

Gulf Studies 6

Lamya Harub

Deconstructing 'Energy Security' in Oman

A Journey of Securitisation from 1920 to 2020

 Springer

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*This study is dedicated to
my parents, Harub and Zuwaina,
for always believing in me,
and for your steadfast love as I sought
new worlds, new realities, and new selves.*

*My siblings,
for your generous spirit and unceasing support of my work;
and my friends,
for all the laughs, love, and companionship.*

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and all whom I met during my research journey,
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Abbreviations

AER	Authority for Electricity Regulation
APOC	Anglo-Persian Oil Company
ARAMCO	Arabian–American Oil Company
CMA	Capital Market Authority
CSR	Corporate Social Responsibility
DLF	Dhofar Liberation Front
EIA	US Energy Information Administration
EOR	Enhanced Oil Recovery
EP	Exploration and Production unit
ESO	Environmental Society of Oman
FAERC	Finance and Energy Resource Council
GCC	Gulf Cooperation Council
HE	His Excellency
HM	His Majesty Sultan Qaboos
HMG	Her Majesty’s Government (Britain)
ICV	In-Country Value
IEA	International Energy Agency
IMF	International Monetary Fund
IPC	Iraq Petroleum Company
IPEC	Independent Petroleum Exporting Countries
<i>Ithraa</i>	Public Authority for Investment Promotion and Export Development
LNG	Liquefied Natural Gas
LTEP	Long-Term Energy Plan
MECA	Ministry of Environment and Climate Affairs
MFA	Ministry of Foreign Affairs
MoCI	Ministry of Commerce and Industry
MoD	Ministry of Development
MoE	Ministry of Education
MOG	Ministry of Oil and Gas
MoNE	Ministry of National Economy
MoP	Ministry of Planning

MSM	Muscat Security Markets
NDFLOAG	National Democratic Front for the Liberation of the Occupied Arab Gulf
NES	National Energy Strategy of Oman
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisations
NLF	National Liberation Front
OGC	Oman Gas Company
OOC	Oman Oil Company
OPEC	Organization for the Petroleum Exporting Countries
OPWP	Oman Power and Water Procurement
OR	Omani Rial
ORPIC	Oman Oil Refineries and Petroleum Industries
OXY	Occidental Oil Company
PAEW	Public Authority for Electricity and Water
PCL	Petroleum Concession Limited
PDO	Petroleum Development of Oman
PDOD	Petroleum Development of Oman and Dhofar
PDRY	People's Democratic Republic of Yemen
PFLO	Popular Front for Liberation of Oman
PFLOAG	Popular Front for the Liberation of Oman and the Arab Gulf
Riyada	Public Authority for Small and Medium Enterprises Development
ROP	Royal Oman Police
SAF	Sultan Armed Forces
SCP	Supreme Council of Planning
SEC	United States Securities and Exchange Commission
SEZAD	Special Economic Zone Duqm
SGRF	State General Reserve Fund
SIP	Social Investment Programme
SIPC	Sohar Industrial Port Company
SME	Small and Medium Size Enterprises
SOCAL	Standard Oil Company California
SQU	Sultan Qaboos University
SROI	Social Return of Investments
TTI	Tetra Tech International
UAE	United Arab Emirates
VCC	Value Core Creation
WB	World Bank
WTO	World Trade Organization

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Chapter 1

Securitisation of Energy in Discourse and Practice



'Time doesn't change, time reveals.'
~Arabic proverb

Introduction

When Mohammed Bouazizi¹ set himself on fire in protest against the Tunisian authorities in 2010, he quickly became a universal symbol across the Arab world. The response from frustrated citizens calling for social justice, freedom, and equal opportunities revealed that a complex web of interdependent social, economic, and political relationships had been involved in his action. Protests swept the region reaching the Sultanate of Oman in late February 2011.² The article 'Black Sunday in Sohar' published by *Muscat Daily*,³ a private local Omani newspaper, reported that nearly two thousand protesters took to the streets of Sohar⁴ demanding job opportunities, salary increases, lower cost of living, an end to endemic corruption and inefficiency, and the removal of allegedly corrupt ministers and government officials. In the city

¹ Mohammed Bouazizi was a Tunisian street vendor who on 17 December 2010 set himself on fire in protest of Tunisian authorities confiscating his merchandise and humiliating him. Bouazizi's act and name became a catalyst for the 'Tunisian Revolution' and the wider so-called 'Arab Spring'. The term 'Arab Spring' has been challenged among various academics, journalists, and many Arabs. Thus, to refrain from using a contested term, this book uses the term post-Bouazizi to refer to the events and protests that took place in the Gulf and the Middle East region after December 2010. For details on the events post-Bouazizi in Oman, see Chap. 6 of this study.

² This book will use 'the Sultanate', 'Oman', and the 'Sultanate of Oman' interchangeably.

³ Muscat Daily is a privately owned newspaper that was created in 2009 by an Omani businessman, Salih Al-Zakwani. It has won awards for its 'unbiased' coverage of several issues pertaining to the 2011 protests in Oman. Muscat Daily staff writer. 2011. 'Black Sunday in Sohar'. *Muscat Daily*, last accessed 26 September 2014, <http://www.muscatdaily.com/Archive/Stories-Files/Black-Sunday-in-Sohar>.

⁴ Sohar is a city in Oman where an economic free-zone and port is situated. The port is very important to the Omani economy as 160,000 barrels of oil-derived products are exported from it daily.

of Haima, a key oil region, oil workers called for increased government investment in the area; in Salalah, a southern city in Oman, citizens requested freedom of the press and political reform. In less than two months, immediately after two Omanis were killed on the eve of ‘Black Sunday’, the Omani government issued Royal Decrees addressing the requests of its citizens. Reforms included the reshuffling of members within the two parliamentary councils⁵ as well as the Council of Ministers, the creation of fifty-thousand government jobs, and the granting of legislative and regulatory power to the *majlis al-shura*, including the exclusive power of interpellation to call on and question ‘service’⁶ ministries in an effort to monitor corruption.

The 2011 protests in Oman serve as a reminder of the euphoria of the post-Bouazizi period, in which citizen action did yield concrete socio-economic and political reforms. Yet, a less visible aspect of the protests and ensuing reform has been the role of energy in these political actions. The energy industry became entangled in political, economic, and social concerns and exposed the economic supremacy of fossil fuels in Oman. Combined with declining oil prices, the web of issues involved in enacting reforms exposed the complex problems associated with modern Oman’s heavy dependence for its success upon fossil fuel production, problems which spanned governance, security, energy diversification, and the distribution of oil wealth. As these challenges surfaced, it became clear that Oman’s reliance upon energy for domestic matters was deeply embedded in its past.

Contemporary Oman faces an energy challenge with growing domestic consumption and ongoing development projects, which also requires large quantities of energy. In 2013, the country’s 5.5 billion barrels of oil reserves were projected to last a little over fifteen years (2013–2030), given its current production rate.⁷ Its oil fields are mature and its ‘easy’⁸ oil has already been extracted, creating a challenge to meet Oman’s domestic energy needs. The US Energy Information Administration (EIA) has reported that energy consumption in Oman will surpass production rates, leaving the country’s most important source of revenue in crisis.⁹ This is the current reality of

⁵ There are two parliamentary councils (*majalis*) in Oman, (1) State Council (*majlis al-dawla*), where the Sultan of Oman appoints representatives; (2) Consultative Council (*majlis al-shura*), where the people elect representatives. Post-Bouazizi, they were given some legislative power as well as the power to question actions of service ministries.

⁶ It is assumed that the Sultan of Oman heads the sovereign institutions. These include the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Finance, Defence, Prime Minister Office, Royal Office, Supreme Judicial Council, Supreme Commander-in-Chief, Council of Financial Affairs, and Energy Resources. Other ministries not mentioned are considered ‘service’ ministries, whereby they serve the Omanis in their day-to-day issues. The division of ministerial hierarchy for the ministries of Foreign Affairs, Finance, however, is not mentioned in any legal document, but is accepted as ‘common knowledge’ in Oman.

⁷ The US Energy Information Administration (EIA) ‘Full Report on Oman’ issued on 28 January 2016.

⁸ With petroleum extraction, ‘easy’ oil is usually set at the primary recovery stage, which means its extraction is easy and its flow is almost natural. Once the ‘easy’ substance has been extracted you are left with secondary and tertiary methods and stages for extraction, which thus requires enhanced oil recovery methods to extract oil. This technique of extracting is very expensive.

⁹ EIA ‘Full Report on Oman’ issued on 28 January 2016.

Oman, the largest oil producer in the Middle East region outside of the Organisation of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC).¹⁰

It is within this present context that this study exposes the precarious foundation of the modern Sultanate. Beginning in 1920 and ending with the post-Bouazizi era, this research explores the complex social construction of ‘energy security’ and the factors that have influenced competing conceptions and transformations of discourse and practice. In addition, it will develop a systematic analysis of the complex assemblage of actors, discourses, and practices of ‘energy security’. Structured as a sociological narrative, it will address four interrelated historical periods and themes: (1) Oman’s colonial history and the role/rule of experts in establishing an understanding of ‘energy security’ since 1920; (2) the convergence of internal and external actors in the formation of discourses and practices for energy during the Cold War; (3) the relationship between energy and neoliberalism after the Cold War; and (4) the role of international and national oil companies in wielding informal influence over social development and cultural production post-Bouazizi.¹¹ From a present-day context, then, this study will reflect upon the historical and social construction of energy security in Oman. Informed by a sociological approach within critical security studies, this research will demonstrate the specificity of conceptions of ‘energy security’ and its transformations.

1.1 Contextualising the Interrelated Themes

Traditionally, the challenge of securing sufficient supplies of energy (oil, in particular) for military defence was considered a national ‘security’ issue. This understanding of ‘energy security’ can be traced to the early twentieth century when Winston Churchill converted the British fleet from coal to oil. Churchill aimed to raise power and efficiency for the British navy while famously emphasising that ‘mastery itself was the prize of the venture’.¹² In Britain’s transition from coal to oil, oil supply became a security concern, especially because Britain, during that period, produced only coal. To secure oil supplies for its navy and to influence the oil prices, the British government invested heavily in the Anglo-Persian Oil Company (APOC), which was involved in oil exploration and production in the Middle East.¹³

It is within this historical trajectory that we can trace how ‘energy security’ in oil-producing countries has acquired different meanings and dimensions. Energy as such is embedded within the social, economic, and political framework of most Gulf states; the survival of these structures is dependent on it. There is thus no inherent

¹⁰ EIA ‘Full Report on Oman’ issued on 15 January 2013.

¹¹ Since the 1970s, Oman has offered social development programmes as part of government policy. However, it has only recently (re)appeared as a sense of urgency post-Bouazizi (see Chap. 6 of this study).

¹² Churchill (1923).

¹³ This is further discussed in Chap. 3 of this study.

reason why the decline of energy resources, the instability of oil-producing Arab countries or even the plummeting oil prices should constitute a ‘security’ concern—as will be argued, these ‘security’ issues stem from the process in which energy has been securitised in the oil-producing countries.

This study’s first historical period is analysed in Chap. 3 and focuses on the colonial period (1920 to 1970) of Oman. The genesis of ‘energy security’ in Oman occurred in 1925, when the D’Arcy Exploration Company conducted a geological survey to explore for oil.¹⁴ The survey brought with it an inflow of experts and professionals to set up the hydrocarbon infrastructure of Oman, as well as Western business interests seeking economic and commercial gains by investing in the energy infrastructure of the Middle East. Given Oman’s strategic location on the route to India,¹⁵ it became the object of British imperial influence. The granting of a concession agreement to APOC in 1937 by Sultan Said bin Taimur brought a series of developments ranging from state formation and forming of boundaries, to the concomitant influx of military and intelligence officers battling against nationalist movements in the north and south of the country.¹⁶

Oil exploration in the Middle East made the region into an area of contention, in which Western international companies competed for the control of oil concessions. This period of competitive rivalry continued until 1962 when Royal Dutch Shell discovered a commercial quantity of oil in Yibal and signed an exclusive deal with Oman.¹⁷ This marked the beginning of oil exports’ vital role in the country’s political, economic, and state-building process. Soon after, Oman became the focus point for experts, ranging from geologists and engineers to security and military officers. This transformative event opened new possibilities for development in the country. With the discovery of oil in significant quantities, Oman served Western strategic interests,¹⁸ particularly those of Britain and the United States, as well as that of the ruling Al-Busaidi family. Jeremy Jones and Nicholas Ridout note how ‘the prospect of major oil discoveries in Oman made the issue of territorial possession, which sovereignty would underpin, an urgent and compelling economic imperative. Thus, the politics of oil intersected with the politics of nationalism and postcolonial authority’.¹⁹ Therefore, the way in which oil intersected with politics is addressed

¹⁴ ‘Letter from Sultan Said bin Taimur to Major M E Rae, His Britannic Majesty’s Consul’, 10 January 1923, in *Arabian Gulf Oil Concession 1911–1953*, Archive Editions (1989), Vol. 12, p. 19.

¹⁵ It is noteworthy to mention that the east-west trade routes, situated at the entrance to the Gulf, was really about energy. The sea lanes and air routes remained up till the independence of India in 1947. The reason why the British did not pull out of the Gulf at that point because of oil.

¹⁶ ‘J C Walton to Lt Col. T C Fowle, Draft Political Agreements and Exchanges for Notes for the Muscat and Oman concession and the Dhofar concession’, 7 August 1937, in *Arabian Gulf Oil Concession 1911–1953*, Archive Editions (1989), Vol. 12, p. 265.

¹⁷ Morton (2012).

¹⁸ Oman strategically overlooks the Indian Ocean and acts as a gateway to Asia. Its control over the Strait of Hormuz, which is the passageway that supplies millions of barrels of hydrocarbons to the international market, has been of great importance to Britain.

¹⁹ Jones and Ridout (2015).

to show how energy is entangled with security, conflict, and socio-economic interests. Oil further enabled Qaboos, the founder of the modern Sultanate, to embark on development projects that improved the material living standards for Omanis.²⁰ However, it also quickly became the domain for corrupt dealings and cronyism involving foreign and local agents.²¹ As the next theme of this study indicates, with development came the interplay of internal and external actors that influenced how energy in the country was utilised and managed.

The second historical period covers the latter part of the Cold War, from 1970 to 1989 (Chap. 4). It analyses the way in which oil became intertwined with global power politics and national strategies. Here, the role of Britain during the 1970s (to the end of the Cold War) and its influence over the way ‘energy security’ is understood and practiced is also examined. It takes into consideration the communist insurgency in the Middle East, which created the unique conditions that allowed the US to assert its dominance in the region more directly than it had in the past. The US also managed to establish military and economic influence over the region as the British government in the early 1970s, due to economic constraints, was only able to maintain a diminished presence through British companies. The battle for control of oil between international oil companies, the emergence of nationalism, and the resistance of colonial powers were prominent themes during the 1970s and 1980s. This Western influence entered the Middle East in the form of private sector development, which was absent during the APOC period. After the 1973 oil embargo, the threat that nationalist-inspired regimes, specifically in the Gulf, would use oil as a weapon to challenge Western hegemony informed British and American foreign policy in the region. Therefore, to maintain their commercial and military interests, Britain and the US propped up political monarchies within the Gulf governments. This guaranteed Britain and the US that Western companies would monopolise industries, the lucrative business of selling arms, and control of oil in the region.²² The impact of Western capitalism in the Middle East, generally, and in Oman, specifically, is discussed in Chap. 5, examining how Oman became the site for the emerging energy complex that produced distinct practices and discourses formulated by myriad internal and external actors.

Furthermore, during the period from the establishment of the modern state of Oman in 1970 to the end of the Cold War in 1989, Western representatives, coupled with international oil companies, sought power, control, and informal influence.²³ This process of exploration, exploitation, and sale of oil involved the convergence of actors domestically and internationally. These actors guided the process through which energy security became progressively entangled with plans to diversify the economy, five-year economic plans, competition and cooperation between the US and Britain. By tracing energy discourses and practices, the study shows the role

²⁰ Referred to in Chap. 3 of this book.

²¹ Detailed in Chaps. 4 and 5 of this study.

²² Macris (2009), see Chaps. 6 and 9.

²³ Detailed in Chap. 5.

of ‘experts’ that contributed to the multifaceted securitisation of energy. This analysis also reveals how energy was central to assembling the Sultanate’s economic, social, political, and security architecture from 1920 to post-Bouazizi. It also shows that the role of consultants and ‘experts’ (internal and external) was not limited to practical and technical affairs only; they were also instrumental in mediating political negotiations, contractual deals, planning the long-term development plans, and monopolising the private sectors, all carried out through the wealth created by oil exports.

The third historical period is developed in the context of the collapse of the Soviet Union and the end of the Cold War. The 1990s marked a new so-called neoliberal phase in the global process, conceived as economic liberalisation, deregulation, and privatisation. In 1995, the Omani government introduced a strategic economic vision, ‘Oman Vision 2020’, calling for the establishment of various programmes to diversify the economy. These programmes included increasing the number of Omanis in the workforce (Omanisation), industrialisation, and privatisation. It was anticipated that these policy changes would serve to improve GDP growth rates and economic stability, mainly by moving away from the over-reliance on the public sector.²⁴ In this regard, this book offers an analysis of the rise and spread of neoliberalism and its effects on energy discourses and practices in Oman. It therefore demonstrates how energy became articulated with neoliberalism.

Towards the end of the Gulf War, discussions over reducing energy consumption and securing the hydrocarbon market through the adoption of neoliberal policies and efficiency were spreading across the Gulf. These interrelated issues emerged as a new focal point in the discourses and practices of ‘energy security’.²⁵ Specifically, the promotion of the world market allowed regional and global actors to converge on a set of neoliberal policies for Oman’s domestic sector. After the global economic crisis in 2008, the country focused on policies related to labour market issues and public investment. These plans were further pursued post-Bouazizi, when the expansion of public employment, higher public wages and benefits, unemployed benefits, and social investment projects became a top priority. Of course, the persistence of the market economy depends on the continual wealth that hydrocarbons provide. Therefore, oil, as a form of energy, has become crucial to the process of wealth accumulation that has emerged in Oman since 1967. With limited oil reserves, the country’s economic situation remains risky in the long term since oil revenue can no longer maintain its conventional role in offsetting the cost of fiscal expansion.²⁶

Another theme of this study deals with the role of energy companies and their promotion of social investment programmes through a corporate social responsibility framework. While some continuity of discourses and practices towards diversification and private sector development prior to 2011 existed, the energy discourses

²⁴ Ministry of National Economy (1996).

²⁵ See, for example, publications from: ECSSR (2008, 2010); Le Billon and Khatib (2004); Woertz (2008).

²⁶ The production peak and decline can be found in the following report: EIA ‘Full Report on Oman’ issued on 28 January 2016.

and practices focused on employment and equal opportunities only became dominant post-Bouazizi. This push towards social entrepreneurship—to create employment and equal opportunities—has dominated the policy structure of most countries throughout the Middle East and North Africa region, including the Gulf. However, in the case of Oman, the role of the international and national energy companies is significant, as they have taken a leading part in promoting neoliberal policies (reflected in Chap. 5) under the banner of social investment and social responsibility (continued in Chap. 6).²⁷ In many ways, entrepreneurship and small and medium enterprises are promoted by the government as an alternative path for thousands of unemployed Omanis.²⁸ Considering the current oil crisis, the government is no longer able to continue to employ its nationals in the public sector. To target this issue, many of the international oil companies have been playing a more active role in employing/training Omanis, thus influencing social development in the country through their social entrepreneurship programmes.

The challenge to meet Oman's domestic energy needs combined with demographic growth raises concerns for future intergenerational equity, especially since it coincides with a rise in unemployment rates.²⁹ In this regard, the influence of international and national oil companies on issues of social development highlights the social dimension of 'energy security'. Social concerns have thus become the core for policymaking in Oman. In September 2016, a national programme for enhancing economic diversification—known as '*Tanfeedh*' ('Implementation')—was launched as a platform to guarantee a more productive role for the private sector in the national economy.³⁰ To ensure that all relevant voices were considered, the government brought the private sector, public sector, civil society, academics, the youth, and journalists, all under one platform. As it will become clearer in Chap. 6, the prioritisation of social concerns has today become the benchmark for energy politics in Oman. Moreover, approaching energy as *materiality* will help us understand the imbrication between the qualities of different forms of fuels, the technological and social organisation of their extraction, circulation and consumption, and effects upon social life in Oman. *Materiality* in this study is therefore understood as: 'the sensuous and phenomenal qualities of things and their implication in human social and cultural

²⁷ Similar trends are found throughout the Gulf countries. See Hanieh (2011).

²⁸ National Centre for Statistics and Information. 'Oman Statistical Yearbook' issued in 2013, last accessed 16 May 2014, <https://www.ncsi.gov.om/Pages/NCsi.aspx>

²⁹ The Omani population growth rate rose from 4.5% in 2011 to 11.5% in 2012, with over 50% of the population below the age of 21. See National Centre... Ibid.

³⁰ Tanfeedh is a mechanism, based on Malaysia's model of economic diversification—PEMANDU (Performance, Management and Delivery Unit)—to achieve the goals of the ninth five-year development plan (2016–2020) to overcome the obstacles facing economic diversification. The model is used for governments to create a roadmap that includes detailed objectives, initial set of actions, outcomes, and identifies targeted key areas. In the case of Oman, three crucial sectors were acknowledged—that included manufacturing, tourism, and logistics—to yield support for the ninth five-year plan. See TANFEEDH. 2016. 'National Programme for Enhancing Economic Diversification'. *Tanfeedh*, last accessed 31 March 2017: <http://www.tanfeedh.gov.om/>.

life’.³¹ In this respect, Chap. 6 will utilise the concept of *materiality* and the so-called ‘material turn’ to focus attention on nonhuman objects, technologies, and devices. It will also show how ‘energy security’ is articulated in relation to social issues, particularly post-Bouazizi.

By the end of 2015, global oil prices dropped dramatically, bringing new economic challenges to oil-exporting countries. A few years later, the world was hit hard by the coronavirus (Covid-19), negatively impacting the fiscal position of many hydrocarbon producers, including the Sultanate. Given its already fragile position, Oman was quick to develop an expanded national strategy towards oil and gas. The double blow of Covid-19 and oil price shock created opportunities for Oman to, almost counter-intuitively, investigate the possibility of transitioning towards a low-carbon, more diversified, and resilient economic future. In an effort to assess these most recent developments, Chap. 7 will illustrate the dominant energy-related discourses in contemporary Oman which run part and parcel with issues of fiscal balancing and the energy transition. The narrative will suggest that the Sultanate’s strategies for tackling both the energy and fiscal crises have become enmeshed within concerns over climate change. While at present, the country’s policies appear fragmented, this study does not intend to end on a critique but rather to provide the theoretical framework from which an effective, sustainable, multifaceted approach might practically be conceived.

1.2 Originality and Contribution to Knowledge

To obtain a deeper understanding of critical security studies from a non-Western perspective, this book embarks on an empirical study of energy in Oman, which has not yet been subject to extensive analysis. While there is a lot of work on oil in the Gulf,³² and some literature on oil/energy in Oman, there are no studies demonstrating how ‘energy security’ has been socially constructed in Oman. Moreover, the existing studies fail to explain how the plural understandings of ‘energy security’ are simultaneously shaped by power relations and networks of internal and external actors. The case of Oman is also not theoretically situated within the already substantial literature on critical security studies, which is grounded in a Eurocentric analysis, and has rarely been applied to the Gulf studies’ literature. This research therefore contributes to broadening the analysis of ‘energy security’ in non-Western/oil-producing countries. Moreover, supplementing critical security studies with postcolonial concepts enables broader theorising of ‘energy security’ beyond the West. Using the case of Oman reveals the process through which the securitisation of energy is shaped by and in turn shapes social, economic, and political discourses and practices in Oman.

³¹ Rogers (2012). For a detailed discussion on the concept of *materiality*, refer to Chap. 2 of this book.

³² This is covered extensively in Chap. 3 of this book.

While some studies have addressed energy in Oman,³³ and critical security studies in the Gulf region, as discussed in the next chapter, no studies have developed a systematic analysis of the complex assemblage of actors, discourses, and practices of ‘energy security’ in the Sultanate since the 1920s. Thus, rather than assuming a singular logic of securitisation as the Copenhagen School does (explained in Chap. 2), this study shows the heterogeneity of discourses and practices of ‘energy security’ in Oman.

This book also addresses the question of ‘energy security’ by moving past the dominant approach of ‘rentier state theory’, which is empirically and theoretically limiting and economic centred in its analysis. The proponents of the rentier state theory do not consider within their approach the complex historical background of the oil industry. This literature further assumes, as argued in Chap. 3, that oil revenue alone did not shape the state structures of oil-producing states, and that the state and society are not two separate, distinct entities.³⁴ This research offers an analysis of the multifaceted energy discourses and practices that arise historically through the internal and external actors and factors, which further considers the analysis of the production, distribution, and use of oil. Furthermore, it sheds light not only on the role of experts and technology in managing ‘energy security’, but also on the conditions under which state formation took place. The varied combination of political, economic, social, and security concerns shape the dominant discourses and practices of energy in Oman. Ultimately, by approaching ‘energy security’ through a sociological approach within critical security studies, and adopting analytical concepts that include *power relations*, *neoliberal assemblages*, *network of experts*, and *materiality* (all discussed in Chap. 2), this study raises questions about the role of state formation, development, diversification, decision-making processes, actors, and policies in relation to ‘energy security’ in the modern oil-producing state of Oman.

1.3 Book Structure

This study is structured in seven chapters including this one. The second chapter introduces the dominant realist and liberal approaches of ‘energy security’. These frameworks have characterised much of the literature on ‘energy security’, not just on Oman but also more generally across the globe. More recently, however, energy studies have utilised a constructivist approach within critical security studies.³⁵ Nonetheless, these have been quite limited and there has been no systematic discussion of critical security studies and its applicability to energy beyond the West. Moreover, while most studies on Oman and the Gulf region have utilised liberal and realist approaches for their analyses, recent literatures have started engaging with critical security studies. Based on these discussions of ‘energy security’ and its treatment

³³ Limbert (2008, 2010), Valeri (2009), Jones and Ridout (2015).

³⁴ This is further discussed in Chaps. 2 and 3 of this study.

³⁵ See Ciuta (2010), Christou and Adamides (2013); among others.

in Oman and the lack of critical security approaches, the research questions for this study are developed.

In addition, the second chapter develops the theoretical framework for this book by drawing on debates from critical security studies and some analytical concepts drawn from the work of Timothy Mitchell and Aihwa Ong.³⁶ It explores the Copenhagen School's concept of securitisation and shows how its analysis is limiting both methodologically and theoretically. Therefore, to have a more rigorous analysis for the formation of energy discourses and practices in Oman, it refers to a more sociological approach represented in the Paris School within critical security studies. While some of the Paris School's concepts can be usefully deployed, the chapter also highlights several assumptions about state and fields of professionals that are not applicable in the Omani context. Therefore, in a final step, it integrates these limitations with other critical analytical concepts drawn from postcolonial scholars.

Chapter 3 begins by showing that 'universal' assumptions of the state are Eurocentric in nature. It provides an overview of 'rentier state theory' and its limitations in understanding state formation and its connection to energy in Oman. Therefore, through a sociological approach, and by examining the history of the energy industry and its role in state formation, it demonstrates how energy, security, development, and modernity become discursively and practically entwined. Chapter 3 traces the way in which energy discourses emerge starting from 1921, when energy first entered the discourse of state-building, to the establishment of 'modern' Oman. Additionally, it shows how the constructed notions of energy are historically understood and temporally contingent. Finally, it illustrates the complex ways in which the meanings of 'energy security' change historically. This is further reflected in Chap. 4, which begins its analysis when the modern state of Oman was established. It shows how, during the Cold War, a competitive rivalry existed between the US and the UK, complicating the connection between energy and state formation in Oman. Here, one finds the multifaceted relationship among internal and external actors. This is developed through a 'security continuum',³⁷ whereby energy is conceptualised in terms of rivalry, security, power relations, nation-building, and state recognition. The view of energy in Oman during the 1970s and 1980s corresponds to the way in which the Sultanate was established and the developments that followed.

Moving to the post-Cold War period, Chap. 5 analyses the effects of this development on energy discourses and practices. It traces how the influence of global neoliberal ideas in Oman changed the way that energy is perceived; as extracting energy technology was advanced, the understanding of 'energy security' in Oman transformed. These neoliberal logics pushed the process of liberalisation and privatisation of the national economy in the Sultanate. These *neoliberal assemblages* are also found post-Bouazizi where the push towards social entrepreneurship is the centre of policy discussions in the country. Chapter 6 illustrates the importance of *materiality* within a sociological approach to discourse and practice. By examining the role of energy companies, PDO, Shell, and BP Oman, it shows how their social investment

³⁶ Mitchell (1988, 1991, 2002, 2011), Ong (2007).

³⁷ The concept of the 'security continuum' is coined by Bigo (2001).

programmes have fostered social connectivity in the country. The chapter argues that ‘energy security’ becomes interconnected with social concerns post-Bouazizi. It also demonstrates how post-2011 the boundaries between the role of the government and the energy companies became more blurred.

Finally, in utilising the concept of the *security continuum*, Chap. 7 demonstrates how the discourses of energy security shift to focus on fiscal balancing and the need to address climate change. Here the intersection of the energy transition discourse with the financial concerns of the country, especially amid Covid-19 and the global drop of hydrocarbon prices, has prompted Oman to take stock of unprecedented factors when developing its systematic agenda under the leadership of Sultan Haitham bin Tarik. Having examined this most recent period in Oman’s history, and with an aim towards making a positive contribution towards Oman’s future, the concluding chapter outlines the empirical and theoretical potential contained within this book.

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Chapter 2

The Heterogeneity of ‘Energy Security’



Introduction

When evaluating ‘energy security’, contemporary analytical paradigms aim for a comprehensive picture that takes into account a range of interrelated dimensions, including economics, national security, development, physical infrastructure, and climate change. A review of existing literature, however, shall reveal not only how current analytical paradigms come up short, but also how they might benefit from a sociological approach. By examining realist, liberal, and constructivist approaches towards energy security, this chapter will uncover the limitations of existing analyses. A fundamental incommensurability begins in assumptions that do not fit when employed in non-Western contexts. Some have tried to address this issue; constructivist approaches, for example (discussed in the first section of this chapter), attempt to move beyond the limiting economic and state-centric analyses towards social constructs and rules.¹ Complicating the problem, however, is the fact that even Gulf studies have tended to adopt existing paradigms, thereby failing, too, to address the broader historical and sociological issues involved.²

Section 2.1 of this chapter begins with an overview of the existing analyses of ‘energy security’. It will show that the realist and liberal perspectives, which have served as the dominant frameworks through which energy has been traditionally understood, yield constricted accounts prioritising state-centred and economic aspects. The failure of these perspectives to accommodate historical and sociological dynamics will reveal the need for a more holistic paradigm. To make up for this lack, the end of the section will turn to constructivism, an analytical perspective that prioritises changing dynamics of power relations.

¹ Discussions of these debates are detailed in Cherp and Jewell (2011).

² More recent literature includes: Vitalis (2006), Jones (2010).

To move beyond the limitations of the realist and liberal approaches towards 'energy security', the second section develops a new theoretical framework by utilising a sociological approach within critical security studies. Most literature on critical security studies has dealt with securitisation³ and (de)securitisation of referent objects in Europe leaving the Middle East largely unexplored.⁴ The first aim of this study, therefore, is to fill this gap. Having recognised the limitations of existing paradigms, however, its second task will be to develop an analysis appropriate to Oman's specific context. To that end, Sect. 2.2 will propose an analytical framework that draws on concepts from both critical security studies and postcolonial studies. By adopting a sociological position, it will demonstrate how 'energy security' in Oman is the performative effect of social discourses and practices. Its sociological approach will part from the constructivist approach, however, as it will address discourses and practices of energy security, and not simply what security *means*, but what it *does*.⁵ More particularly, its distinctive sociological paradigm will analyse *how* different discourses and practices on energy have emerged from historically contingent ways, *how* they have been shaped by different actors, and *how* energy and security have been connected in varied and complex ways.

The second section begins with an exploration of the concept of 'security' by opening with the Copenhagen School's securitisation theory. It will then identify the methodological and theoretical limitations of the Copenhagen School by addressing the analytical gap of the 'speech-act', which, we will find, fails to account for the context of the securitising move.⁶ After introducing the general concept of securitisation, Sect. 2.2 will survey the range of literature concerning regions outside of Western Europe and liberal democracies. As an alternative to the Copenhagen model, it will examine the Paris School which offers an approach to conceptual analysis based on performative effects.⁷ Applying the Paris School model to the specific context of Oman, the analysis will employ Didier Bigo's concept of the *security continuum*. Insofar as it reveals the nexus of practices and discourses carried out through the *power relations* within the assemblage of internal and external actors, the *security continuum* will elucidate the transformation and formation of 'energy security' in Oman.

Ultimately, Sect. 2.2 will conclude that while some of the Paris School's concepts can be usefully deployed, this model, too, has its limitations. Relying on assumptions about the state and the field of professionals that seem inapplicable beyond a Western European context, the Paris School, like others, remains Eurocentric in its normative assumptions. In an effort to correct and make up for these shortcomings, Sect. 2.3 integrates concepts used in postcolonial approaches drawn from Timothy

³ Securitisation is the process in which a referent object is elevated to a realm above politics and transforming it into a security issue.

⁴ Only recently does one find literature on the Gulf that utilises critical security studies. As discussed in Chap. 1: Ulrichsen (2009), Heeg (2010), Ehteshami (2013), Ulrichsen (2011), to name a few.

⁵ Huysmans (1998a), pp. 226–255.

⁶ Buzan et al. (1998), p. 10.

⁷ The performative effect is the performance of a specified act by virtue of its utterance.

Mitchell and Aihwa Ong. Subdivided into analyses of postcolonial states, networks of experts, neoliberalism, and the materiality of energy, the section ends by proposing a theoretical framework that integrates a history of postcolonialism currently lacking from existing securitisation literature. This developed framework will be applied to the history of energy securitisation in Oman in the next chapter.

The final section in the chapter will discuss the methodological approach developed and, particularly, the qualitative tools upon which it relies, including discourse and historical analysis, and semi-structured interviews. With a mind towards not only Oman but other non-liberal states as well, it will evaluate how well this combined methodology might enable in-depth analysis of energy security. As no thorough sociological examination of energy in Oman has yet been attempted, this new framework and its particular application to Oman will significantly contribute to the fields of Middle East area studies, energy studies, and critical security studies.

2.1 Approaches to 'Energy Security'

As noted, this section aims to provide a survey of the discourses influencing the ways in which conceptions of this security issue—energy—have developed. It will conclude that the studies on 'energy security', specifically in Oman, and more generally in the Gulf, have been limited to a restricted realist and liberal view that fails to show how 'energy security' was formed historically and which fails adequately to account for sociological dynamics.

2.1.1 *Realist Approaches*

Realist approaches to energy security maintain that all states seek 'security' because of the specific anarchic structure of the international system. Realists differ, however, in their estimation of what type of response this threat demands. Kenneth Waltz, for one, claims that the anarchical nature of the international systems compels states to focus on preserving their own independence rather than on maximising their own power. While survival 'is a prerequisite to achieving any goals that states may have', Waltz explains that 'beyond the survival motive [...] the aims of states may be endlessly varied; they may range from the ambition to conquer the world to the desire merely to be left alone'.⁸ Despite expansionist ambitions, he concludes, states should not prioritise the pursuit of power, for it may undermine their foremost goal, which is 'security'.⁹ John Mearsheimer, by contrast, maintains 'that it makes good strategic sense for states to gain as much power as possible and, if the circumstances are

⁸ Waltz (1979), p. 91.

⁹ Waltz (1979), p. 126.

right, to pursue hegemony'.¹⁰ From Mearsheimer's perspective, offensive strategies prevent the threat of anarchy, and thus of insecurity.

Independent of differences between realist approaches, they are based on a state-centric perspective. Understood from this perspective, energy security relies on the following assumptions: (1) access to and control of energy resources is motivated by concerns about national power and national interest; (2) there is a growing scarcity of energy resources; (3) states will increasingly compete for access and control over energy resources; (4) and conflict over these resources is likely and unavoidable because of an anarchical international system and constant competition between states.¹¹

The state-centric aspect of realism is illustrated by Michael Klare who explains how, after the 1973 and 1979 oil crises, most debates in the Western world linked 'energy security' to war and conflict by drawing assumptions from issues related to resource scarcity.¹² During this period, 'energy security' meant that the security of oil supply was needed for military power. Thus, 'energy security' became embedded within the national security priorities of most states and became the dominant strategy for oil-importing states.¹³ In addition, Klare argued that if the global economy continued to depend on oil, the world would be at war competing for oil rents and resources.¹⁴

Klare's mode of analysis also features in the 'resource curse' literature, as discussed by Michael Ross, which ties energy competition (and reliance) to conflict and war.¹⁵ As Ross points out, oil, in particular, has played a central role in modern warfare. Here, the 'resource curse' implies that resource *presence* causes conflict.

The 'resource curse' also postulates that, while providing opportunities for Arab states, for example, to finance their developmental projects, the discovery of hydrocarbons also created 'extreme volatility' and 'bad governance' (defined mainly as economic mismanagement), ultimately impeding economic diversification and subjecting states to 'Dutch disease'.¹⁶ The theory's recognition of certain *de facto* indirect negative economic impacts does seem to be valid; nevertheless, its assumption that economic growth is *in principle* linked directly to conflict and insecurity does not seem accurate. Ibrahim El Badawi and Alan Gelb put it nicely, explaining that, although 'a natural resource curse is real, [... it] is not destiny'.¹⁷ As Ross elaborates, governments in oil-producing countries can, in theory, mitigate and counteract

¹⁰ Mearsheimer (2010).

¹¹ Dannreuther (2010), p. 3.

¹² Klare (2002).

¹³ Yergin (1991).

¹⁴ Klare (2002).

¹⁵ Ross (1999).

¹⁶ The concept of Dutch disease looks at the effect of reliance on one commodity—in the case of the Gulf, overreliance on oil and natural gas—for the foreign exchange dealings of a country. The first case of the 'Dutch disease' took place in Holland (hence the name), whereby non-energy exports suffered, and other industries weakened. In some cases, the economic theory is oversimplified and is rendered as the 'oil curse'.

¹⁷ Elbadawi and Gelb (2010), p. 22.

the 'Dutch disease' by, for example, crafting careful fiscal policies and investing in the productivity of the natural resources.¹⁸ Steffen Hertog points to a number of Gulf states that have successfully created efficient state-owned enterprises, achieving economic productivity in specific areas through public investments.¹⁹ However, Hertog also notes in other works that 'rentier states' (detailed in Chap. 3) do tend to be less productive.²⁰ By way of explanation, he points to excessive bureaucratic expansion, duplication, and competition for patronage between government departments.²¹

In another study, Klare defines 'energy security' as the consistent and affordable supply of energy to meet fundamental needs, as well as ensuring their unhindered delivery from point of production to ultimate consumer.²² In the milieu of the Cold War, maintaining access to, and control of, valuable natural resources such as oil was key. Daniel Yergin observes in *The Prize* that the Middle East was the main region for oil production, which consequently instilled fears from the West over the potential for supply shortages.²³ Concerns regarding the security of energy supply were particularly acute during the 1970s as governments in the Middle East started nationalising their respective oil industries. The process of nationalisation led to concerns over supply prospects and the use of oil as a political weapon. The nationalisation of the oil industry impacted US foreign policy, leading the US to extend its military presence in the oil-rich Middle East. This military presence thus became the foundation of the Carter Doctrine and the subsequent military involvement in the Gulf War (1990) and the Iraqi War (2003). As Jimmy Carter famously declared in 1980:

Let our position be absolutely clear: Any attempt by any outside force to gain control of the Persian Gulf region will be regarded as an assault on the vital interests of the United States of America, and such an assault will be repelled by any means necessary, including military force.²⁴

In observing the deeper implications of Carter's declaration, Klare claimed that, by stating that an attack on the Gulf is like an attack on the US, this policy allowed for the establishment of military bases in the region in order to secure uninterrupted flow of oil supplies.²⁵

In a realist perspective, a primary aspect of 'energy security' is energy independence, which is measured by three criteria: (1) insulation from the oil market, (2) no price fluctuations from imports, and (3) influence on the oil price.²⁶ However,

¹⁸ Ross (1999).

¹⁹ Hertog (2010), pp. 262–264.

²⁰ Hertog (2011).

²¹ Ibid.

²² Klare (2008) (added emphasis).

²³ Yergin (1991).

²⁴ Johnson (1990).

²⁵ Klare (2008), p. 487.

²⁶ Nivola and Carter (2010).

this was impossible to attain given that the global oil market is unpredictable, and prices inevitably fluctuate. In this regard, Pietro Nivola and Erin Carter argue that, regardless of attempts to achieve energy independence, the rise of oil prices globally will always affect the national consumer. Since, for example, the US is no longer the only global power in the twenty-first century, China, India, and various other rising powers will play major roles in influencing the price of oil because of the size of their economies.²⁷ Nivola and Carter explain that due to the interconnectedness of issues involved in 'energy security' they recognise the limitations of a realist approach (a 'Buy American' approach),²⁸ fundamentally declaring it a failure because it does not account for the manifold dynamics of the global market.

Martin Pasqualetti and Benjamin Sovacool take a slightly different approach. While they also approach 'energy security' through a geopolitical lens, wealth, and power,²⁹ they divide analysis between the national and global scales. The national scale, they contend, presents its own unique set of 'energy security' issues, from national defence and national infrastructure, to the environmental costs of maintaining both.³⁰ The global scale, by contrast, is more accurately examined by attending to geopolitics and war, global investment barriers, and trans-boundary externalities.³¹

Despite realism's contribution to the understanding of 'energy security', most of the literature in the realist approach discusses the perspective of oil-importing, not exporting, states. This 'energy security' approach offers little in terms of understanding the political pressures and factors that influence the decision-making process of oil-exporting states. For example, the OPEC states have mostly outsourced their production decisions to an international organisation to improve their collective bargaining power. Contrary to realism, the importance of dialogue between international organisations, particularly in terms of bringing together producers and consumers, has shaped the rationale for different types of states in the global energy structure.³² As will be shown, liberal approaches have attempted to address this shortcoming. Jan Kalicki and David Goldwyn, for instance, suggest that single-state energy independence is doomed to fail because it wrongly conceives the makeup of the global market. Any individual state, they argue, will need to 'forge a greater coalition of nations based on common needs and promote development and cooperation, or it will see continued instability and unrest—and endure cyclical shocks to

²⁷ It is significant to note that Oman's oil exports to China in 2011 represented 89.9% of the Sultanate's total exports. See Ministry of National Economy, Oman. 2011. Directorate General of Economic Statistics.

²⁸ Nivola and Carter (2010), p. 116.

²⁹ For further discussions on integrating 'energy security' into foreign policy, refer to Kalicki and Goldwyn (2005).

³⁰ Pasqualetti and Sovacool (2012), pp. 5–10.

³¹ Ibid.

³² It is noteworthy to mention that no country is solely a producing country or a consuming country. In many ways, even in the case of Oman, countries that produce also import and consume energy and have difficulty meeting their domestic energy demands.

the global economy and sustained attacks on its people and property'.³³ Therefore, to ensure stability and security, Kalicki and Goldwyn assert the need for a cooperative strategy towards 'energy security'.

In many ways, the cooperative approach (usually a subset of liberalism) resembles the realist perspective in its analysis of foreign policy. William Wohlforth explains how the 'balance of power theory' posits that states will balance against threats 'by building up their own capabilities ("internal balancing") or aggregating their capabilities with other states in alliances ("external balancing")'.³⁴ Most existing literature on foreign policy in Oman exhibits this school of thought, which is to say, realism informed by the 'balance of power theory'. Joseph Kéchichian, for example, adopts this lens when surveying the development of Oman's foreign policy from the 1970s up until the 1990s, as it evolved from a position of 'isolationism' to global diplomacy.³⁵ Kéchichian has observed trends described by Gerd Nonneman as 'omni-balancing',³⁶ which entails the act of offsetting internal and external pressures born from a range of domestic, regional, and international forces.

According to Nonneman, 'omni-balancing' ensures political and economic stability, thus assisting in state formation and ultimately serving to legitimise it.³⁷ Omni-balancing therefore yields a much more comprehensive approach to meeting a state's security concerns. However, it is important to note that the central assumption of 'omni-balancing' does not deviate from the realist perspective of balance of power and the capability of states (or the leader) countering threats from other states. As a result, Steven David argues that it still provides a state-centric perspective and characterises the world by anarchy.³⁸ One account of 'omni-balancing' has been offered by Ibrahim Noor, who looks especially at Oman's balanced and mediating role in the Gulf region, where Oman provides a channel for dialogue between the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC)³⁹ countries and its Arab and non-Arab neighbours.⁴⁰ Noor's article reveals the process that Oman went through in creating a foreign policy that ranged from isolationism to the role of mediation in the region. Noor approaches Oman's policy from a historical and economic perspective. Resting on this background, he ends the article contending that, upon the break-up of the Soviet Union, the Sultanate advanced its relations with Russia and Central Asia on the policy of sharing common benefits especially in the areas of trade, investment, oil exploration,

³³ Kalicki and Goldwyn (2005).

³⁴ Wohlforth (2012), p. 40.

³⁵ Kéchichian (1995).

³⁶ This concept of 'omni-balancing' was designed by Steven David to explain so-called Third World states alignment decisions during the Cold War. For details on this, see David (1991).

³⁷ Nonneman (2005).

³⁸ David (1991), p. 234.

³⁹ The GCC is a regional economic integration council that was established in 1981. Its membership includes the following six states: Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates.

⁴⁰ Ibrahim (1992).

and policy coordination in the oil market.⁴¹ In this scenario, balancing strategies and building alliances with other states have become the core of Oman's foreign policy. This strategy, as Gal Luft and Anne Korin explain, is dominant in the realist perspective, where commodities like energy 'have been repeatedly used as tools of foreign policy by exporters and have been among the prime catalyst of armed conflict'.⁴² In addition, while Noor sheds light on the country's 'omni-balancing' strategy, he does not explain how multiple perspectives on 'energy security' emerge in Oman.

From the perspective of oil-producing states,⁴³ realism suggests that energy resources are power elements in states' foreign policy tool kits when they seek to expand influence abroad. Oil-exporting countries 'seek security of demand—the assurance that their production will be purchased at a fair price over a long-term, so that national budgets can anticipate a steady and predictable revenue flow'.⁴⁴ Therefore, in the context of an energy-consuming state, 'energy security' is mostly understood as 'simply the availability of sufficient supplies at affordable prices'.⁴⁵ Moreover, following the realist school, the policies of states in the international system are not only connected to economic rationality as geopolitics of oil has also become the centrepiece of 'energy security' within realism, which in many ways is predicated on a historical view of the world during the Cold War period. As pointed out by Jeffrey Legro and Andrew Moravcsik, realists 'have long insisted that control over material resources in world politics lies at the core of realism'.⁴⁶ Yet, realism is not the only dominant approach to energy security. The next section turns to liberal approaches, which, generally, consider 'energy security' as related to the diversification of the energy supply, integration into the energy market, as well as affordability and accessibility.

2.1.2 *Liberal Approaches*

In contrast to realism, liberalism generally places state–society relations at the centre of its analysis of world politics. More specifically, liberalism focuses on the interaction between domestic and world politics. Moravcsik, for example, states that liberal theories

rest on the fundamental premise that state behaviour reflects the relationship between it and the domestic and transnational society in which it is embedded. This basic claim underlies theories about the influence of economic interdependence, varying conceptions of collective goods provision, or domestic representation.⁴⁷

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Luft and Korin (2009a).

⁴³ Further discussions on oil-producing countries are covered in Chap. 3 of this study.

⁴⁴ Luft and Korin (2009b).

⁴⁵ Yergin (2006), pp. 70–71.

⁴⁶ Legro and Moravcsik (1999), p. 18.

⁴⁷ Moravcsik (2001).

The liberal approach distinguishes itself by three basic assumptions: (1) The actors in international politics are fundamentally rational individuals and private groups seeking to promote their interests; (2) states are represented in international affairs as a subset of domestic society; and (3) the preferences of the state determines its behaviour and policies.⁴⁸ Policy becomes a function of the societal context, as Moravcsik argues, where the focus is shifted from international anarchy (consistent with the realist approach) to domestic conflict where suboptimal outcomes are imposed.⁴⁹

The basic assumptions of how 'energy security' is understood today have not deviated from the definition offered by the International Energy Agency (IEA), established by Henry Kissinger as a 'confrontational response' to the 1973 oil crisis, represents the interest of the Western oil-importing states.⁵⁰ The agency defines 'energy security' in terms of:

the uninterrupted availability of energy sources at an affordable price. Energy security has many aspects: long-term energy security mainly deals with timely investments to supply energy in line with economic developments and environmental needs. On the other hand, short-term energy security focuses on the ability of the energy system to react promptly to sudden changes in the supply-demand balance.⁵¹

This economic-centred definition also arose in reaction to the Arab countries' oil embargo during the 1970s. This liberal approach to 'energy security' sought to retain wealth accumulation, commercial interest, and promote a sense of national security. Unlike realism, which focused on resource wars and dirty politics, the liberal approach was concerned with issues of transparency, accountability, good governance and corporate social responsibility, economic liberalisation, and free markets for energy. When it came to the energy market, the players in the liberal approach were considered rational actors motivated by 'profit maximisation' and dictated by market economy principles.⁵²

Moreover, liberalism, as noted by Luft and Korin, downplays the ideological, cultural, and geopolitical drivers in world politics.⁵³ The role and structure of the international market hence included energy *interdependence* as a new dimension within the liberal approach. Liberals thus claim, 'security is higher when all the terms of a chain are part of the whole process'.⁵⁴ Consequently, the role of international cooperation and liberal markets becomes the focus of liberalism. Chris Brown and Kirsten Ainley, in tracing the history of International Relations (IR) core concepts,

⁴⁸ Details of these assumptions can be found in Moravcsik (2001), pp. 5–10.

⁴⁹ Moravcsik (1997), p. 537.

⁵⁰ Dannreuther (2015), p. 472.

⁵¹ The IEA developed the IEA Model of Short-term Energy Security (MOSES), which is a measuring tool used to examine risks and resilience factors associated with short-term physical disruptions of energy supply. In International Energy Agency (IEA) (2014).

⁵² Luft and Korin (2009a), p. 341.

⁵³ Interview with Lt. General Ahmad Harith Al-Nabhani, Chief of Staff Sultan's Armed Forces. 26 April 2016, Muscat.

⁵⁴ Chifu (2014).

contend that, 'states are essentially concerned with the absolute gains made from cooperation; as long as they are happy with their own situation, they will not be too worried about how well other states are doing'.⁵⁵ The development of cooperation took several stages concurrent with the robust growth of the global energy market during the 1970s and onwards. In the context of energy, Janusz Bielecki explains how the two major oil shocks (1973 and 1986)⁵⁶ caused a longer term decrease in energy demand. This was followed by reduced oil prices forced upon OPEC, which brought 'disagreement among members, no insecurity about supply, and increased consumption from the OECD countries'.⁵⁷

Furthermore, a paradigm shift from the 1980s and 1990s occurred that changed the focus of 'energy security' to investing in global energy infrastructures as means towards security of energy supply. Within this new policy, climate change also became a substantial 'energy security' concern that incorporated the core of energy policy without minimising security of supply.⁵⁸ This global phenomenon for climate change and reducing carbon emissions has become a problem also in Asia whereby carbon emissions more than doubled from 1990 to 2010 in China, Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand, and Vietnam.⁵⁹ Dieter Helm therefore notes that given the prevailing climate concerns, the ageing oil refineries and networks constructed in the 1970s, and the advancements of technology and the concentration of oil in the Middle East region, there is a greater need to adopt an interdependent approach towards 'energy security', especially during an era of free movement of goods.⁶⁰

Concomitant with this analysis, Sovacool and Marilyn Brown claim that 'energy security' should be based on 'the interconnected factors of availability, affordability, efficiency, and environmental stewardship'.⁶¹ They assert that energy interdependence is essential to secure the supply of energy. Saudi Arabia, for example, though rich in crude oil exports, still depends on importing refined gasoline for its domestic energy needs. Likewise, Russia exports natural gas but must import uranium. In this regard, Sovacool and Brown contend that 'energy security' 'does not stand abstractly by itself; rather, it is most meaningful in a comparative context'.⁶² Similarly, Carlos Pascual and Evie Zambetakis have suggested that, 'interdependence has become crucial and no monolithic system or entity can be responsible for energy security'.⁶³ The authors observe a new focal point in the geopolitics of energy by examining the secured supply of hydrocarbon resources versus reduced consumption through efficiency and the use of alternatives.⁶⁴ Recently, for instance, the United

⁵⁵ Brown and Ainley (2005).

⁵⁶ The 1979 oil shock is not discussed in Janusz Bielecki's article.

⁵⁷ Bielecki (2000), pp. 235–237.

⁵⁸ Helm (2005), p. 16.

⁵⁹ Sovacool (2014), p. 2.

⁶⁰ Helm (2005), pp. 6–7.

⁶¹ Sovacool and Brown (2010), p. 81.

⁶² Sovacool and Brown (2010), p. 80.

⁶³ Barton et al. (2004).

⁶⁴ Pascual and Zambetakis (2010), pp. 4–6.

Arab Emirates (UAE) has invested in renewable energy even as it remains a major energy exporter. Pascual and Zambetakis' observation is also relevant in the context of rich oil-producing countries,⁶⁵ most of whom are struggling to maintain a sufficient supply for domestic energy consumption.⁶⁶

Assuming, as the liberal approach does, that economic efficiency and 'profit maximisation' should be the sole criteria for decisions, Roland Dannreuther argues that liberals ignore 'the fact that any durable arrangement needs to incorporate the issue of political legitimacy'.⁶⁷ In this respect, when looking at the case of Oman, this study will demonstrate how the process of energy securitisation assisted in state formation and the concurrent construction of 'energy security'. Moreover, when linking the concept of 'security' to energy in the context of Oman, several elements move the understanding of 'energy security' beyond dominant perspectives. As Moravcsik explains, 'states do not automatically maximize fixed, homogeneous conceptions of security', as realists tend to assume, instead, 'they pursue particular interpretations and combinations of security, welfare, and sovereignty preferred by powerful domestic groups enfranchised by representative institutions and practices'.⁶⁸ This is exemplified in the words of Ahmad Al-Nabhani, Chief of Staff for the Sultan's Armed Forces, where he notes that in 2016 the biggest challenge in Oman for the armed forces during the current oil crisis was the military need for financial support.⁶⁹ Furthermore, in explaining the country's decision-making process, Al-Nabhani explained how several issues in Oman became security concerns:

All issues are taken into consideration and are driven by a holistic approach/vision. The socio-economic concerns are equally very important to the nation. State security is not everything, *we always consider that schools are security, hospitals are security, roads are security, the citizen's comfort is also security*. This is all considered in our decisions and discussions, we always consider the citizen's interest.⁷⁰

In the Omani context, then, 'security' is defined through a holistic range of development and societal concerns, the most central of which is care for the citizen. As Al-Nabhani makes clear, 'energy security' does not only involve economic concerns, but social domains excluded from other conceptual approaches. According to one

⁶⁵ An integrated analysis of this is provided by Anoushriyan Ehteshami while drawing on Barry Buzan and Ole Wæver. He argues that the Gulf is a dynamic sub-region that plays a large role in the international security system. Ehteshami devotes a chapter to 'Oil and the Persian Gulf economy' demonstrating the interrelation of Gulf oil and its control by Western oil companies. His analysis reveals the economic interdependence of the international economic system with that of Gulf oil. While his contribution is beneficial for this research, it nonetheless overlooks the intricate details of how internal and external actors influenced the way in which varied conceptions of 'energy security' is formed throughout the history of oil development in Oman. Ehteshami (2012).

⁶⁶ Oman is a net natural gas exporter, exporting approximately 324bcf annually, primarily to South Korea, as well as Japan, Taiwan, Spain, France, and the US. Refer to the US Energy Information Administration 'Full Report on Oman' issued on 28 January 2016.

⁶⁷ Dannreuther (2015), p. 479.

⁶⁸ Moravcsik (1997), p. 519.

⁶⁹ Interview with Al-Nabhani. 26 April 2016, Muscat (added emphasis).

⁷⁰ Ibid.

understanding of 'energy security' in Oman, then, the absence of energy resources constitutes a 'security' threat in its own right. This view is asserted by Aleh Cherp and Jessica Jewell, who contend that, 'Problems related to oil security, initially for military use, and later for the transport sector have historically shaped the "sovereignty" perspective on energy security rooted in strategic security studies, international relations theories and political science'.⁷¹ While realists and liberals would agree that revenue from hydrocarbons transforms into a vital source for security, the centres of their analytical frameworks are but aspects of Oman's more comprehensive view, which includes not only economic and political analysis, but a strong social dimension, too.

Another common dimension of the liberal approach is the focus on climate issues and the need to diversify energy sources and adopt renewable forms of energy. Diversity in the 'energy security' context is a means 'to help *prevent* disruptions to energy supply and to *mitigate* their effects should they occur'.⁷² Ultimately, the liberal approach broadened the 'energy security' agenda by including economic principles of availability, affordability, diversification, and interdependence. However, there are limits to this analysis. With liberalism, as with realism, the perspective of energy-importers takes precedence over that of energy-exporters. Though the liberal approach incorporates economic and climate concerns into its paradigm, its main concern nonetheless revolves around the macroeconomic impacts of high-energy prices and the danger of economic losses resulting from potential shortfalls in energy supply.

Unlike its realist counterpart, liberalism rests on distinctive elements of social demands, ideation, and domestic preferences in world politics.⁷³ Through analyses utilising 'resource curse' literature and 'rentier state theory' (elaborated in Chap. 3), Dannreuther shows how the liberal approach exposes illiberal practices.⁷⁴ In the context of the Gulf, for instance, scholars have alleged that authoritarian regimes found in oil-rich states constrain civil society and prohibit democracy. In Oman, for example, Marc Valeri suggests that the discovery of oil allowed for the creation, in 1970, of an invented tradition called *al-nahdha* (the renaissance),⁷⁵ which in turn underpinned the political legitimacy of Qaboos.⁷⁶ Through 'informal hierarchies of the different local groups',⁷⁷ says Valeri, the Sultan 'built his own legitimacy by initiating a process of nation-building that redefined the cultural and political references of a society formerly rooted in the traditional *'asabiyya* (tribe, ethno linguistic

⁷¹ Cherp and Jewell (2011), p. 207.

⁷² Stirling (2011), p. 147.

⁷³ Moravcsik (2001), p. 524.

⁷⁴ Dannreuther (2010), p. 6.

⁷⁵ In several British memoirs, the Omani 'renaissance' is understood as 'the move away from the middle ages' (i.e. what is considered as the 'dark' times). An example of this is found in The Duchess of St Albans (1980).

⁷⁶ Valeri (2009), p. 73.

⁷⁷ Valeri (2009), p. 175.

group, and community)'.⁷⁸ Oil rents, Valeri continues, replaced the '*asabiyyat* (i.e. the traditional form of ruling) enabling the development of infrastructure, roads, free health care, and education.⁷⁹

Valeri's sociological analysis and, more specifically, his helpful enumeration of the various aspects involved in political development can guide a more thorough analysis of the evolution of 'energy security' in Oman.⁸⁰ Still, like the realists, Valeri too fails adequately to trace the processes and conditions in which 'energy' became a security concern. Moreover, Valeri's study, which is predicated on the 'rentier state' hypo study that 'focuses on the nature of domestic representation and the resulting possibilities for rent-seeking behaviour', remains limited in its prioritisation of domestic economics.⁸¹

Most studies on the Gulf fail to address the role of the internal and external actors that played a role in determining how 'energy security' has been understood and formed. However, in literature on Oman, Valeri touches upon the role of actors when he notes how a merchant 'alliance with the new rule ensured them the protection of the political authorities, the latter's non-interference in the business sphere, *and privileged access to the oil godsend through public goods*'.⁸² His argument that the state–society relationship would be precarious post-Qaboos is central to his study, which follows a liberal view of how one analyses oil-producing states. The structure of state–society relations, Valeri argues, explains why business elites hold the positions they do, or why the Omani national identity has become such a powerful presence over only a generation or two, but that simultaneously regional identities are also strong. However, as found in most existing historical accounts on Oman,⁸³ Valeri's work is embedded in Eurocentric assumptions of how the state and society are divided. This is due to his use of the 'rentier state theory' framework, which limits his study when considering the varied formations of 'energy security'. A broader analysis is thus necessary to move beyond the prisms developed by realist and liberal approaches.

In general, scholarly work on energy security has neglected the interconnected role of internal and external actors and policies in shaping concepts of 'energy security'. A comprehensive understanding cannot succeed if the theory is entrapped within the boundaries of any single perspective. Thus, we turn to a third approach—the constructivist view—which more fully integrates social, economic, and political dimensions.

⁷⁸ Valeri (2007).

⁷⁹ Valeri (2007), p. 144.

⁸⁰ Marc Valeri is banned from entering Oman after writing a 'controversial' article stating that the Sultan of Oman has become 'de-sacralised' post-Bouazizi protests, see Valeri (2012).

⁸¹ Moravcsik (1997), p. 524.

⁸² Valeri (2007), p. 148 (original emphasis).

⁸³ Book-length studies on the history of Oman written before the twenty-first century include Landen (1967), Narayan (1979), Price (1975), Joyce (1995), to name a few. For contemporary history see Allen (1987), Valeri (2009), Jones and Ridout (2012), Jones and Ridout (2015).

2.1.3 *Constructivist Approaches*

By the end of the Cold War, an alternate approach to the realist-liberal debates emerged, whereby constructivist theorists suggested that, within an anarchical framework, norms could develop. The first theorist to introduce the term 'constructivism' in IR theory was Nicholas Onuf in 1989 in his ground-breaking work *Making of Our World*.⁸⁴ According to Onuf: 'human agents author rules and deploy resources in accordance with those rules so as to secure and ensconce advantages over other agents'.⁸⁵ Premised on pragmatic motives, social rules are constructed in a twofold way: 'resources are nothing until mobilised through rules; rules are nothing until matched to resources to effectuate rule'.⁸⁶ The approach was then developed further by Alexander Wendt who claimed that constructivism 'is not a theory of international politics. Constructivist sensibilities encourage us to look at how actors are socially constructed, but they do not tell us which actors to study or where they are constructed'.⁸⁷ The basis of constructivism, as Wendt argues, places its emphasis on the importance of identity and norms, and the politics of different kinds of anarchy. The approach borrows from social theory to maintain that the way in which subjects interact with the world and with each other is the reason for the chaos of international relations.

Constructivism's attachment to socially constructed notions is also highlighted by Brown and Ainley who point out that the

central insight of constructivist thought can perhaps best be conveyed by the notion that there is a fundamental distinction to be made between 'brute facts' about the world, which remain true independent of human action, and 'social facts' which depend for their existence on socially established conventions.⁸⁸

Constructivists assume that state identities are ideational constructs produced by the interaction of states (not societies) within the international system. As articulated by Emanuel Adler, constructivism 'stress[es] the reciprocal relationship between nature and human knowledge and suggest[s] a view of the social sciences that is contingent, partly indeterminate, nominalist, and to some extent externally validated'.⁸⁹ Simply put, constructivism is a theoretical approach based on the notion that all relations are socially constructed and therefore pervade energy issues.

In this regard, constructivism emphasises the social construction of world affairs, which contrasts with the realist and liberal claim that international politics is based on rational choice behaviours and decisions. Constructivism's core concepts include the belief in social construction, a focus on ideational as well as material structures, a focus on the role of identity and the belief in 'the mutual constitutiveness of agents

⁸⁴ McDonald (2008), p. 60.

⁸⁵ Onuf (1989), p. 39.

⁸⁶ Onuf (1989), p. 60 and 64.

⁸⁷ Wendt (1999), p. 7.

⁸⁸ Brown and Ainley (2005), p. 48.

⁸⁹ Adler (2013), p. 114.

and structure, and a focus on practice and action'.⁹⁰ This places the constructivist approach, as Matt McDonald claims, in a relatively strong position in relation to realist theory since it can come to terms with periods of structural change.⁹¹ Identity in the constructivist approach *cannot* be underestimated. For example, the perception of the Western world towards countries that are labelled 'autocratic' and countries that are 'democratic' differs. Constructivists assume that two countries that share the same ideological identity are more likely to cooperate regardless of the 'security' benefits that may or may not progress. This way of thinking was prevalent in US relations with the Republic of China and the Soviet Union during the Cold War period.⁹² In the Middle East, it underpinned relations during the Gulf Wars. F. Gregory Gause, for example, provides a detailed account of the Gulf region from 1971 to 2008, examining the region from a wider perspective that includes regional, local, and international security levels.⁹³ Though mainly focused on US interests in the Gulf region, he shows how the Gulf countries—given their similar social and political structures—managed to cooperate as well as adopt some of the discourse of liberal and constructivist approaches, which emphasise cooperation. In moving away from the discourse of multipolarity, however, he rejects a purely realist lens and turns to constructivism.

Focusing on the construction of identity, Gause suggests that the Gulf states are new creations that have 'developed some degree of citizen loyalty and identification'.⁹⁴ More pertinent, however, are 'cross-border identities', which present 'both opportunities and challenges to Gulf leaders', affecting 'regional and international politics'.⁹⁵ Gause suggests that the national identities are constructed and at times threatened by transnational identities. Therefore, the regional Gulf states perceive national threats from within the regional security complex, owing to the salience of transnational identities, and not because of the pursuit of resources (as proposed by realism). In a similar strand, Kristian Ulrichsen—also using the 'regional security complexes' concept—examines the internal and external dimensions of Gulf security and its effects on the regional security agenda. He delineates Gulf security as moving from the traditional military challenges to issues that may arise in the region post-oil such as unemployment, which 'is intertwined with the broader socio-economic challenges arising from the over-stretch of existing state capacity to meet rising demand for utilities, health care and education, in addition to job requirements'.⁹⁶ The above studies, while taking into account the local conditions of the states, do not demonstrate the impact of energy on the social and political fabric of oil-producing countries, which is at the core of how energy is 'securitised' and constructed.

⁹⁰ Flockhart (2012), p. 82.

⁹¹ McDonald (2008), p. 60.

⁹² Brown and Ainley (2005), p. 50.

⁹³ Gause, III (2010).

⁹⁴ Gause, III (2010), p. 10.

⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁹⁶ Ulrichsen (2011).

Utilising a constructivist approach, Dannreuther argues that the concept of 'energy security' should be 'understood as an effect of material power relations'.⁹⁷ His article focuses on how 'energy security' is constructed in relation to the shifting modes of governance in international political economy and to broader changes in global security governance.⁹⁸ Through intervening historical periods,⁹⁹ he demonstrates how dominant articulations of 'energy security' arises. What is relevant to this study, is Dannreuther's account of how during the 1970s and the 2000s, oil-producing countries generally accumulated high oil revenues that consequently strengthened the economic and political power of these states. This, he argues, generated anxiety among energy-consuming states that translated into increased fears over 'energy security'. By the 2000s, these anxieties had spread to other oil-producing countries. For instance, given that Oman is an oil producer, its oil fields are matured, creating a challenge to meet its domestic energy needs.¹⁰⁰

In his most recent publication, Dannreuther explains how an interdisciplinary approach (inclusive of a realist, liberal, and 'radical' approach) is necessary to obtain an 'overarching conception' of the 'contested nature of energy security'.¹⁰¹ He proposes an expanded view that incorporates the political dimension, and, by doing so, he simultaneously integrates linkages between security, power, and justice.¹⁰² Through a broad historical perspective of the history of energy—'a history of human prosperity and emancipation'—Dannreuther shows how energy security evolved into multiple formations that highlight structural inequalities and economic and political unfairness, to name a few.¹⁰³ Similar to this study, he advocates for a historically contextualised analysis that adopts a postcolonial perspective to demonstrate how different dimensions of energy security interacted (and interacts) with issues of power and justice.

Recent literature in Gulf studies has increasingly started to engage with 'energy security' in ways that reflect more comprehensive concerns (that is, the role of cultural understandings, identity, and society) than those of the realist and liberal approaches. Heavily influenced by the 'rentier state theory', Mari Luomi, for example, illustrates the way that the governments in Gulf countries—particularly Qatar and the UAE—drive energy policy to influence domestic issues. While her argument fails to depart from a 'regime survival strategy-oriented approach',¹⁰⁴ she nevertheless points out how the Gulf countries' 'energy security' concerns differ from those characterised

⁹⁷ Dannreuther (2015), p. 468.

⁹⁸ Dannreuther (2015), p. 467.

⁹⁹ He divides the historical periods thematically as followed: (1) energy security and the neo-colonial order (1900 and 1960s); (2) energy security and the rise of OPEC (1960 and 1970s); (3) energy security and the neo-liberal order (1980 and 1990s); and (4) towards a state-capitalist order (2000s onwards). For details refer to Dannreuther (2015), pp. 470–475.

¹⁰⁰ Discussed and explained in this study' Introduction.

¹⁰¹ Dannreuther (2017), p. 3.

¹⁰² Dannreuther (2017), p. 35.

¹⁰³ Dannreuther (2017), p. 34.

¹⁰⁴ Luomi (2012).

by Eurocentric realist and liberal security perspectives. Noting that, 'societal forces, such as interest groups, institutions, public opinion and media, had a mixed record in driving energy and environmental policies in the Gulf in the 2000s',¹⁰⁵ Luomi combines a constructivist approach with socio-historical analysis, to show how 'energy security' is embedded in varied economic, political, and social concerns, and, especially, local politics.

However, the literature on 'energy security' has rarely extended beyond the Western context. There is a shortage, therefore, of Middle Eastern literature that provides systematic analyses of 'energy security' from a sociological approach within critical security studies (which is a particular development from the constructivist perspective here).¹⁰⁶ Even rarer are country-specific studies. Toby Craig Jones however offers one such study of Saudi Arabia, his analysis proceeds mainly by a political historical narrative. Focusing on the influence of experts in the country's development, Jones explains how, from the 1960s, development and progress 'became central themes in the cult of personality that emerged around the leaders of Saudi', all of which later developed into 'additional layers of complexity, particularly in terms of how the kingdom's rulers deployed development as a tool for binding their citizens to them more completely'.¹⁰⁷ Jones shows how power and authority are created in part through narratives of development, and how they in turn underpin identity. His examination reveals how Saudi Arabia's royal family utilised oil wealth to strengthen Saudi's autocratic rule and to attain limitless economic, social, and political possibilities in the Kingdom. When considering Oman, it will be helpful to adopt Jones' consideration of foreign and domestic experts, and of the international network of technicians and technocrats, all connected to the energy complex. It also reveals how the analysis of these experts by Jones created 'redistributive mechanisms that bind state-society relations in rentier systems'.¹⁰⁸

To this point, however, such analysis has been lacking. Most literature on Oman has been historical work that is not theoretically informed. The first thorough account of Oman's political history is provided by John Peterson, which is considered a classic historical study of the country during the twentieth century.¹⁰⁹ He untangles the personalities and dynastic and tribal politics that allowed Oman to surge into a developed nation in the twentieth century. Peterson shows how energy in Oman was viewed in terms of its economic importance to state revenue, he states that in 1968, the 'Muscat treasury had been dependent on four basic sources of revenue: loans and subsidies, customs, zakat, and periodic payments from oil concessionaries'.¹¹⁰ His account, though useful, does not demonstrate how the discourse and practices

¹⁰⁵ Luomi (2012), p. 72.

¹⁰⁶ There are a few studies that approach 'energy security' through the framework of critical security studies. This is covered in Chap. 2 where the conceptual framework of this study is developed.

¹⁰⁷ Jones (2010), p. 85.

¹⁰⁸ Ulrichsen (2009).

¹⁰⁹ Peterson (1978).

¹¹⁰ Peterson (1978), p. 88.

around oil has changed through critical junctures of the country's history. Moreover, Peterson's state-centric historical position exhibits the perspective propagated among Western academics when describing the Middle East,¹¹¹ commonly found, for example, in British colonial writing.¹¹² Overall, there has been less analysis of energy discourses and their transformations, whereby discourses have not really been analysed in their social context. Therefore, among the benefits of adopting a critical sociological framework (detailed in this chapter) is the possibility of correcting the Eurocentric assumptions prevalent in, among others, Peterson's historical account.¹¹³ Given the limited analysis in critical security studies of energy discourses and the way in which they transform, this study aims to adopt a constructivist approach (combined with poststructuralism) to analyse discourses in their social context.¹¹⁴

A number of anthropological studies have sought to address questions of identity and social norms in Oman; as such, they could be considered constructivist. In her ethnographic work, Mandana Limbert, for example, describes Omani society as organised around the 'disappearances, miracle, and surprises' of oil.¹¹⁵ Limbert argues that official discourse in Oman downplays the role of oil as the source for the 'miraculous' development that the country underwent during the past forty years. In another study, Limbert discusses the uniqueness of Oman's culture and identity by observing its linear progress to 'modernity' focused on the domestic dynamics.¹¹⁶ Her observations pave the way for adopting a sociological approach to address the specific question about 'energy security' discourse and practice. Limbert thus explains, that, 'Within the context of Oman's (limited) oil wealth, people's understanding of what constituted and constitutes good governance shaped not only their current politics, but their hopes, concerns, and expectations as well'.¹¹⁷ Her research uses a case study of Bahla, a city in Oman. Through historical ethnography of oil development in Oman, Limbert shows how oil transformed the dynamics and structures of governance and

¹¹¹ Said (1978).

¹¹² John Wilkinson, renowned Oxford University Omani historian, notes in his review of Peterson's book: 'Numerous other cases could be quoted to illustrate how the author is being Eurocentric, or at best Sultanate-centred, even when he is trying to be sympathetic in his treatment of the peoples of the Interior'. John Wilkinson. 1980. 'Book Reviews: J.E. Peterson. *Oman in the Twentieth Century: Political Foundations of an Emerging State* (London: Croom Helm, and New York: 1978)'. *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, p. 540.

¹¹³ Other book-length studies on the history of Oman written before the twenty-first century include Landen (1967), Narayan (1979), Price (1975), Joyce (1995), to name a few.

¹¹⁴ An example of how securitisation was adopted in the Gulf context is presented by Jennifer Heeg. She utilises securitisation to explain how identity—analysed through the societal sector of the Copenhagen School—in Qatar is securitised, and thus develops a new regime type, the 'laissez faire autocracy'. Heeg brings into question securitisation theory's focus on decision-making and audience as this does not translate neatly in Qatar. This, she explains, is because 'in non-democracies, action and not speech is the means by which security is constructed and understood'. Heeg (2010).

¹¹⁵ Limbert (2008).

¹¹⁶ Limbert (2012).

¹¹⁷ Limbert (2012), p. 45.

society by contributing to infrastructure development and road constructions, some of which divided one village from another, literally transforming Oman's landscape.¹¹⁸

Other studies on Oman examine how cultural and sociological factors have helped to shape Oman's political, economic, and political structures. Jeremy Jones, Nicholas Ridout, and Badr bin Hamad Al-Busaidi,¹¹⁹ for instance, analyse development in Oman in conjunction with culture and diplomacy.¹²⁰ Jones and Ridout explain how culture and society play a central role in Oman's contemporary foreign and domestic policy, while Al-Busaidi's study—which echoes the Sultanate's official discourse—emphasises that Oman has worked on balancing its traditional historical cultural linkages to modern development independent of its oil discovery. Jones and Ridout's contemporary foreign policy analysis can be helpful in explaining Oman's external economic links, both regionally and globally.¹²¹ Within a postcolonial framework, their critique of 'rentier state theory' for its failure to consider 'the differential social and political roles of each state', offers an alternative way of how to understand modern Oman.¹²² Jones and Ridout demonstrate how the country developed rapidly from 1970 into a state that has been 'modernised' but not 'Westernised'—as they contend—through oil revenues.¹²³ As others, however, they too overemphasise the role of *al-nahdha*, the Omani renaissance, in unifying the country,¹²⁴ a move which serves to downplay the central role of energy in forming the 'Qaboos State'.¹²⁵

More pertinent to this research, however, is an observation made by Jones and Ridout that during the 1970s the 'military campaign was supported with a massive increase in resources, made possible largely by oil revenues'.¹²⁶ Oil revenues, though, played an integral role not only during this military period, but throughout the Sultanate's history. Still, while Jones and Ridout shed light upon the shifts in government structures and practices in Oman, they too omit an examination of the converging actors (external and internal) who played a role in constructing varied conceptualisations of 'energy security'. Borrowing from their historical account, this research shall attempt to fill the gaps by demonstrating the links between the construction of 'energy security' and social, political, and economic transformations.

While constructivism emphasises the need to analyse ideas, norms, culture, and identity, it nevertheless also maintains a state-centric perspective. As concerns energy

¹¹⁸ Limbert (2012), p. 44.

¹¹⁹ Badr bin Hamad Al-Busaidi is Secretary General of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Oman. His father served as the Head of the Royal Office under Said bin Taimur (prior to 1970) and during the Qaboos.

¹²⁰ Jones and Ridout (2012), Al-Busaidi (2008).

¹²¹ Jones and Ridout (2015).

¹²² Jones and Ridout (2015), pp. 166–165.

¹²³ Jones and Ridout (2015), p. 3.

¹²⁴ Focusing on the concept of *al-nahdha*, Linda Pappas Funsch's comprehensive analysis demonstrates how Qaboos played a central and determining role in creating national unity; Funsch dedicates a whole chapter to 'Qaboos bin Said: Renaissance Man', thus linking the beginning of Omani nationalism to the Sultan. See Funsch (2015).

¹²⁵ The use of 'Qaboos State' is taken from the book title of Valeri (2009).

¹²⁶ Jones and Ridout (2015), p. 157.

in Gulf studies, no systematic discussion, in fact, has managed to move beyond a state-centric and economic-driven analysis. This lacuna is the one this study aims to close. Deviating from a state-centric notion prevalent in the realist and liberal perspectives, mostly, and the constructivist approach, for the most part, it shall adopt a critical sociological approach that aims to uncover both the complex historical processes and the varied (formal and informal) social, political, and economic contributors to 'energy security'.

Unlike the realist and liberal narrative, the next section advances its analysis to demonstrate the interplay between the local, regional, and international expertise. It further illustrates the juncture of power relations that developed throughout the Sultanate's history. As Cherp and Jewell point out, an examination of 'energy security' 'should be strongly focused on specific national contexts rather than abstract and generic considerations'.¹²⁷

2.2 Embedding 'Energy Security' in Critical Security Studies

After the Cold War, a new wave of scholars rejected the restrictive notion of 'state-security' (and the military-centred sector) and advocated a combined approach, post-structuralism, and constructivism, which considered 'security' in light of a much wider range of issues.¹²⁸ Since then, the predominant view in critical security studies is that 'security' is a socially constituted concept. Situated within this most recent phase, the following section explores three central elements of the field's most contemporary debates. Beginning with the Copenhagen School's emphasis on *how* 'security' is constructed and *what it does*, as opposed to defining *what* 'security' *is*, it then proceeds to introduce the 'logic of emergency' and the 'securitising actor and its audience'. Section 2.2 then ends by observing the limitations of the Copenhagen model, namely, exclusive emphasis on discursive securitisation, and, moreover, on liberal democracies. As an alternative, it will look to the Paris School for the foundations of a sociological approach.

2.2.1 *The Copenhagen School's Concept of 'Security'*

While traditional approaches focusing on the state have dominated the study of 'security', its definition has expanded in recent years. According to Barry Buzan, most literature on the concept of 'security' prior to the Cold War was embedded in realism, characterised by issues of power as dominant means and ends, short-term perspectives, and an embedded military orientation. With the Cold War, however, this

¹²⁷ Cherp and Jewell (2011), p. 211.

¹²⁸ Columba Peoples and Vaughan-Williams (2010).

conception proved insufficient. 'Security', Buzan contends, is 'essentially a contested concept'¹²⁹ with 'moral, ideological [...] and normative elements that render empirical data irrelevant and prevent reasonable people from agreeing with one another on a fixed definition'.¹³⁰ Today, 'security' is considered a socially constructed concept that was 'weakly conceptualised' and 'underdeveloped'.¹³¹

Recognising its fluidity, the Copenhagen School's aim was to broaden the notion of 'security' by placing it within an analytical framework of 'securitisation'.¹³² The conceptual framework of the Copenhagen School is presented in Buzan et al.'s *Security: A New Framework for Analysis*, which describes a particular process for securitisation through a social constructivist reading of 'security'. In the Copenhagen School, 'security' came to be defined not as an objective condition,

but as the outcome of a specific social process: the social construction of security issues (who or what is being secured, and from what) is analysed by examining the "securitising speech-acts" through which threats become represented and recognised.¹³³

According to this approach, the mere utterance of a threat constitutes an act of securitisation. Securitisation is a process that requires the acceptance of its audience, and a specific rhetorical or linguistic structure; only then does the securitising actor effectively manage to underline the referential object as 'political in nature' or a type of 'extraordinary means'.¹³⁴ The idea of 'audience acceptance' also signifies a possibility that the audience may not accept the object as a concern of 'security', in which case a securitising move will not be successful.¹³⁵ According to Ole Wæver, during the process of securitisation, the state actor only articulates the need for 'security' in a specific context (for example, an institution).¹³⁶

In considering 'security' from a speech-act perspective, the Copenhagen School rejects the traditionalist tendency to restrict 'security' to one sector¹³⁷ and extends 'security' to a wide range of issues. Accordingly, Buzan et al. delineate the significance of analysing 'security' through various sectors (military, political, economic, environmental, and societal) and levels (international systems, international sub-systems, units, sub-units, and individuals) of analysis. Therefore, by broadening the concept of 'security' to include other concerns, it includes non-traditional security issues such as energy. To demonstrate some characteristics of the Copenhagen

¹²⁹ Buzan (1983).

¹³⁰ Quote taken from Lipschutz (1995).

¹³¹ Buzan (1983), pp. 3–5.

¹³² Buzan et al. (1998).

¹³³ Williams (2003), p. 514.

¹³⁴ Buzan et al. (1998), p. 24.

¹³⁵ A sub-section on the securitising actor and its audience will be discussed subsequently.

¹³⁶ Wæver (1995), pp. 54–57.

¹³⁷ The term 'sector' was first adopted in critical security studies from Buzan (1983), p. 11. Sector was later used to 'serve to disaggregate a whole for purposes of analysis by selecting some of its distinctive patterns of interactions. [...] The purpose of selecting them is simply to reduce complexity to facilitate analysis', in Buzan et al. (1998), p. 8.

School, a survey of different approaches scholars utilised to analyse energy-related issues follows.

In her study of the securitisation of energy, Jonna Nyman demonstrates the shortcomings of linking energy to a 'national security' paradigm, using US–China relations as a case study. She argues that the 'importance of energy to state survival and continued economic development has in practice put energy policy into the "high" politics arena of national security, making the phrase "energy security" commonplace'.¹³⁸ Such a realist understanding limits the debate for 'energy security'; impedes cooperation between states; and overlooks the other insecurities caused by the state in pursuit of energy independence at the expense of social, economic, and political security.¹³⁹ Nyman believes that her alternative, by contrast, would afford greater possibilities: 'Moving energy out of the "high" politics of national security would both make cooperation more likely, as energy "security" would no longer be framed in us/them terms, and open up the debate on policy alternatives'.¹⁴⁰ While Nyman offers a broader perspective on 'energy security', because she is mainly interested in energy policymaking, she too gives little attention to sociological aspects.

Moreover, Felix Ciuta introduces into the debate of 'energy security' a distinction among a 'logic of war', a 'logic of subsistence', and a 'total' security.¹⁴¹ The purpose of this division was to demonstrate the multiple ways of thinking about 'energy security'. Ciuta argues that 'energy security' can, for instance, be approached geopolitically, illustrating the logic of interaction and behaviour of some actors. Building upon his definition of 'energy security', he claims that it 'reflects the constant and multifaceted interaction between the domestic and the international'¹⁴²; Ciuta thus shows how 'energy security' relates to domestic issues. Ciuta's Malthusian interpretation and 'logic of war' can be found in the exhaustive study carried out by Michael Klare, as discussed in Chap. 1, under the realist approach to 'energy security'.¹⁴³

While the introduction of sectors expands the realm of critical security studies, these distinctive analytical sectors remain confined to socially constructed referent objects. As Jef Huysmans argues, however, 'a security problematic is not necessarily sector bound'.¹⁴⁴ Pointing out how sector divisions can obscure the discursive continuity of 'energy security', Matt McDonald explains:

Political leaders can and do simultaneously invoke sovereignty and identity as that in need of preservation, and attempting to compartmentalise security dynamics can obscure broader forms of discursive continuity in approaches to issues as disparate as immigration,

¹³⁸ Nyman (2014), p. 2.

¹³⁹ Ibid.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid.

¹⁴¹ Ciuta (2010), p. 124.

¹⁴² Ciuta (2010), p. 127.

¹⁴³ Klare (2002).

¹⁴⁴ Huysmans (1998a), p. 490.

environmental change, and traditional military practices in particular historical or social contexts.¹⁴⁵

As McDonald suggests, sectorisation jeopardises our understanding of the construction of security issues. While the Copenhagen School valuably broadens the 'security' framework to include consideration of various agents, referent objects, and non-state actors, given the 'logic of emergency' implicit in securitisation theory, Claudia Aradau observes that, through 'securitisation, traditional security actors such as the military are privileged over other actors, such as non-state and local actors'.¹⁴⁶ Furthermore, as the examples above show, approaches within the school tend to overlook the sociological transformations that affect varying discourses and practices of energy. For all its advantages, therefore, the Copenhagen School maintains certain restrictions when analysing 'security' and 'energy security'.

2.2.2 *The 'Logic of Emergency'*

In considering 'securitisation' as a process initiated by a certain kind of speech-act, the Copenhagen School makes it possible to identify the characteristic elements of all such acts, resulting in what it calls the 'logic of securitisation'. According to this logic, any speech-act that invokes 'security' 'frames [a security] issue either as a special kind of politics or as above politics',¹⁴⁷ thus placing it in the realm of 'extraordinary measures'. If securitisation implies a move from 'normal politics' to 'extraordinary politics', conversely Wæver argues that by removing issues from the 'security agenda' and away from the realm of 'existential threats', one can (de)securitise an issue; thus, using more cooperative¹⁴⁸ forms (since it is no longer a 'security' concern) for solving the issue.¹⁴⁹ Desecuritisation does not imply the absence of language of 'security', but rather a process of moving the discourse of 'security' towards the realm of normal politics. In restoring 'normal politics', it is essential to point out that this study views 'normal politics' as a cooperative form for solving the issue.

The Copenhagen School is vulnerable to logics of 'exception', 'emergency', and 'extraordinary measures'. In an analysis of British securitisation processes in Africa, Rita Abrahamsen critiques the school's ambiguous categories of what is considered a risk or a 'security' concern. Demonstrating how development and humanitarian categories bred fear, risk, and security issues, she suggests that the Copenhagen focus

¹⁴⁵ McDonald (2008), p. 571.

¹⁴⁶ Aradau (2009), p. 200.

¹⁴⁷ Buzan et al. (1998), p. 23.

¹⁴⁸ 'Cooperative' here is a post-Cold War principle whereby the dominance of traditional security has been challenged by new and wide range approaches to the concept of 'security'.

¹⁴⁹ Wæver (1995), pp. 56–57.

on a Schmittian 'state of exception'¹⁵⁰ can lead to dire consequences. On the African continent, for example, former Prime Minister Tony Blair's discourse on morality yielded 'the ability to place an issue above the normal rules of liberal democratic politics, and hence justify emergency action to do whatever is necessary to remedy the situation'.¹⁵¹ Abrahamsen claims that securitising issues like 'development' is unhelpful when trying to tackle them in Africa, for example. She aptly explains that security policies are not simply 'existential threats' from 'external enemies'; they can be related to everyday endeavours. Furthermore, Abrahamsen argues, when one approaches the concept of 'security' as a 'speech-act', the concern is whether 'an issue should be treated as a security issue. The normative question, in the words of Huysmans, is not "more or less security", but to securitise or not to securitise?'¹⁵² In line with Abrahamsen, and Huysmans' normative question, this study also considers the implications of the securitisation of energy in Oman, a non-democratic state.

Exhibiting similar concerns as Abrahamsen, Huysmans asserts that the securitisation of migrant issues in Europe creates a narrative of a war against all. The desecuritisation of migration, by contrast, 'relocate[s] the question of migration in the context of ethico-political judgment'.¹⁵³ This re-location positively allows for different understandings of the concept of the 'political', which is advantageous to widening the perspective of 'security'. Desecuritisation, therefore, effectively achieves what securitisation does not. Furthermore, in an attempt to surpass a Schmittian 'logic of exclusion', Huysmans notes that an examination of 'a desecuritising political aesthetics of everydayness has to incorporate a concept of the political which defines what is right and wrong or good and bad'.¹⁵⁴ In this regard, desecuritisation slips away from the 'exception', which allows for 'emergency' and 'extraordinary measures'—that can be seen as taking undemocratic procedures and thus moves towards 'everydayness'.

The 'logic of emergency' is important in the context of liberal democracies, as critics argue that the exception becomes the rule. Didier Bigo criticises the role of securitising actors' institutional power to speak 'security' in the name of exceptional measures and measures beyond law'. He therefore contends that the Copenhagen School agrees:

with the idea of an 'exceptionalisation,' or a 'beyond the law' politics, and come back to 'cynicism and realism,' forgetting 'democracy.' Sharing the *illusion* of the field they analyse, they do not really understand the 'field effect' of the struggle between the managers of unease, imposing, despite their resistance, the vision of the professionals as the 'truth,' and their coercive means as 'solutions.'¹⁵⁵

¹⁵⁰ In Carl Schmitt, the state of exception is any kind of severe economic or political disturbance that requires the application of 'extraordinary measures'. Schmitt (1985).

¹⁵¹ Abrahamsen (2005).

¹⁵² Abrahamsen (2005), p. 61.

¹⁵³ Huysmans (1998b), p. 570.

¹⁵⁴ Huysmans (1998b), p. 589.

¹⁵⁵ Bigo (2002).

In other words, the Copenhagen School risks missing the routine practices of security professionals by focusing mostly on politicians and the media. Moreover, when examining climate change through securitisation, Aradau points out that not all issues are securitised or (de)securitised in the same way.¹⁵⁶ Some issues, as Wæver points out, may be placed under the realm of 'politics' while others fall under the realm of 'security', all of which depends on the legitimacy of the securitising actor.¹⁵⁷ This consequently leads us to turn to the roles of securitising actors and audiences.

2.2.3 *Securitising Actors and Audiences*

Buzan et al. observe that the role of the audience is as crucial as that of the securitising actor in permitting the actor 'to override the rules that would otherwise bind'.¹⁵⁸ Hence, as opposed to prioritising judgment of their actions, the Copenhagen School aims to understand the approach of the securitising actors.¹⁵⁹ Therefore, to study the process of securitisation, one also needs to determine who the securitising actors are and who their target audience is. Since the 'speech-act' in the Copenhagen School is placed at the centre of securitisation theory, it fails to consider that discourse and practice are interrelated in multiple ways.¹⁶⁰

Thierry Balzacq explains that securitising actors 'always strive to convince as broad an audience as possible because they need to maintain a social relationship with the targeted individual group'.¹⁶¹ Thus, the social construction of 'security' depends on the actor's ability to frame an issue in a way that would allow the audience to accept him/her as a securitising actor. He delineates the process by which an audience assents to the discourse of high-ranking officials due to their knowledge, power, and position in society:

[T]he audience is not fully informed, for instance, on the temporal proximity of threats, it usually relies on state officials' discourses because it thinks that the latter, who are the site of constitutional legitimacy, must have 'good reasons' to assert, in this case, that 'X' represents a threat to a state's survival.¹⁶²

It is easier, for example, for a high-ranking official working in a public institution than for other securitising actors to claim 'security' within the designated 'security field', since these officials hold influential positions.¹⁶³ Balzacq crafts the term 'linguistic competence' to underscore that certain issues are situated within certain domains of

¹⁵⁶ Aradau (2009), p. 195.

¹⁵⁷ Wæver (1995).

¹⁵⁸ Buzan et al. (1998), p. 26.

¹⁵⁹ Buzan et al. (1998), pp. 33–35.

¹⁶⁰ Balzacq (2005).

¹⁶¹ Balzacq (2005), p. 185.

¹⁶² Balzacq (2005), pp. 190–191.

¹⁶³ Ibid.

expertise that are able to use their knowledge and position in order to draw confidence and attention of the audience.¹⁶⁴ Securitisation is thus a 'strategic practice' that depends upon audience acceptance and allows a certain class of society to play the role of the securitising actor.¹⁶⁵ Thus, Balzacq identifies three basic characteristics of securitisation: '(i) that an effective securitisation is audience-centred; (ii) that securitisation is context-dependent; (iii) *that an effective securitisation is power-laden*'.¹⁶⁶ These assumptions assist in deconstructing the intersubjective process that is stressed in the Copenhagen School.

Another element in Balzacq's conceptualisation of securitising actors is context. Balzacq suggests that a 'speech-act' can change our understanding of some things, but it does not change the socially constructed reality. Eventually, securitising actors are expected to 'pay attention to the social, political, and historical contexts in which particular discourses of security (even those defined narrowly in terms of the designation and articulation of threat) become possible'.¹⁶⁷ It is in this sense that 'energy security' needs to be understood in a broader social, economic, and political context.¹⁶⁸

From a different perspective, Lene Hansen, in her comprehensive analysis on the Western examination of the Bosnian War, broadens the post-Cold War debate on 'security' and its conceptualisation. To do so, she uses Bosnia as a case to illustrate the application of discourse analysis to the study of foreign policy.¹⁶⁹ Grounding her research on historical and contextual arguments, she applies a poststructuralist discourse analysis to show how the 'Other' drives policymaking to construct identity.¹⁷⁰ What is particularly relevant in Hansen's analysis is how 'security' discourses construct identities in Self/Other terms in Western Europe. She thus emphasises the importance of knowledge and the authority of security actors. This latter point brings us to the process of securitisation and the importance of looking at when, why, and how certain actors articulate 'security'—as the articulation is only possible with power. Hansen also illustrates how 'security', as a construct, neglects historical, social, and political contexts (which are essential when searching for the process of securitisation) and focuses on the narrow 'security' concern of discursive threats.¹⁷¹ She points out how Western liberal states play a role in securitising certain objects based upon their normative standards of what should be prioritised as a referent object of 'security'.

¹⁶⁴ Balzacq (2005), p. 191.

¹⁶⁵ Balzacq (2005), p. 174.

¹⁶⁶ Balzacq (2005), p. 171 (added emphasis).

¹⁶⁷ McDonald (2008), p. 573.

¹⁶⁸ Balzacq (2005), p. 182.

¹⁶⁹ Hansen (2006).

¹⁷⁰ Hansen (2006), p. 37.

¹⁷¹ Hansen (2000).

Additionally, Paul Roe—informed by the work of Balzacq— suggests that to recognise the role of the audience and its relationship to securitising actors, the understanding of the securitisation process must be revised in theory.¹⁷² Buzan contends that the securitising actors must obtain 'permission [from its audience] to override the rules that would otherwise bind'.¹⁷³ Using the case of the UK and the US' decision to wage war against Iraq in 2003, Roe illuminates the intersubjective role of audience and actor and argues that securitisation proceeds by a two-stage process.¹⁷⁴ Audiences play a crucial role in legitimising the acts of the securitising actors; however, 'speaking security', Roe adds, 'is not the same as doing security'.¹⁷⁵ Only a handful of actors have the authority and legitimacy to *do* security as opposed to simply discussing 'security'. It is for this reason that—at least in the case of liberal democracies—the public (the audience) accepts elected officials to act on their behalf (as securitising actors).

2.2.4 *Securitisation Beyond Liberal Democracies*

Most critical security studies have limited the application of securitisation theory to Western states or liberal democracies. Mohammed Ayoob in his earlier work pointed out that to attain a non-Eurocentric definition of 'security' one should not confine oneself to defining 'security' 'in external or outward-directed terms—that is, external to the commonly accepted unit of analysis in international relations: the state. This definition and the process by which it was reached were both understandable and ethnocentric in character'.¹⁷⁶ In analysing how and why different concepts of 'security' exist, Ayoob used the context of the 'Third World' and contended that this Eurocentric understanding of 'security' can be traced historically and politically back to the 1648 Peace of Westphalia.

Ayoob further contends that there is a general difference between Western 'security' concerns versus those of the 'Third World'. He outlines three distinguishing features of developing states that structure their security priorities: (1) threats to their viability are more likely to arise internally than externally; (2) a lack of political autonomy and territorial integrity defines their histories of state formation; and (3) that their political structures are weaker than those of their Western counterparts.¹⁷⁷ Because political structures and social contexts differ, 'security' concerns may likewise differ. The shape they take depends upon the ruling regime of the state, and the social and political structures. In the context of European security, for example, Wæver has shown the differences between the East and West within the

¹⁷² Roe (2008).

¹⁷³ Buzan et al. (2008), p. 26.

¹⁷⁴ Roe (2008), p. 620.

¹⁷⁵ Roe 2008, p. 632.

¹⁷⁶ Ayoob (1983–84), p. 42.

¹⁷⁷ Ayoob (1983–84), pp. 42–44.

European context. He claims that during the Cold War, Eastern Europe broadened its view to include economic security, and 'regarded almost all societal interactions with the West as potentially dangerous and destabilising'.¹⁷⁸ Western Europe, in contrast, focused on a concept of 'security' centred on the military sector, and their political structures went through a process of political evolution ('Europeanisation of political structures'), while cultural identity was dictated at the national level.¹⁷⁹

As part of this debate, Claire Wilkinson applies the Copenhagen School approach to the case of Kyrgyzstan's so-called Tulip Revolution. Wilkinson refutes the linear¹⁸⁰ dynamic described by securitisation, 'starting with a securitising actor who then constructs a referent object and threat narrative to be accepted or rejected'.¹⁸¹ She contends that emergency measures can be adopted without a preceding demand from the audience to use them. Moreover, Wilkinson argues that although the most successful 'redefinition' of 'security' comes from the Copenhagen School, its broadening view has yet to escape the 'Westphalian straitjacket' due to its Eurocentric institutionalisation:

This latent Eurocentrism contributes to a portrayal of a situation that is by default cast in Western terms and that 'edits' the processes of securitisation into a linear and simplified version of events owing to the emphasis on outcome – that is, a successful securitisation – rather than on the processes involved.¹⁸²

She also explains how a European understanding of the world constrains critical security studies' analysis assuming a universal model. Fundamentally, she writes, these normative assumptions of 'state' and 'society' are 'understood in "Western" rather than local terms and contexts'.¹⁸³ Wilkinson concludes that, 'the presumption of Western democracy and primacy of the speech-act, mean that, particularly in a non-Western setting, security dynamics are edited and Westernised through the application of the theoretical framework'.¹⁸⁴

Bilgin goes further to identify certain factors that impede it from moving beyond Western Europe. She states that the universality of 'a state-centric ontology' plays a role in entrenching realist views when looking at concepts such as power, security, and the national interest.¹⁸⁵ Bilgin does not believe it impossible, however, to move beyond Eurocentric paradigms. She cites Turkey as an example. Pointing to Turkey's negotiations for accession to the EU, she shows how securitisation has achieved outside of Western Europe by drawing on 'the nexus between scholarship and politics' in Turkey.¹⁸⁶

¹⁷⁸ Wæver (1995), p. 59.

¹⁷⁹ Wæver (1995), pp. 68–69.

¹⁸⁰ This is important when looking at the case of Oman, an example of a non-Western and non-democratic state, where the construction of 'security' objects does not follow a linear path.

¹⁸¹ Wilkinson (2007), p. 20.

¹⁸² Wilkinson (2007), p. 8.

¹⁸³ Wilkinson (2007), p. 6.

¹⁸⁴ Wilkinson (2007), p. 21.

¹⁸⁵ Bilgin (2011), pp. 400–401.

¹⁸⁶ Bilgin (2011), p. 400.

The Copenhagen School claims Bilgin, 'have been at the forefront of cautioning against Eurocentrism in international relations'.¹⁸⁷ In a similar vein, Buzan and Hansen together have dedicated a chapter entitled 'Beyond the Western State' outlining a set of texts responding to the Eurocentric assumptions such as, for example, the tendency to interpret free speech as an intrinsic good and everyday laws and practices as having universal structures.¹⁸⁸ Learning from these examples, Buzan and Hansen argue that normative assumptions associated with securitisation ought likewise to include non-Western values. However, even with the inclusion of non-Western values, the application of the 'logic of securitisation' still appears limited to liberal democracies, since the process of decision-making, as Aradau puts it, 'follow strict procedural rules, i.e., democratic politics',¹⁸⁹ and, therefore, does not necessarily apply more widely beyond the West.¹⁹⁰

Critiquing the Copenhagen School Western-centric approach, Maja Greenwood and Ole Wæver state that a 'more valid criticism is that state and society are often less tightly knit, and central policy rarely permeates societies in the Third World'.¹⁹¹ Greenwood and Wæver further stipulate that the standard process of securitisation when applied to the Nile River of Egypt is inadequate since it assumes the explicit mention of a referent object of security by a nationally recognised authority, whereas Egypt never explicitly mentions it.¹⁹² While nothing could be more relevant to Egypt's overall security than sufficient access to water, the path to the proper analysis of this issue was obscured by the fact that in Egypt it was almost non-existent in the public discourse.¹⁹³ It was only since the year 2000 that the concept of 'water security' as 'a consequence of the international impact of the widened security concept [...] found its way into analyses of the Nile issue, where it often serves to legitimise Egypt's attempts to block solutions negotiated with the Nile basin states'.¹⁹⁴ Here, it is worth mentioning that because securitisation is not a linear process, an analysis focused only on the rules of speech-acts may have failed to highlight the significance of water in Egypt.

Another example utilising securitisation in a non-Western context, as well as analysing 'energy security', is the work of Odysseas Christou and Constantinos

¹⁸⁷ Bilgin (2011), p. 403.

¹⁸⁸ Buzan and Hansen (2009), pp. 200–214.

¹⁸⁹ Claudia Aradau (2004), p. 392.

¹⁹⁰ In the case of Oman, often there is no clear process for decision-making (as discussed in Chap. 5), and the 'logic of securitisation' is better understood through informal practices carried out by merchants, society, officials, expert (detailed in Chap. 4), which differs from regimes where liberal democratic rules are institutionalised.

¹⁹¹ Greenwood and Wæver (2013), p. 487. This study agrees with the authors' analysis and use of traditional and non-traditional security concepts, which allowed them to demonstrate the process of securitisation emphasised through action (and not simply through speech). In addition, this study assumes that such criticisms can be appropriated not only in the context of the 'Third World' but also universally.

¹⁹² Greenwood and Wæver (2013), p. 496.

¹⁹³ Ibid.

¹⁹⁴ Ibid.

Adamides where they look at the concomitant effects of oil and gas in the Middle East post-Bouazizi. They claim that ‘energy security’ is ‘an important variable that may be subject to securitisation’, and that energy securitisation ‘becomes part of political, economic and even military threat discourses, frequently having a multiplier impact on existing securitisation relations’.¹⁹⁵ For example, energy *insecurity* ‘can lead to the generation of threats against the state’s survival’; if this is the case, “‘energy security’” may be subsumed by the political and military sectors, where the referent object under threat is the state’ itself.¹⁹⁶ On one hand, Christou and Adamides point out that by keeping energy within the context of politics, relations between neighbouring states tend to be peaceful. On the other, if ‘political securitisation increases significantly—thereby surpassing the threshold level that allows for the creation or perpetuation of economic collaborations—then the role of energy in maintaining a desecuritized environment will decrease or become irrelevant’.¹⁹⁷

Debates about ‘speech-acts’ and ‘security practices’ incorporate sociological approaches to ‘security’ and are therefore essential additions to a comprehensive theoretical framework. Among the most valuable contribution of the literature surveyed above is its recognition of the roles played by both the securitising actors and the audience. The actor must effectively sway the audience to accept the process of securitisation. The audience, by contrast, fundamentally approve the ‘proposal’ made by the actor, thus placing the referent object into the domain of ‘security’. In other circumstances, however, the audience is not necessarily accounted for, there is an external context other than speech (i.e. power and authority), and the power of the ‘security’ utterance derives from the social position of the speaker—a discursive emphasis. Since the correlation between the actor and the audience is crucial, Balzacq contends, it is essential to look at what certain utterances do, and what do these utterances mean within their respective contexts.¹⁹⁸ Nevertheless, while the Copenhagen School literature moves towards and even calls for an alternative to a Western conceptualisation of securitisation, its analysis is still confined to the Western notion of a ‘nation-state’.¹⁹⁹ In an attempt to address these limitations, the next section will consider the main theoretical advances of the Paris School.

¹⁹⁵ Christou and Adamides (2013), p. 507.

¹⁹⁶ Christou and Adamides (2013), p. 514.

¹⁹⁷ Christou and Adamides (2013), p. 517.

¹⁹⁸ Balzacq (2005), p. 176. The contexts include ‘informal rules’, which is useful since most dynamics in the Omani context are based on informal rules, and actions are not taken in accordance with formal rules within an establishment.

¹⁹⁹ Mitchell suggests that the ‘ideological and cultural construct’ of the state should be taken ‘seriously’ since the ‘state’ is reproduced continuously through daily social practices. Due to this, a misunderstanding of the state–society relationship and its limits exists. Thus, practice and power relations are at the heart of his understanding of the state. On this basis, Mitchell criticises the political literature on the state for not examining the internal relations of society that shape the processes of the state. Timothy Mitchell (1991).

2.2.5 *The Paris School*

Whereas the Copenhagen School emphasises discursive forms of 'speech-acts' and the discursive actions of the agents perform make them, the Paris School conceives the process of (in)securitisation as 'a mixture of discursive and non-discursive practices, which operates at different scales'.²⁰⁰ Thus, the Paris School calls for an approach that encompasses *both* practices and discourses. As Bigo articulates, 'security' should be analysed as 'a process of (in)securitisation by which some practices are subsumed by actors under a claim that they provide security to generate acceptance for their activities; even if it implies use of (physical and symbolic) violence'.²⁰¹ As exhibited by Bigo, a primary factor that distinguishes the Paris School from its Copenhagen counterpart is its reference to this process as one not of 'securitisation' but rather '(in)securitisation'. Because the episteme of 'security' ties into the uncertainty of human activities and action, the process to attain maximum 'security' actually brings forth insecurity.²⁰² This sociological approach further helps one to understand how high-ranking officials and authorities have developed an 'ethos of shared knowledge from which audiences might be excluded'.²⁰³

In his work on migration, Bigo contends that in analysing 'security' through the merging of internal and external securities has thus 'created the condition of possibility whereby the migrant is, par excellence, the object of securitisation'.²⁰⁴ According to Bigo, we need to analyse practices and discourse within a 'security field', whereby security professionals struggle over power and knowledge. What follows is a political fear of the symbolic loss of territory, which results from power positions.²⁰⁵ When examining the 'field',²⁰⁶ consideration is therefore placed on two kinds of professionals: political professionals and professional managers. For Bigo, these professionals are the only ones that have the authority to exercise power: 'Amateurs need to prove their claims, and professionals can evoke theirs'.²⁰⁷ Importantly, the 'security field' is not fixed. As Shahar Hameiri and Lee Jones argue, using Indonesia as a case study, the field converges with other actors that come and go from different fields.²⁰⁸ Therefore, 'security' is more robust than in other paradigms,

²⁰⁰ Bigo (2008).

²⁰¹ Bigo (2008), p. 125.

²⁰² Bigo (2008), p. 126.

²⁰³ Bigo (2002), p. 74.

²⁰⁴ Bigo (2002), p. 77.

²⁰⁵ Bigo (2002), p. 74.

²⁰⁶ The term 'field' is defined as 'a distinct social space consisting of interdependent *and* differentiated positions'. In other words, a field is a 'network or a configuration of objective relations between positions'. C.A.S.E. Collective (2006). 'Critical Approaches to Security in Europe: A Networked Manifesto.' Security Dialogue, p. 458.

²⁰⁷ Bigo (2002), p. 74.

²⁰⁸ Hameiri and Jones (2012), p. 465.

encompassing a full and shifting range of knowledge and expertise from internal and external actors which comprise the *security continuum*.²⁰⁹

Another hallmark of the Paris School is the attention to the convergence of internal and external securities. This is reflected, for example, in the assumption that securitisation is a result of a *security continuum*, a process in which various actors (and policies) converge.²¹⁰ For Bigo, the *security continuum* blurs the demarcation of the internal and external and creates a move 'where every social change is seen as a new threat'.²¹¹ This insecurity connects individual fears with the fear of collective survival. As Bigo states:

The boundaries of the security tasks are not fixed through a clear belief of what security is (and what it is not). They don't know where the inside ends and where the outside begins. They don't know where security is beginning and where insecurity is finishing. As in a Möbius ribbon, the internal and the external are intimately connected.²¹²

The 'Möbius ribbon' encourages one to see that internal security extends beyond the boundaries of a specific 'security field'. In his work on 'security' and migration, for example, Bigo shows that insofar as the roles of the police and the military are interconnected, they become blurred 'transversal fields'.²¹³ In this context, the analysis of 'transversal'²¹⁴ security fields of power allow this study to examine the social transformations of *power relations* within the global and national levels. The Paris School, Bigo contends, has 'explored different societal practice fields (from inter-state power relations to migration, social exclusion and freedom of movement)'.²¹⁵ This study therefore reveals the nexus of practices and discourses carried through internal and external actors and their *power relations*, which will be discussed in the subsequent two chapters.

Alternatively, Balzacq proposes a sociological approach around the notion of the 'pragmatic act',²¹⁶ which focuses on contextualisation to reveal the concurrence between the actor and audience. In authoritarian states, an authoritarian figure demands recognition of their discourse; thus, 'security' becomes perlocutionary and

²⁰⁹ It is essential to point out that the *security continuum* has been applied to understand the transformation of internal and external securities in Europe, but not to 'energy security'.

²¹⁰ Bigo (2002), pp. 63–92.

²¹¹ Bigo (2001), p. 113.

²¹² Ibid.

²¹³ Bigo (2006), p. 29.

²¹⁴ These sociological works in critical security studies identify 'a transversal field of processes of (in)securitization, whereby a certain number of professionals from public institutions with domains internal to the nation—such as police—or external to the nation—such as the military—occupy the dominant positions'. Bigo (2006), p. 10.

²¹⁵ Bigo (2008), p. 117.

²¹⁶ The 'pragmatic act' 'deals adequately with the complexity of actual security circumstances without fitting within the normatively ordered interactions of the speech-act framework (the question of the context)'. Balzacq (2005), p. 174.

enters the intersubjective process.²¹⁷ Therefore, a sociological approach to securitisation, which will be applied to this study, will integrate not only the audience, but also the context as Balzacq claims.²¹⁸ Furthermore, by using a 'critical theoretical tool of immanent critique' Christopher Browning and Matt McDonald contend that the future of critical security studies,

will ultimately be determined by the extent to which scholars recognise the limits and tensions of existing approaches (especially 'Schools') and take up the challenge of moving beyond first principles or universalised assumptions about security to engage in nuanced, reflexive and context-specific analyses of the politics and ethics of security.²¹⁹

They suggest that a more nuanced understanding of security dynamics is necessary, depending on various contexts. This also suggests moving away from so-called universal and Eurocentric assumptions of 'security'. Unlike the Copenhagen School, this study pertinently focuses on the practices and contexts of 'security' and examines how 'security' is governed.

To summarise, this chapter began with a brief overview of the theoretical findings of the Copenhagen School and their analysis of securitisation as an intersubjective process, which involves securitising actors, audiences, and speech-acts. It then showed how the Paris School proposed an alternative sociological approach. As Balzacq et al. argue, the Copenhagen School 'neglects the study of the conditions of possibility for the performativity of these narratives and the everyday practices of societal agents'.²²⁰ The Paris School, by contrast, analyses the practices of different social, political, and economic actors to understand how 'security' is conceived not through exceptional speech-acts, but through the creation of a *security continuum* between different phenomena in transversal fields.

The merging of internal and external security issues—of what Bigo calls the *security continuum*—will allow this study to gain deeper insight into how understandings of 'energy security' have been constructed (Chap. 7). By attending to the social, political, and economic realms, it will fill the analytical gaps of the Copenhagen School, which neglects to address how securitisation theory performs beyond the 'speech-act', through the Paris School. Moreover, it will seek to look beyond the confines of the 'state' to identify other actors and processes whose dynamics influence conceptions of 'security'. When analysing *how* and *why* issues like energy are governed as non-traditional 'security', it must identify 'the conflicts between the different contending coalitions that organise around them, both within and beyond the state, and drive or resist processes of state transformation'.²²¹ Here the dynamics of

²¹⁷ The three stages of a security problem are defined by Balzacq (2005), p. 175: '(i) locutionary—the utterance of an expression that contains a given sense and reference; (ii) illocutionary—the act performed in articulating a locution. [...] and (iii) perlocutionary, which is the 'consequential effects' or 'sequels' that are aimed at evoking the feelings, beliefs, thoughts or actions of the target audience'.

²¹⁸ Balzacq (2005), p. 179.

²¹⁹ Browning and McDonald (2013), p. 248.

²²⁰ Balzacq et al. (2010).

²²¹ Hameiri and Jones (2013), p. 467.

governance and state characterised in terms of conflicts between contending regimes, or through political struggles (as argued by Bigo),²²² denotes different forces that extend beyond the state.

Most particularly, in an effort to avoid Eurocentric assumptions, the next section will seek additional alternatives that seem suited to Oman. Specifically, the work of Timothy Mitchell and Aihwa Ong will establish the basis from which one can examine how the question of energy attaches itself to varied discourses and practices throughout Oman's historical development.

2.3 Approaches to Analysing Postcolonial States

Building upon a sociological approach within critical security studies, discussed above, this section develops the analytical framework of this study to (1) tackle the problem of Eurocentrism and latent Orientalism when examining how 'energy security' was formed in Oman and (2) provide a wide-ranging perspective inclusive of social, political, and economic influences, as well as the global and local discourses and practices. To enhance the perspective of the sociological approach, this framework will draw on concepts used to analyse postcolonial states, additionally, it will shift the primary focus towards the practices and contexts of 'security', along with the question of how 'energy security' is formed.

2.3.1 *Analysing Postcolonial States*

Through Mitchell's work, this research transcends the Eurocentric assumptions prevalent in critical security studies. Therefore, by supplementing analytical concepts used to analyse postcolonial states, Mitchell's concepts will show how complex the formation of energy practices and discourses are. Unlike Western assumptions, they are not confined within a binary order and predetermined boundaries of state and society. In *Colonising Egypt*, Mitchell explores the forms of reason, power, and knowledge that define the experience of modernity in Egypt, developing a new approach when interpreting the 'modern' Middle East history, while also demonstrating that the very notion of 'modernity' is an artefact of Orientalism.²²³ He explains how, following the emergence of modern modes of government in the colonial period, the characterisation of a 'modern' institution in Egypt contributed to the construction of a 'world' with complex social practices confined within 'a binary order: on the one hand, individuals and their activities, on the other, an inert structure that somehow stands apart from individuals, pre-exists them, and contains and gives

²²² Bigo (2002), p. 73.

²²³ Mitchell (1988).

a framework to their lives'.²²⁴ This phenomenon is what Mitchell calls the 'structural effect'²²⁵; it is a process whereby individual practices create 'an appearance of order, an appearance of structure as some sort of separate, non-material realm'.²²⁶ This structure stems from the construction of a model of the world.

Moreover, Mitchell's work breaks through the Orientalist conventions that critical security studies have of the Middle East. In *Limits of the State*, he begins with the assumption that the boundary between state and society is incoherent as the state—an 'elusive concept'—needs to be understood and 'examined from a historical perspective' *inclusive of society and its practices*.²²⁷ While the Copenhagen School maintains a form of state and society binarism prevalent in European analyses of the state, Mitchell's critique alternatively reveals that there are no predetermined boundaries of state and society. Rather than viewing the state as imposing power or agency, he sees 'society' as a wider process that moves beyond the state (and can include the state).²²⁸ His approach, like that of the Paris School, does not look at the state as a unified form. Nevertheless, he demonstrates how the Eurocentric spatial organisation has allowed for the perpetuation of the idea that the 'modern' state is a distinctive entity. What characterises a 'modern state',²²⁹ for example, is the establishment of 'a territorial boundary and exercising absolute control over movement across it [...]'.²³⁰

Furthermore, tracing the effects of such delineation, Mitchell points out how power relations organised within an institution have come to constitute the 'modern individual', 'constructed as an isolated, disciplined, receptive, and industrious political subject'.²³¹ In this instance, Western narratives and views, with their limiting assumptions of 'modernity' and 'development', are not sufficient to fully understand the complex historical transformation of postcolonial states. These limitations are developed through the practices of decision-makers and experts; these experts consequently see the world as represented with inherent meanings. In this respect, transversal connections emerge from varied external and internal actors, thus complicating the relationship of energy and 'security' even further.

²²⁴ Mitchell (1988), p. xxi.

²²⁵ Mitchell (1988), p. xiii.

²²⁶ Mitchell (1988), p. 94.

²²⁷ Mitchell (1991), p. 78.

²²⁸ Mitchell (1991), pp. 94–95.

²²⁹ These 'modern state' features are demonstrated in the state-building projects that took place in Oman during the reign of Said bin Taimur (Chap. 3) and post-1970 when Qaboos took power (Chap. 4).

²³⁰ Mitchell (1991), p. 94.

²³¹ Mitchell (1988), p. xi.

2.3.2 *Network of Experts*

In addition to the notion of 'the modern state', Mitchell questions the status of concepts such as 'experts' and even 'the economy'. In *Rule of Experts*, Mitchell provides a critique of technology-centred development, the role of the (foreign) experts in knowledge production and their entanglement in regimes of power.²³² This transfer of knowledge comes in the form of global capitalism and technology (Chaps. 5 and 6). It resonates with the Paris School where, as Bigo argues, the analysis of 'security' (internally and externally) creates the condition within the *security continuum* to achieve routine practices of professionals.²³³ These security professionals have power that comes from a network 'of objective relations between positions'.²³⁴ However, Mitchell does not use the concept of the field as his analysis of the 'economy' is more heterogeneous than the Paris School.

Following this, Mitchell illustrates the process whereby the construction and production of the 'economy' in the twentieth century allowed for the flow of international actors to pose as 'experts' in the field of economic knowledge and government. Mitchell thus explains how the emergence of the 'economy' became 'the most important set of practices for organising what appears as the separation of the real world from its representations of things from their values, of actions from intentions, of an object world from the realm of ideas'.²³⁵ The 'economy', which was taken to comprise a certain process of exchange, 'provided a mode of seeing and a way of organising the world' that did not formerly exist.²³⁶ Mitchell argues that such construction, binarism, and so-called universality was made coherent and advocated by the *rule of experts*. In social science, especially, appeal to 'experts' served to propagate this constructed idea of the 'economy' and, as we shall see, is not without implications for discourses on energy and security. In the same way that Mitchell's concept of the 'economy' encompasses a more expansive definition beyond the merely traditional notions of the state and the market, security, in this sense, should be seen as equally multidimensional—as something more than just what the state decrees, but, rather, is linked to a wide range of activities carried out by internal and external 'experts'. According to Mitchell, among its longest lasting impacts, the *rule of experts* transported and embedded 'neoliberal' ideas within the state.

²³² Mitchell (2002).

²³³ Bigo (2002), p. 77.

²³⁴ C.A.S.E. Collective (2006), p. 458.

²³⁵ Mitchell (2002), p. 6.

²³⁶ Mitchell (2002), p. 272.

2.3.3 *Neoliberalism*

‘Neoliberalism’ is a contested term in its meaning and broad application in different disciplinary settings. James Ferguson, Taylor Boas, and Jordan Gans-Morse all contend that contemporary scholars who refer to neoliberalism frequently fail to define the term.²³⁷ Seeking to identify the common denominator among its many analytical and political uses, Ferguson describes how neoliberalism, in ‘the strictest sense [...] refers to a macroeconomic doctrine’.²³⁸ The key elements of neoliberalism include changing the market structure towards free market, retrenchment of the state, privatisation of public goods, and promotion of free trade. Its very name suggests a revival of liberalism,²³⁹ a notion that does not see a role for the welfare state and the government beyond that of a custodian nature. The liberal view of ‘economic liberalism’—that is, individuals participating in free and self-regulating markets—is embedded within ‘neoliberalism’. The derivative term, however, was first coined by economists in the Freiburg School of Germany, who simultaneously stepped *away* from its parent by distinguishing neoliberalism as ‘a philosophy that was explicitly *moderate* in comparison to classical liberalism, both in its rejection of *laissez-faire* policies and its emphasis on humanistic values’.²⁴⁰ Later, these ideas were elaborated by Milton Friedman and Friedrich Hayek from the Chicago school, where they wanted to improve upon the postulates of classical liberalism.²⁴¹

Recent literature on neoliberalism has analysed the shifts in techniques and practices associated with the governance of states of different forms, most particularly, the welfare state and the free market. What characteristically distinguishes these two models is a transfer of responsibility for the provision of social services from the state to the private sector.²⁴² This shift towards neoliberalism allows Western economic experts to deploy a universalising economic model that fails to take into consideration the variability of social formations in both Western and non-Western contexts. This sub-section will show *how* neoliberalism ‘travels’ beyond the West.

According to Ferguson and Akhil Gupta, ‘the logic of the market’ extends to all state operations to function as private enterprises thus designating a ‘new modality of government’ that creates ways in which governmental results are brought about through the decentralisation of risk onto the ‘enterprise’ or the entrepreneur.²⁴³ This conceptualisation of ‘neoliberalism’, Ferguson and Gupta argue, while instructive

²³⁷ Boas and Gans-Morse (2009), pp. 142–143, Ferguson (2009).

²³⁸ Ferguson (2009), p. 170.

²³⁹ The tradition of liberalism has three main divisions: (1) classical liberals (that believe in the *minimal* interference of state) like Friedrich Hayek and Adam Smith, (2) modern liberals (the state plays a more active role in the economy) like John Stuart Mill and John Dewey, and (3) libertarians (that concern themselves with the notion of ‘liberty’ for economic and commercial activities, but de-emphasises the values of democracy) like Robert Nozick.

²⁴⁰ Boas and Gans-Morse (2009), p.139 (original emphasis).

²⁴¹ Boas and Gans-Morse (2009), pp. 150–151.

²⁴² Barry et al. (1996), pp. 11–12; referenced in Ferguson and Gupta (2002).

²⁴³ Ferguson and Gupta (2002), p. 989.

and evocative, remains Eurocentric as it is 'closely tied to the idea of the territorially sovereign nation-state as the domain for the operation of government'.²⁴⁴

Alternatively, Aihwa Ong proposes two concepts of 'neoliberalism'. The first is Neoliberalism with a capital 'N', which compares 'units of equivalents', collapses 'socio-political values into a single measure or structure', and 'seldom engages with the dynamism it encounters in particular environments'.²⁴⁵ The second formulation 'neoliberalism' with a small 'n' which is 'a technology of governing 'free subjects' that co-exists with other political rationalities'.²⁴⁶ This strategy of governing, which is not uniformly applied to all groups outside of the Western context, allows 'neoliberalism' to take different forms and to respond to contingencies, while also holding extreme vitality and mobility.²⁴⁷ Describing it as '*a migratory technology* of governing that interacts with situated sets of elements and circumstances',²⁴⁸ Ong suggests that neoliberalism is decentralised and amorphous insofar as its concept has moved, 'migrated', beyond Western liberal countries, where 'global assemblages shape the interaction of global forms of neoliberalism with particular political regimes'.²⁴⁹ This understanding of 'neoliberalism' brings the local (internal) and the global (external) logics into the same field; like the *security continuum*, it responds 'to the problems of governing by making calculative choices about intervention and risk in an unfolding situation'.²⁵⁰

In congruence with Mitchell, who examines the conditions in which certain economic 'calculations' emerge to organise political power,²⁵¹ Ong asserts that such 'calculations' are less concerned with norms of transparency and accountability, and more interested in creating exceptions²⁵² within a given governing system, in order to accord special attention to a group of actors with neoliberal agendas. Ong's framework will help with analysing the neoliberalisation process of energy discourses and practices in Oman after the Cold War when international experts called for diversification, social entrepreneurship, and the establishment of special economic zones (discussed in Chap. 5). Although 'neoliberalism' remains a contested term, what is essential in this study is to showcase *how*, after the Cold War, neoliberal ideas were utilised and adopted in Oman to push forward particular agendas. The assemblage of the global and local allowed for selective utilisation of 'neoliberalism' by some, and its coexistence, rather than the replacement, of local politics and culture (Chaps. 5 and 6).²⁵³

²⁴⁴ Ferguson and Gupta (2002), p. 990.

²⁴⁵ Ong (2007), p. 4.

²⁴⁶ Ibid.

²⁴⁷ Ong (2007), p. 3.

²⁴⁸ Ong (2007), p. 5 (added emphasis).

²⁴⁹ Ong (2007), p. 5.

²⁵⁰ Ong (2007), pp. 4–5.

²⁵¹ Mitchell (2009).

²⁵² Fieldwork in South India exemplifies what Ong calls 'neoliberalism as exception', refer to Cross (2010).

²⁵³ Ong (2007), p. 7.

Accordingly, ‘neoliberalism’ has been used as ‘a set of political tools’²⁵⁴ aimed to privilege certain outcomes for neoliberal advocates—the *network of experts*—at the expense of others.²⁵⁵ Through the process of privatisation, Ferguson adds, neoliberal mechanisms of governing decouple energy governance from the state.²⁵⁶ But is a strict dichotomy necessary? The question is important when analysing Oman. As we shall see, Oman has managed to incorporate elements typically considered ‘neoliberal’ without parting from state involvement. To the contrary, especially since the sharp economic downturn of the 1990s, which initiated discussions concerning economic diversification and privatisation,²⁵⁷ Oman has developed ‘new market-based techniques of government within the terrain of the state itself’.²⁵⁸ The division here between the private and public sectors is blurred (see Chap. 6).

How, then, might one conceive of ‘neoliberalism’ in Oman? To answer this question, it will be necessary to look at the full assemblage of logics and processes that have influenced the country’s economic, social, and political policies since the Cold War (see Chap. 5), and especially post-Bouazizi (see Chap. 6), when neoliberal discourses enter into the realm of social development thus producing different politics. The *materiality* of energy (its physical properties), therefore, is an essential concept to utilise when tracing how energy is securitised as a social concern in Oman.

2.3.4 *Materiality*

In *Carbon Democracy*, Mitchell looks at how *materiality* of coal and oil and the technical conditions of the use of fossil fuels can simultaneously set limits and create possibilities for democratic action. He observes that both the possibilities and the limits of political agency were historically shaped by the ‘different ways of organising the flow and concentration of energy’ as well as the ‘arrangements of people, finance, expertise and violence that were assembled in relation to the distribution and control of energy’.²⁵⁹ In this context, the *materiality* of coal and oil led to different kinds of politics. As Mitchell contends, the coal industry was a constitutive force for democratic movements in the West since its industry required a large number of labourers to extract the coal, transport it, and operate mines underground. The industry thus allowed coal workers to collaborate, strike against the elites, and demand rights, since

²⁵⁴ Mitchell (2009), p. 387.

²⁵⁵ Mitchell (2009), p. 389.

²⁵⁶ Ferguson (2009), p. 168.

²⁵⁷ Proposal was made to reform the electricity sector by removing the state’s role in production and distribution. However, this change was not implemented and no dichotomy was drawn between the state and market. If anything; the two continued to complement each other and to share entwined interests. See Al-Yousef (1998).

²⁵⁸ Ferguson (2009), p. 172.

²⁵⁹ Mitchell (2014).

the political power of the industry was translated to the workers.²⁶⁰ Political power however shifted with the 'fluid and transportable properties' of oil that played an important part in the making of twentieth-century democratic politics, and allowed for the construction of different kinds of knowledge and networks to follow.²⁶¹ Therefore, the material properties of coal, as opposed to oil, created greater opportunities for the growth and rise of democratic politics.

For this study, *materiality* will provide a way to capture and express how the physicality of the energy industry, given the complex nature of the substance of oil and gas, produces particular forms of social relations in Oman. Unlike coal, the flexible properties of oil and gas (that is, their ability to move through pipelines, and the technologically advanced mechanisms used for their extraction) required a limited number of labourers to operate its industry. The production of oil, for example, Roland Dannreuther points out, 'is generally much more capital- than labour intensive'.²⁶² This has important implications for social relations, as we will see in the analysis of the oil and gas industry post-Bouazizi in Oman. Chapter 6 will show how the new discourses about corporate social responsibility (CSR) emerging post-Bouazizi need to be understood in relation to both the *materiality* of energy and social claims about unemployment. These new discourses and practices have become dominated by international energy companies pushing for specific social investment programmes to deal with social development concerns. The outcome of these social concerns, therefore, reframed the international energy companies' CSR targets in the country. An analysis of the relationship between multinational energy companies, the role of experts, as well as the material properties of energy, will reveal the complexity of their connection. While the *materiality* of energy includes many other socio-technical features of the oil industry (i.e. its physical properties and infrastructure),²⁶³ this study will focus on the organisation of labour drawing on Mitchell's analysis.

Mitchell's approach, unlike the 'rentier state theory',²⁶⁴ helps understand how energy is integrated within the state's form and structure, thus creating new interrelationships such as the *network of experts* and other local and global actors within the broader, and heavily politicised, *security continuum* (Chap. 4). Drawing on Mitchell's contributions, it will be possible to evaluate both energy's connections to Oman's 'modern' development, together with the opportunities and constraints that have come with social development (Chaps. 3, 4, and 6). The economic wealth energy companies gained paved the way for energy companies to sponsor social and cultural programmes, ultimately shifting social, economic, and political patterns (Chap. 6). In the case of Oman, oil was concomitant to its establishment as a modern state, and it continues to play a major role in all its processes. The participation of oil and gas companies in development projects within their areas of operation and beyond is

²⁶⁰ Mitchell (2014), pp. 43–65.

²⁶¹ Mitchell (2014), p. 44.

²⁶² Dannreuther (2017), p. 45.

²⁶³ Mitchell (2014), p. 237.

²⁶⁴ Discussed in detail in the next chapter.

what this research focuses on. The historical political influence of energy companies, as evident with Petroleum Development of Oman (PDO), Shell, and later BP Oman (Chaps. 3 and 6), assisted in their role of cultural and social production.

Ultimately, the concept of *materiality* enables my analysis to advance beyond a speech-centred approach (dominant in the Copenhagen School) towards a more comprehensive perspective on ‘energy security’. By encompassing *materiality* into the framework of critical security studies, it shows how the concept of ‘energy security’ moves beyond the problems of a language-based focus typified by securitisation. It also supplements the Paris School approach and its focus on security professionals by attending to the *materiality* of energy and its role in constituting relations between experts, and between experts, citizens, and other social actors.

2.3.5 Approach of this Study

The discussions above survey existing approaches to ‘security’ in order to evaluate their applicability in an Omani context. In doing so, this study considers the notion that ‘security’ is a socially constructed term that the process of securitisation plays a role in empowering some actors at the expense of others, and that varied discourses and practices assist in defining ‘energy security’ in Oman. The research draws on Mitchell’s postcolonial approach to analysing a non-Western state and examines the structure of power and the role of actors (locally and globally) that formulated plural energy discourse and practices in the country (Chap. 3). Through an analysis of the *power relations*—as brought forth with the Paris School—it traces the practices and discourses of several actors (including experts) within the *security continuum* in Oman. Here, Bigo’s *security continuum* assists the study in understanding the role of the converging internal and external *networks of experts* played in creating certain representations of ‘energy security’.

In critical security studies, the analyses of *power relations* include the history of individuals within professions. This is supplemented with Mitchell’s postcolonial approach that includes an analysis of the historical processes of state formation, governance, and expertise. This historical process complements the historical convergence of actors discussed in the Paris School and allows this study to trace the way in which ‘energy security’ is thus formulated. In this context, Chaps. 3 and 4 question to what extent the establishment of the modern state of Oman contributed to a security-focused understanding of energy. This study describes how the need to explore for oil as well as exploit and control it, collectively contributed to the structuring of energy discourse and practices in the country. Oman is used as a case study to examine the complex moments where energy became entangled to social, economic, security, and political concerns. Therefore, tracing the process of energy securitisation and approaching this study through historicising *power relations* reveal the formation of the energy complex in Oman and how it was represented by experts as a centre of hydrocarbon production to be exploited.

Embedded in a sociological approach, this research shows how *neoliberalism* reformulated the Sultanate social, economic, and political structures (Chap. 5). This was done through a closer collaboration between state and market interest. The concept of neoliberalism, as conceptualised by Ong, 'migrated' beyond Western liberal countries, where assemblages shaped the way in which neoliberalism interacted within Oman's political regime.²⁶⁵ Utilising this understanding of neoliberalism brings the local (internal) and the global (external) logics into the *security continuum* for energy. The resulting 'energy security' discourses and practices reinforced the reproduction of neoliberal principles (covered in Chap. 5) as well as diversification of energy resources and fiscal balancing (Chap. 7). Looking at these processes is necessary to understand the role of actors as well as the *network of experts* in managing energy in the country. The neoliberal processes that took place in the mid-1990s (Chap. 5) allowed the Sultanate to take a step back and outsource the governmental functions to energy companies (see Chap. 6), a form of 'transnational governmentality'—following Ferguson and Gupta.²⁶⁶ What one sees post-Bouazizi is the role of energy corporations handling social development through their social investment programmes.

In the same way, the energy companies' entanglement with state-owned enterprises also changed the social fabric of the country (see Chaps. 3 and 6). Therefore, this study includes the concept of *materiality* to show how energy (oil and gas) inhibits and enables different ways of thinking about energy. Ferguson in another study shows how oil intersects with *neoliberalism*. While oil and gas extraction boomed in several countries, what one sees in his analysis of the African continent is how energy infrastructures in 'secured enclaves, often [...] have] little or no economic benefit to the wider society'.²⁶⁷ Although this may be common in the African continent, the political, economic, and social landscape of Oman differs from this logic. In the case of Oman, this is reflected with PDO, an oil company enmeshed in the state structure where its influence can be traced historically (see Chap. 3) and is today leading the role in social development activities for the country (see Chap. 6). Here, energy manifests itself and produces certain kinds of citizens; this is evident in the Sultanate's push towards neoliberalisation in the latter twentieth century, and then post-Bouazizi, where the proliferation of discourses calling for the need to create an entrepreneurial culture. This process, therefore, allowed the energy companies to develop social investment programmes to train Omanis to be entrepreneurs (Chap. 6). In addition, the advancements of technology and know-how also allowed energy companies like BP Oman to play a social role through funding and partnering with small and medium enterprises in their areas of operation.

²⁶⁵ Ong (2007), p. 6.

²⁶⁶ Ferguson and Gupta (2002), p. 982.

²⁶⁷ Ferguson (2005), p. 378.

2.3.6 *Contribution to Methodology*

This research therefore explores the varied energy discourses and practices in the Sultanate since the 1920s. By following a sociological approach within critical security studies, it adds a new angle to the literature of ‘energy security’, Middle East studies, and critical security studies. The research traces how energy has been securitised in Oman since the early twentieth century to the present time. Its aims to understand:

1. How ‘energy security’ has been transformed since the 1920s in Oman?
2. The role that the convergence of internal and external actors and policies played in formulating varied perspectives for ‘energy security’?
3. How actors have represented ‘energy security’ and what practices of governance have been set in place?

To examine the above, analyses of energy discourses and practices, and the construction that followed, is conducted. In addition, the study provides a historical analysis of how the governance of Oman has included and excluded energy by looking at the role of various actors within the *security continuum* and questioning *how* certain practices, policies, and discourses from the convergence of actors changed the way ‘energy security’ is understood.

Informed by a sociological approach and integrating it with the other analytical concepts used in postcolonial approaches, this study also demonstrates how the analysis of ‘energy security’ in countries like Oman differs from that of Western democratic societies. It examines the decision-making processes and the role of the *rule of experts* played in developing heterogeneous understandings for energy. Following Mitchell, this study does not make an artificial distinction between the state and society. The process of state formation in Oman, I argue, was dependent on several factors that included: a complex assemblage of actors, a transnational network of experts, and the formation of energy discourses and practices since the 1920s. However, the wealth from oil played a central role in its establishment, and in the consolidation of local and global actors (Chap. 3). A sociological approach towards ‘energy security’ provides this research with the tools necessary to argue that energy is securitised in Oman essentially because of its dynamic associations.

2.3.7 *‘Energy Security’ and the Omani Context*

This study traces the discourses and practices of ‘energy security’ and demonstrates how it changes according to time. Given the sociological approach taken, ‘energy security’ refers to historically contingent articulations of ‘energy’ and ‘security’ in the Omani context. These are mediated by social, economic, and political concerns. Both energy and security take different forms in these articulations. As the study will show, in the case of Oman, energy starts by getting attached to questions of civil unrest

and the role of the military, it is not simply linked to development practices. This makes 'energy security' fluid and changeable as both discourse and practice. Through the examination of critical junctures in Omani history, the study untangles how the connections between energy and security were formed and constructed starting from the 1920s. Precisely due to this historical contingency of how energy and security are articulated, this study approaches questions of energy security through the prism of critical security studies. Even when not discursively articulated as such, practices of security ranging from pacification of civil unrest to social order are central to understanding the role energy discourses and practices in Oman.

Simply put, therefore, 'energy security' is context dependent and its formation is about how security reframes social, political, and economic concerns. Thus, the role of energy in Oman cannot be understood only in relation to issues of development, welfare, and state-building, which is usually a major component of the rentier state theory (discussed in detail in Chap. 3). What this study will show is how 'security' (with its varied discourses and practice) and its link to energy shifts and changes throughout the Sultanate's history (starting from 1920 to the present time) with the aim to move the understanding of 'energy security' beyond the dominant perspectives prevalent in the realist and liberal approaches (discussed earlier in this chapter).

According to this sociological approach to the discourses and practices of 'energy security' in Oman, then, we can analyse its heterogeneity both at certain historical moments and across time. For instance, the absence of energy resources has been discursively constructed to constitute a 'security' threat in its own right. This understanding of 'energy security' shows how some issues connected to energy were historically shaped and rooted within a traditional security studies perspective. Energy and security were connected in diverse ways by different actors: the British and their imperial strategy, the Sultan, tribal actors in Oman, and international actors as well (as discussed in Chaps. 3 and 4). Another articulation of 'energy security' is developed through an analysis of the rise and spread of neoliberalism and its effects on energy discourses and practices in Oman. As shown in Chap. 5, neoliberal ideas of economic liberalism and practices of privatisation rearticulate 'energy' and 'security' in complex ways.

Unlike the realists and liberals who would agree that revenue from hydrocarbons transforms into a vital source for security, the analytical framework developed above, as well as the use of the case of Oman, provides a more comprehensive view that includes not only economic and political analysis, but a strong social dimension as well. The varied combination of security, political, economic, and social concerns shape the complex web of energy discourses and practices in Oman. Moreover, the consideration of foreign and domestic experts, and of the international network of technicians and technocrats, shows the multiplicity of the connections, discourses, and practices in Oman concerning energy (Chap. 4). It also reveals how different security concerns become connected to energy through these *networks of experts* who also blur the boundaries between state, market, and society.

The context dependent and historically contingent conceptualisation of 'energy security' allows this study to move beyond the embedded Eurocentric assumptions of how the state and society are divided. A broader analysis is thus necessary to

move beyond the prisms developed by realist and liberal approaches, as well as Eurocentric analyses. In addition, considerations of the material properties of energy are necessary when analysing how certain understandings of ‘energy security’ have emerged (Chap. 6). For example, Oman’s oil fields are mature, and the extraction of its oil and gas is geologically challenging; therefore, the material properties of oil and gas in Oman are entwined with new discourses and practices of ‘energy security’.

An examination of ‘energy security’ should thus not be limited just to national contexts. Neoliberalism and the *network of experts* allow this study to understand the cross-boundary circulation of ideas about what ‘energy security’ should be. By approaching ‘energy security’ through a sociological approach within critical security studies and adopting analytical concepts that include *power relations*, *neoliberal assemblages*, *network of experts*, and *materiality*, this study raises questions about the role of state formation, development, diversification, decision-making processes, actors, and policies in relation to ‘energy security’ in the modern oil-producing state of Oman. With a fluid and context-dependent approach to discourses and practices of ‘energy security’, this study advances its analysis to demonstrate the interplay between the local, regional, and international expertise, as well as the juncture of power relations that developed throughout the Sultanate’s history. Moreover, the use of ‘energy security’ with quotation marks in the study indicates that ‘energy security’ is a changing historical construction that it brings together complex concerns and it mediates the connection between energy and security through social, economic, environmental (Chap. 7), and political concerns. This understanding, again, moves beyond the rentier state theory that is approached mainly through the liberal and realist perspectives and avoids reproducing a binary understanding of state and society which limits one’s understanding of ‘energy security’ to issues of development and welfare.

To conclude, there is no singular and pre-given definition for ‘energy security’, there is no unitary concept. An attentive analysis of discourses and practices will reveal the heterogeneous articulation of ‘energy’ and ‘security’ in the case of Oman. This means that our understanding of how energy and security have come to be connected, and can be extended and broadened.

2.4 Methodology

Most researchers utilising critical security studies have relied on qualitative approaches.²⁶⁸ By grounding its examination on qualitative empirical research, this study follows suit, adopting a combined methodology of discourse and historical analysis, along with semi-structured and in-depth interviews. This note on methodology will address discourse and historical analysis, interviewing, the time/period during which the interviews were conducted, ethical concerns, and the scope and limitations of the research.

²⁶⁸ For the various debates refer to Salter and Mutlu (2013).

2.4.1 *Discourse and Historical Analysis*

It is generally assumed, as recognised by Balzacq, 'that the way in which securitisation occurs is essentially an empirical question, but, paradoxically, there has been little discussion on methods'.²⁶⁹ Balzacq urges researchers to address this omission, contending that, 'the main task facing students of securitisation is not to add to the already long list of arguments and conjectures but instead to unpack and re-present these diverse approaches into a coherent set of assumptions guiding empirical research'.²⁷⁰ In line with Balzacq's call, and with discourse and historical analysis as its leading methodology,²⁷¹ this book aims to avoid the tendency to 'ignore, or at least underplay, the epistemological, theoretical and methodological implications of incorporating non-discourse analytical theories into a discourse analytical framework'.²⁷²

To this end, the research began with official sources and archives available to the public from various libraries in the UK: The British Library, the Middle East Centre at St Anthony's College Oxford, and the National Archives in Kew Gardens. By paying close attention to the political and socio-economic environment from which the data arose, it aimed to examine if and how history helped in shaping 'energy security' in Oman. It then turned to official reports from government and non-government institutions such as Oman's Central Bank, the State General Reserve Fund, Authority for Electricity Regulation, Public Authority for Electricity and Water, PDO, Shell Oman, BP Oman, Oman LNG, as well as international agencies such as the International Monetary Fund, US Energy International Agency, and International Energy Agency. The sources consulted also included materials where appropriate from several ministries in the country of fieldwork: Foreign Affairs, Finance, Commerce and Industry, Finance, Oil and Gas, Environmental Affairs and Climate, and Supreme Council of Planning.

Primary and secondary sources include websites, newspaper articles, and public documents such as press coverage, speeches, and lectures by those involved in the implementation and development of energy policies, and official documents—available in Arabic and English. Careful consideration has been paid to identifying patterns among these sources and to observing social consequences of different discursive representations of 'energy security', to assessing the relationships among dominant discourses and emerging policies, and to outlining potential trajectories. These concerns also guided the interviewing process.

²⁶⁹ Balzacq (2011), p. 31.

²⁷⁰ Balzacq (2011), p. xiv.

²⁷¹ As recommended by Balzacq (2011), pp. 39–53.

²⁷² Jorgensen and Phillips (2002).

2.4.2 *Specialised Interviewing*²⁷³

In his introduction to *Elite and Specialised Interviewing*, Lewis Anthony Dexter explains in layman terms that an interview ‘is an interview with *any* interviewee—and stress should be placed on the word “any”—who in terms of the current purposes of the interviewer is given special, *non-standardised* treatment’.²⁷⁴ Here, ‘non-standardised’ treatment denotes giving the interviewee an opportunity to share what he or she thinks is relevant to the subject at issue, plus, allowing the interviewee to define and account for a particular situation or subject. In effect, ‘non-standardised treatment’ allows an interviewee to present his or her notion of what is significant.

In general, an interview is a controlled situation whereby the interviewer asks a series of questions to another person, the interviewee. In this circumstance, the interviewer must rely on the interviewee’s willingness to answer the set of questions, which should meet the study’s needs. Daphne Keats denotes ‘that the purpose of the interview is not to change the respondent’s attitudes and behaviour but to reveal it’.²⁷⁵ Interviews therefore have the ability to reveal aspects of a topic that a researcher has not previously considered. In many ways, interviewees can be teachers to the interviewer. Thus, as Marjorie DeVault suggests, greater analytic attention ought to be attributed to the conversational details of interviews, for ‘the *forms* of talk that emerge in interviews may reveal a great deal about how interviewees experience the worlds’.²⁷⁶ In an effort to obtain as much information as possible, the approach adopted herein aims to consider *how* interviewees say things along with *what* they choose to say.

That said, experience in the field also discloses, as Alexander George and Andrew Bennett observed, that policymakers have an incentive to slant their accounts to portray to the public a ‘careful, multidimensional process of policymaking’.²⁷⁷ Because of this potential limitation, it became incumbent on the researcher to be aware of the possible drawbacks that come with conducting interviews, and to critically evaluate them, a step facilitated by recourse to the framework of George and Bennett, which enumerates four guiding questions: (1) Who is speaking? (2) To whom are they speaking? (3) For what purpose are they speaking? and (4) Under what circumstances are they speaking?²⁷⁸ The aim of these questions is to bring attention to the dynamics and context of an interview, and thus to gain a more complete portrayal of the issues.

In conducting this research, the researcher benefited from two distinctive situations. On one hand, a professional background of working in Oman’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs for eight years enabled the researcher both to identify and gain access

²⁷³ To deviate from the connotation of superiority, this study uses the term ‘specialised’ interviews as opposed to the common term ‘elite’ interviewing.

²⁷⁴ Dexter (1970), p. 18 (original emphasis).

²⁷⁵ Keats (2000).

²⁷⁶ Marjorie L. DeVault cited in Weinberg (2002).

²⁷⁷ As quoted by Tansey (2007), p. 767.

²⁷⁸ George and Bennett (2005).

to strategic interviewees and critical documents. On the other, a native upbringing in Oman has cultivated an intimate familiarity with and position in its social networks and structures, enabling research to proceed by the 'snowball sampling' method,²⁷⁹ which, as described by Nissim Cohen and Tamar Arieli, is 'a technique for finding research subjects where one subject gives the researcher the name of another, who in turn provides the name of a third, and so on. [...] The sample group grows like a rolling snowball'.²⁸⁰ The method has been recognised as particularly significant in cases regarding marginalised populations (that is, those in low-ranking positions, and thus not known/considered to the public). Therefore, this study took recommendations from interviewees to interview other relevant actors and obtain more materials that would further assist in revealing the multifaceted understandings of 'energy security'.

2.4.3 Interview Context

To a certain extent, the context and environment in which the interviews were conducted played a major role in their content. The relationship of the interviewer with the interviewee also affected which techniques would be most effective, since the researcher was from the country where fieldwork was conducted.²⁸¹ From December 2014 to March 2017,²⁸² the researcher had the opportunity to meet with ninety-three interviewees ranging from, to name a few, high-ranking officials to non-officials, energy experts (internal and external), and consultants (detailed in Appendix A). The drop of oil prices in early January 2015 cast an atmosphere from which there arose implicit understanding of the usefulness and importance of this research.²⁸³ Underpinning a certain degree of anxiety was a somewhat ominous environment in Oman due to Qaboos' weak health and his absence from Oman for eight months (July 2014 to March 2015). The researcher found that, in several cases, many of the interviewees showed frustration and seemed to approach the interview as an opportunity to voice their vexation; consequently, the interviewer managed to obtain more and weightier information than was expected. This brought an automatic acceptance of good faith in the interviewer, whereby everyone the researcher approached accepted to be interviewed. There was also a pledge of confidence and a notable degree of candour since the researcher was then working for Oman's Foreign Ministry, and because an option of anonymity of information was provided to the interviewees.

The interview design was rather general, in order to give the interviewees the opportunity to interpret the subject in whatever manners they chose. The interview

²⁷⁹ Heckathorn (2011).

²⁸⁰ Cohen and Arieli (2011), p. 424.

²⁸¹ Keats (2000), p. 8.

²⁸² Additional interviews were conducted for Chap. 7 between November 2021 and March 2022.

²⁸³ This is also true for the interview climate during the year 2020 when Covid-19 hit, and the oil prices dropped making the discourse of climate change and 'energy security' an intriguing topic.

questions began with pilot semi-structured interviews in which the interviewee was asked one initial question: *How is 'energy security' understood in the Omani context?* This question was then followed by others of a more general nature.

Initially, in order to ensure consistency from one respondent to another, every interviewee was asked the same questions. However, the researcher realised that the primary question was somewhat leading, as it directed the interviewee to think of energy issues within the framework of 'security'. Consequently, the researcher altered the approach to begin with more open-ended and general questions that included: *What are the challenges that Oman faces in terms of energy? What recent changes have you seen in Oman's energy policy since the 1970s? If any, what have been the main factors that led to change in your view? What has been the role/contribution of your ministry/agency/company?* The change in question, however, did not appear to produce a corresponding change in the answers.

Each interview was scheduled for an hour, while many of the high-ranking officials offered to continue the interview for 2 h (in addition to offering their direct e-mail address for any follow-up questions, which the researcher took advantage of when needed; see Appendix A). Because the researcher's study was funded by Oman's Ministry of Higher Education, most interviewees seemed to assume that the researcher was working for the benefit of Oman; as a result, they seemed willing to share more knowledge openly. But as Dexter postulates, 'the interviewee has to get something out of the interview—otherwise there is no reason from him [or her] to open up'.²⁸⁴ This did seem to be the case, especially considering how some of the interviewees shared information far from the subject of study. Recorded interviews were transcribed, and notes were documented soon after the interviews, including remarks off the record—even those that sounded innocuous—but these are not included in this study. Once collected, the data was reflected upon, and theoretical analysis was brought to bear upon it yielding unexpected conclusions.

The analysis of the interviews demonstrated that the terminology of 'energy security' was non-existent (just like an energy policy) in the Omani context prior to 2018—it is for this reason that this thesis places 'energy security' in inverted commas.²⁸⁵ As this study explains, 'energy security' as conceived within both realist and liberals' perspectives was incommensurate with the reality in Oman. Therefore, this study had to turn to other mechanisms such as discourse analysis, interviewing, critical analysis of contents, official speeches, and archives, to conduct an expansive examination of the connection between energy and security. Careful deliberation focused on any interesting points raised in the interview, especially any ideas, problems, and concepts falling within the researcher's research interest.

²⁸⁴ Dexter (1970), p. 39 quoting Gunsfield 1955. (original emphasis).

²⁸⁵ This author participated in the country's first Energy Lab which aimed to create a national energy strategy with a focus on 'energy security'. This took place in March 2018, and it was the first time the government of Oman looked into the issue of 'energy security' in light of the dwindling gas resources in the country.

2.4.4 *Ethical Considerations*

The importance of confidentiality in interviews must be stressed, as many experts, officials, and non-officials worry that the remarks they make may be used against them in a damaging manner.²⁸⁶ The researcher ensured the participant that the interview would be regarded as strictly confidential and held securely until the research is finished; that all data for analysis would be anonymised; and that, as required by the UK Data Protection Act 1998, all information gathered within the interviews would be held on password-locked computer files or in locked cabinets within King's College London.²⁸⁷ Confidentiality allowed the interviewees to be more straightforward in providing answers to questions during the somewhat intense interview process. Permitting the interviewees to speak in their preferred language (Arabic or English) also allowed for comfort and ease of sharing information.

Conclusion

In reviewing the realist, liberal, and constructivist approaches towards 'energy security', this chapter has analysed the contributions and limitations of existing literatures. Much literature on the Gulf, specifically, and oil-producing countries, more generally, use the realist approach to conceptualise 'energy security', making realism the dominant approach in Gulf literature. At a later stage, the inclusion of domestic policies and its influence on energy concerns would be seen through the lens of liberalism. These changes would take place in light of the shifts in the balance of power between the West and major energy producers, 'and the greater willingness of the latter to resist Western preferences, has led to a heightened securitisation of energy, reflecting greater anxiety among the dominant Western powers'.²⁸⁸

Given the complex historical evolution of energy governance, the next section in this chapter responds to the shortcomings of the existing literature of the Gulf and builds upon it to develop a comprehensive theoretical framework. It does so by engaging with the body of literature that has come to be known as 'critical security studies'. It introduces the concept of securitisation and responds to two key criticisms raised to securitisation theory. It deals with, first, the question of context, practice, and actors, and second, criticism of the concept of securitisation as applicable only to liberal democracies. It also critiques, too, realist conceptions of 'security' that are state-centric, along with concepts of 'national security' understood primarily in military terms.

²⁸⁶ This research went through ethical review, which is mandatory as a doctoral student in King's College London for any 'Low Risk' research. After receiving ethical approval (see Appendix B) to conduct fieldwork in Oman, the researcher followed the ethical research procedures and before every interview an information sheet (see Appendix C) was given to each participant, delineating the purpose of the study. The later interviews followed the same approach.

²⁸⁷ See Appendix A for list of interviewees that wanted to be anonymous, identified, or partially identified.

²⁸⁸ Dannreuther (2015), p. 476.

By engaging existing literature on securitisation and (de)securitisation in an effort to show how a sociological approach within critical security studies, particularly the Paris School, provides an alternative way to conceptualise ‘energy security’. In contrast to the Copenhagen School, whose concept of securitisation rests on over-reliance on language and the adoption of ‘extraordinary’ measures²⁸⁹; a sociological approach attends to practices, transversal fields, and professionals. By critiquing and re-inserting approaches used in postcolonial state analyses—such as *materiality*, *network of experts*, and *neoliberalism*—within the framework of critical security studies, this study broke away from the Eurocentric paradigms of the field, shifted focus to other processes, and provided a sociological understanding of ‘energy security’.

This framework helped to deconstruct Western historical representations of non-Western countries like Oman. This alternative approach surpassed the restrictive binary assumptions created by such depictions, especially when examining non-Western structures and institutions. In utilising analytical concepts and methods provided by Bigo, Mitchell, and Ong, the comprehensive framework showed the heterogeneous manifestations of ‘energy security’ throughout the Sultanate’s history.

Overall, the chapter offered a critical reading of the main debates in energy security and critical security studies. It showed how by adopting a sociological approach, which analyses situated discourses and practices, the study challenged Orientalist readings of the state beyond the West. This research also considered that the realm of politics does not lie in the limiting observation of Buzan et al. claiming that ‘security is the move that takes politics beyond the established rules of the game and frames the issue either as a special kind of politics or as above politics’.²⁹⁰ It relied on a sociological approach that focused on what security *does* and not simply on what it means.²⁹¹ In this regard, this study—through the sociological underpinnings of critical security studies with postcolonial concepts—first showed how the internal and external actors complicates the way that ‘energy security’ is perceived today, and second, explained why the understanding for ‘energy security’ is varied and changes according to context. To reflect this, it adopted Bigo’s concept of the *security continuum*, which encompasses the various securitising actors that may be ‘dominated by technocrats or technical experts and are generally beyond the reach of representative institutions’.²⁹²

Moreover, it considered the varying interests and agendas of internal and external actors that govern discourses and practices of energy. The discourses and practices of different societal groups in Oman, from the head of state followed by public discourses, and corporate practices were examined to recognise ‘the articulation of knowledge and power relations’.²⁹³ In analysing Oman, this study asserted that the rest of the world does not share the same ontological depth of the Western concept

²⁸⁹ Aradau (2009), pp. 174–175.

²⁹⁰ Buzan et al. (1998), p. 23.

²⁹¹ Huysmans (1998a); Wæver (1995).

²⁹² Hameiri and Jones (2013), p. 472.

²⁹³ Bigo (2002), p. 84.

of security issues. A critical consideration on the informal dynamics and practices is necessary in state structures such as Oman. Finally, a focus on the ways in which material qualities of energy connects and shifts social, political, and economic processes within varying contexts added to the complexity of how 'energy security' is conceptualised. By incorporating other analytical concepts into debates of critical security studies, the chapter revealed the heterogeneity of energy discourses and practices and showed how the *security continuum* enables energy to attach to issues of social, economic, and political throughout Oman's history. Its combined methodological tools also showed how a plural understanding of 'energy security' has developed historically and continue to be formed.

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Chapter 3

State Formation, Energy, and Security from 1920 to 1970



Introduction

The previous chapter introduced certain key debates within critical security studies in order to examine and identify which sociological paradigms and concepts could be most constructive when applied in postcolonial contexts. This chapter now turns specifically to Oman. By locating the issue within a broader twentieth-century history of colonialism, imperialism, and revolution, it aims to explore how energy has been conceptualised and articulated within Oman's developmental trajectory. It will argue that the 'rentier state theory' and other approaches studying state formation in the Gulf are inadequate for the task of understanding state formation in Oman.¹ As an alternative, it will present a sociological analysis which, following Didier Bigo, shows how social practices and *power relations* created and shaped the existing institutions of the Sultanate. Drawing on the work of Timothy Mitchell, the chapter will show how alliance building, personal relationships, oil exploration, and the control of energy-based resources have played key roles in Oman's process of state formation, and, correspondingly, in how 'energy security' has been conceptualised and sought.

The first section, therefore, begins with a discussion of the literature on 'rentier state theory', which is, at present, the dominant approach to understanding 'the state' in the Gulf. Following this review, alternative conceptions of what constitutes 'the state' shall be examined. The second section turns to the question of energy's role in issues of security and development. Beginning from the early twentieth century, the research will trace how energy discourses and practices emerged through critical junctures in the Sultanate's modern history. It illustrates how Oman's modern conception of development was built upon what once appeared to be an infinite quantity of oil. Finally, it will examine the role played by the oil company, Petroleum Development of Oman (PDO), in Oman's state formation and decision-making processes.

¹ Detailed in the first section of this Chapter.

Demonstrating where Western paradigms fall short, Chap. 3 will show that, at least in the case of Oman, state–society boundaries are not pre-given.² Since the 1920s, social development programmes spanning education, health care, and so forth, facilitated the operations of international energy companies in the country. The British, meanwhile, framed development programmes as mechanisms to deal with social and political obstacles hindering a company’s operations in the interior region of the country. The analysis, therefore, penetrates the deeply woven connections between Oman, the British, and other actors, all of which influenced the local energy conditions.

In the case of Oman, the discovery of oil created a field dominated by *power relations* and the *rule of experts*, which, through involvement with wider processes of state formation, shaped the varied notions of ‘energy’ and ‘energy security’. Contrary to the binary perspective prevalent in Western literature, in the development of Oman, the role of actors within the *security continuum* of energy remained fluid and ever-shifting; so too did the very concepts at stake. Ultimately, within the *security continuum* ‘new modes of authority’ were developed³ by which technocrats create a political field aimed to end resistance to energy companies’ accumulation of wealth from oil.

In addition to drawing attention to the role of energy companies (in this case, PDO) in Oman’s development, this chapter illustrates the way in which energy deepened past historical alliances into the country’s modern social and political fabric. While the ‘rentier state’ literature assumes that development woes in the Middle East is due to an ‘oil curse’, this chapter provocatively suggests that oil companies purposely hindered the discovery of oil to slow down development in the region.⁴ This was particularly the case within the context of the breakup of Standard Oil Company and the following rise of the Seven Sisters in maintaining global production levels hence limiting production in the Middle East to protect US production. Ultimately, it was a global economic factor whereby ‘American and British oil companies became fearful that oversupply could create periods of extreme supply glut and collapsed prices’.⁵ The chapter, therefore, considers the way in which the British during the 1920s stayed in the Middle East to guarantee control over the oil to Western firms (British, US, and French), which consequently ‘impeded the ability, using the infrastructure of oil, to build effective methods for advancing egalitarian political claims’.⁶

By examining the interlinkages of political, economic, and sociological dynamics, this chapter questions to what extent the development of modern Oman contributed to the securitisation of energy.

² Mitchell (1991).

³ Mitchell (1988).

⁴ Mitchell (2002a).

⁵ Wood (2011).

⁶ Mitchell (2011).

3.1 Approaches to Studying State Formation in the Gulf

This section will undertake a review of the dominant approaches to state formations in the Gulf region, with the aim of explaining the limitations, economic-centredness, oversimplification, and generalisations that characterise the current literature. By employing Mitchell's methods and analytical concepts (see Chap. 2), it will show how existing paradigms fall short and that, in analysing postcolonial states, a more nuanced model is needed. Current literature on state formation and state building of Middle Eastern countries, especially in the Gulf, is characterised by the following main approaches: political economy, rentierism and late rentierism, authoritarianism and patriarchy, and democratisation. By treating the state as a monolithic entity, however, the 'rentier state theory' and other dominant state formation approaches provide poor explanations of energy politics in the Sultanate. This section will therefore explain why these approaches do not fit the case of Oman, and why a sociological approach that moves beyond one that is static and timeless better explains the historical link between energy, security, and development.

3.1.1 *Political Economy of the Gulf*

In Alan Richards' and John Waterbury's classic work *A Political Economy of the Middle East*, the authors explore how states in the region seek to implement strategic economic transformation, focusing particularly on the ways in which certain social actors, interests, and elitist groups seek to promote and protect their interests.⁷ Although careful considerations are taken to include each country's distinctive characteristics, Richards' and Waterbury's analysis neglects important historical and social aspects of state formation, as reflected in their synopsis: 'The course of economic growth and structural change is far from smooth. It is characterised by extensive state intervention, by numerous bottlenecks, and by serious macro- and microeconomic problems'.⁸ The reason for this may be the nature of their study, which is primarily political economy. The authors discuss in detail the economic changes that took place, but they fail to account for the causes of these changes, their implications for Omani society, and their effects on the political structures of other Middle Eastern states.

To move beyond too facile generalisations, Roger Owen constructs a picture of the region starting from the early twentieth century, where Middle Eastern state systems emerged, and examines the resilience of their regimes, and military norms.⁹ Like Richards and Waterbury's analysis, Owen's historical approach traces political and economic developments but fails to capture the complexities and differences of Middle Eastern countries. Moreover, in its focus on the process of economic

⁷ Richards and Waterbury (1990).

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 18.

⁹ Owens (2014).

liberalisation, the study remains somewhat narrow.¹⁰ Nonetheless, a chapter entitled ‘Family rule, and the Libyan alternative’—although focused on Saudi Arabia and Libya—helpfully illustrates the role played by oil companies in producing leading personalities who have assumed, upheld, and shaped certain narratives of energy understood and accepted today. In Saudi Arabia, for example, Owen shows that many advisors and officials were supported by the wealth accrued by the oil company ARAMCO¹¹ in the 1950s, leading to ‘the creation of a Council of Ministers to direct the work of the inevitable expansion of bureaucracy as oil royalties began to mount’.¹² Owen’s insight is germane for a study of Oman. Like ARAMCO, PDO has played a central role in the creation and evolution of Oman’s political, sociological, and economic structures.

Several accounts attempt to offer a general analysis of the entire region. In reviewing the political economy of the Gulf region, for example, Mehran Kamrava states that the GCC countries adopted two processes: the creation of institutions to wield political power and the incorporation of social actors into the state as stakeholders to maintain the political system.¹³ The key problem with Kamrava’s explanation, however, is that it assumes that the GCC states share similar historical patterns. In a number of respects, this is not the case. Unlike the other Gulf states,¹⁴ for example, Oman saw itself as a regional commercial power (through the spice and slave trade) in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, overseeing an empire that stretched from Zanzibar in East Africa (until 1964) to Gwadar in Pakistan (until 1958).¹⁵ Its imperial history brought a distinct degree of religious and ethnic diversity into the country, contributing enormously to Oman’s political and social complexity. Kamrava’s one-size-fits-all attempt misses these aspects, and others as well, including the role of external actors such as international oil companies.

Kiren Aziz Chaudhry makes similar mistakes. Examining how, following the oil shock episodes, the discovery of new oil reserves shaped and transformed the domestic economies of the region, specifically Yemen and Saudi Arabia, Chaudhry writes:

[T]he creation of national market requires a state capable of destroying local economies and the legal economic and social relationships they were based on. [...] Institutions not only liberate exchange and protect members of the newly constituted unit; they also proscribe and limit the actions of groups. *The aggregate groups in favour of national market rarely include the old economic elite as a whole.* It is in this deeply violent and fundamentally political

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ ARAMCO (Arabian-American Oil Company) in 1950 held a 50/50 profit share. However, in 1980, the government of Saudi Arabia bought 100% of ARAMCO’s shares and named it Saudi Aramco.

¹² Owens (2014), p. 49.

¹³ Kamrava (2012).

¹⁴ Other Gulf states were also regional commercial hubs during this time-period (Bahrain and Saudi Arabia); nonetheless, Oman is unique in terms of being the only Gulf state that was also an imperial power.

¹⁵ The role of Oman’s history and geopolitical significance in the region is detailed in Robert Kaplan. 2010. *Monsoon*.

process in all historical specificity, that we can observe the interlinked origins of the national state and market.¹⁶

Chaudhry makes sweeping depictions of two countries (Yemen and Saudi Arabia) with completely different histories.¹⁷ Furthermore, her universal claims would fail to apply to the case of Oman. When she notes that other Gulf regimes assumed that the private sector could not be relied upon, in 1970, the Sultan of Oman consolidated powers with the economic elites, making them critical regime allies.¹⁸ Oman is not simply an exception. Similar processes of regime consolidation through cooperation with economic merchants have likewise occurred in Kuwait, Bahrain, and Qatar. Moreover, in these states, as in Oman, the increasing integration of the royal family and of economic elites into positions of economic and political power has contributed to a breakdown of distinctions between ‘public’ and ‘private’.

Premised on an economic-centred analysis, Chaudhry attributes negative economic outcomes to paternalism, dependence, and systemic inefficiency, but in reality, many of the outcomes she criticises are direct or indirect results of colonial involvement. She illustrates how the oil rent (during the oil boom) established an unstable economic foundation in the Gulf countries as the influx of outside revenues diminished incentives for economic regulation. In turn, this created inefficiencies on various levels, and ‘a definitive impact on the structure and functions of state institutions’.¹⁹ Her basic claim is that as the external rents accrued directly to the government and were distributed to its citizens, the oil rent became a major source of finance and power. However, Chaudhry overlooks the possibility that the poor economic outcomes of these states are attributed to the colonial history of the state, the interference of international oil companies prior to and during the establishment of the state, and the internal and regional conflicts. These issues occupy a role in the current social, political, and economic status of the Gulf states. Therefore, in terms of this book, to illustrate the blurring of the lines between state, economy, and society, and their relationship to international and national oil companies, a socio-logical approach is necessary as it moves beyond the limitations of the ‘rentier state theory’ discussed next.

3.1.2 Rentierism to Late Rentierism

The danger that faces the rentier states is that while some of the natural resources of these countries are being fully developed by foreign concerns and considerable government expenditures (usually in a few cities) *are creating an impression of prosperity and growth*, the mass

¹⁶ Chaudhry (1997). (added emphasis).

¹⁷ On Saudi Arabia refer to Vitalis (2009); on Yemen refer to Clark (2010).

¹⁸ Valeri (2005).

¹⁹ Chaudhry (1997), p. 313.

of the population may remain in a *backward state* and the most important factors for long-run growth may receive little or no attention.²⁰

There are two primary types of ‘rents’ in the Middle East region: rents from the export of hydrocarbons, in oil-producing countries, and rents from economic aid, in non-oil-producing countries. The ‘rentier state theory’ developed as a theoretical framework by Hazem Beblawi and Giacomo Luciani in 1987, aimed to explicate the political and economic realities of abundant oil-producing Gulf countries and the consequences of their dependence on external rent. The authors argue that, at the outset of the oil industry, only a minor segment of the population was involved in the generation of oil revenues, while the rest were engaged in the utilisation of the oil wealth.

While the rentier state theory, in some ways, contributes to a fundamental understanding of the political economy in the Gulf, it neglects a number of other critical aspects. These include observations introduced in the previous discussions concerning the roles of the *rule of experts*, colonial history, Western depictions of the region, and domestic and global politics, in explaining the political sociology of states in the region. More problematically, not only does rentier state theory omit important considerations, but because of certain premises embedded within it, it ends up perpetuating Orientalism.²¹ The quotation above, from Hussein Mahdavy, displays one such ‘orientalising’ attitude: Mahdavy describes the Gulf states as ‘giv[ing] an impression of prosperity’ when they are ‘backward’.²² Implicit in this view, of course, is the further assumption—and prevailing view, perhaps derived in part from the discipline of economics—that economic development occurs on a linear path along which countries can be placed, and according to which they can be judged, as ‘developed/forwards’ or as ‘undeveloped/backwards’.

Most literature, in fact, shows a similar reading of the region as ‘backward’, adopting the view that the socio-economic environment prior to the 1970s was generally dire. Jill Crystal, for example, describes the economy as one consisting of ‘basic’ agricultural structure, and in which the level of poverty was high among most of the population.²³ To be fair, her theory of rentier relations is geared towards distance-trading and entrepôt economies, and her mention of ‘basic’ agricultural sectors refers only to relatively small date/palm plantations, not to the economy as a whole. Still, few observe that the political and social structures in Oman were not confined either to the central government or to agriculture, and even though each played important social and economic roles,²⁴ neither was the centre for state formation. Unlike state

²⁰ Mahdavy (1970) (added emphasis).

²¹ Mitchell (2002b).

²² Orientalism refers to a system of ideas and intellectual positions concerning the ‘Middle East’ that assume that the differences between ‘Western’ and ‘Eastern’ civilisations are ontological, Edward Said. 1978, *Orientalism*.

²³ Crystal (1990).

²⁴ Peterson (1978).

formation in Europe, the Middle East in the nineteenth century went through ‘defensive modernisation’²⁵ whereby the Middle East states only acquired European-style statehood to combat the growing military and economic power of Europe.²⁶

The concept of ‘late rentierism’—coined by Mathew Gray—attempts to move away from the essentialism²⁷ found in rentierism by highlighting the differences among the GCC countries. Gray divides the literature on rentierism into three phases and critiques the way in which each phase applied rentier theory to the Gulf states. According to Gray, the first phase (1970–1990), which focused on state–society relations, viewed the state as highly allocative and distanced from society. The literature expositing this view, however, oversimplifies complex dynamics, neglects political-context analysis, and fixates too narrowly on democratisation (using mainly Kuwait as an example, thus failing to appreciate the nuances of each Gulf state).²⁸ In phase two (1990–2004), says Gray, the rentier theory became more sophisticated as literature integrated theories from international relations and political economy/ development. The second phase, Gray contends, is advantageous in its treatment of rentierism as a characteristic of politics, yet, he argues, the political orders and structures of the Gulf states have changed and must be accounted for. In the third and final phases, to characterise the shifting political dynamics in the Gulf, Gray develops ‘late rentierism’, which proposes that the state does not simply spread the wealth of rents, but strategically distributes and invests them with the aim of prolonging its rule.²⁹ Thus, stage three constitutes the transition in which ‘the state is more entrepreneurial, supportive of development, and responsive than it was previously’.³⁰ Nevertheless, despite his more nuanced vision of the way in which rentier theory applies, Gray affirms that ‘the fundamental characteristics of rentierism remain’.³¹

The main features of ‘late rentierism’ include (1) a responsive but undemocratic state; (2) opening up to ‘globalisation’, but with some protectionism remaining; (3) an active economic and development policy; (4) an ‘energy-driven’ versus an ‘energy-centric’ economy; (5) an ‘entrepreneurial state capitalist’ structure; (6) a state that is long-term in its thinking; and (7) an active and innovative foreign policy.³² While some of these elements will assist an understanding of the foundation of some oil-producing states, they are not without ambiguities and omissions. To name one, Gray’s model fails to explain how oil is extracted, processed, shipped, and how oil turned into a form of affluence and power.³³ In addition, ‘late-rentierism’ remains

²⁵ Anderson (1987).

²⁶ The transition from Ottoman rule to European rule was marked with great discontinuity. See Anderson (1987), p. 6.

²⁷ Essentialism is a belief that every entity or thing has a set of attributes and characteristics that are necessary to make them what they are and are essential to their existence.

²⁸ Gray (2011).

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 22.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 23.

³¹ *Ibid.*

³² Gray (2011), pp. 23–32.

³³ Mitchell (2011), p. 2.

embedded in the idea that a robust economic foundation—*any* robust foundation—contributes to strengthening a state. The problem with this oversimplified view is that it neglects external variables and historical contingencies, which have played roles in the production of rentier states, and which, in many cases, have set them on trajectories of dependence difficult to escape. Furthermore, like earlier rentier accounts, Gray fails to resolve the contradiction between the theory's claims that rentier economies link directly to weak political formations in oil-producing states, and the fact that many such states have evolved into strong states.³⁴

3.1.3 *Authoritarianism and Patriarchy*

Another body of literature on Middle Eastern state formation deals with the concept of 'patrimonial societies' in authoritarian regimes. The most prominent of these works is Michael Herb's *All in the Family*,³⁵ which builds on rentier state theory by asking how authoritarian monarchies of the GCC states remain in power. Herb discusses two forms of monarchism: (1) 'dynastic' monarchism and (2) 'other'³⁶ models of monarchies in the Middle East, identifying the first as the most resilient due to the political hegemony it bestows upon a family. While oil may be 'an intervening variable', Herb nonetheless asserts that it is secondary to the form of government.

The situation in Oman, however, reveals at least two ways in which Herb's analysis comes up short. First, Oman's ruling family does not monopolise all the highest positions in government. Herb's perception that authoritarian regimes will persist if structured around a ruling monarchy is partially erroneous. The author disregards external variables that may contribute to a monarchs' resilience. In the case of Oman, however, Herb himself acknowledges that British support proved critical to both Said's and Qaboos' rule. Second, Herb assumes that the bureaucratic structures of these states have been static since their emergence as 'modern states'. Again, this assumption fails to correspond to Oman, where Qaboos has not shared dynastic power with his family but has divided it among wealthy merchants and other prominent tribes in the country.³⁷ Following the coup of 1970, for instance, the Sultan 'relied on a mix of British expatriates, members of the ruling family, a few other Omanis and Arabs from outside Oman'.³⁸

The point here is to recognise the limitations of a 'regional' interpretation and to underscore the unique situation of each state, most especially Oman. The Sultanate's

³⁴ For example, Iran, Saudi Arabia, and the UAE, all fall under some criteria of strong states.

³⁵ Herb (1999).

³⁶ Herb describes the 'other' models of monarchies as those that have fallen to revolution. He uses the examples of the fallen monarchs in Egypt (1952) Iraq (1958), Libya (1969), Afghanistan (1973), and Iran (1979) to make his case that these 'other' models are not resilient like the dynastic models of the oil-exporting Gulf states.

³⁷ Herb (1999), pp. 145–152 and 179–181.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 150.

historical patterns show forms of social unrest that differ from those of neighbouring GCC countries.³⁹ Incidents such as the Imamate rebellions in the 1950s, the Dhofar revolution during 1965–1975, the 2005 attempted coup of the Sultan by extreme Islamists (Chap. 5), and the recent post-Bouazizi protests in Sohar (Chap. 6), illustrate a continuous thread whereby social unrest has in fact impacted in state formation (as will be clarified later in this chapter).

In all, Herb's work proves useful for understanding monarchism found in oil states today.⁴⁰ However, implicit Orientalist assumptions and biases weaken his perspective, as Mahday's. Herb describes Khaleeji communities, for example, as 'bribed' and 'unproductive'. Such negative depictions, too, appear in Beblawi's portrayal of the 'rentier mentality',⁴¹ which describes citizens of rentier states who do not pay tax, and who receive an income directly from oil rents, as contributing to a society that is 'lazy' and 'unproductive', built upon an undemocratic 'fragile' economy.⁴²

Moving away from negative Orientalist views, Steven Heydemann more neutrally examines authoritarian regimes to evaluate interactions between formal and informal modes of governance and how resources are allocated in the context of the national social pact.⁴³ These 'informal' modes of governance, as argued by Heydemann, which were 'designed to contain and control mass politics', in fact, 'produced informal modes of governance and resource allocation that were dense, decentralised, and broadly inclusionary [...]'.⁴⁴ This consequence allowed for the establishment of a system in which bargaining opportunities became available for ruling regimes in search of support. Heydemann's errors, however, are to associate the 'national pact' with resource allocation and to overlook much of the historical research prior to the time of oil. The informal networks to which he refers pre-existed in the oil era and continue to exist today. Governance in Oman has always been characterised by informal and formal modes.⁴⁵

In a similarly styled analysis of corruption in oil-rich sub-Saharan African countries, Nicholas Shaxson determines that the problem is a systemic one that transcends the individual, and thus he examines the structures of the state primarily by observing

³⁹ Gause (1994), also challenges the perception of some rentier theorist arguments of complacency among the Arab citizens.

⁴⁰ Herb (1999), p. 23.

⁴¹ Beblawi (1990).

⁴² The application of Orientalist undertones is perhaps more of an economic terminology to political studies. This comes from the idea of 'rents', and how it can cause 'lazy' or 'unproductive' practices, was first developed by looking at European societies (e.g. Adam Smith, David Ricardo, Joseph Schumpeter, etc.) that still use it widely in economic theory focused on the West and elsewhere. Therefore, although the term 'unproductive' had come to have quite an Orientalist meaning in the Gulf—for example, in the case of Western managers and workers in the Gulf that throw around the term 'unproductive' and 'lazy' in very Orientalist ways—the political economy literatures are (mostly) using the term without Orientalist intent.

⁴³ Heydemann (2007). A 'social pact', 'can be conceptualised not solely in terms of an institutionalised bargain among collective actors but also as encompassing a set of norms or shared expectations about the appropriate organisation of a political economy in general'. Heydemann. (2007), p. 25.

⁴⁴ Heydemann (2007), pp. 33–34.

⁴⁵ See Limbert (2010).

the *informal rules* of interaction.⁴⁶ However, in his focus on war-torn states (such as Iraq and Equatorial Guinea), Shaxson overlooks socio-historical practices and power relations, both of which are fundamental components of a comprehensive analysis of state structure. Not only to borrow from the contributions of Heydemann and Shaxson but also to make up for their defects, certain adjustments will have to be made. Any analytical model capable of providing insights into state formation in the Sultanate, specifically, and the Middle East, more generally, will have to account for ‘the colonial rule and its effects’.⁴⁷

The framework of ‘patriarchy’ is also included in the literature on authoritarianism. Most contemporary works utilise ‘patriarchy’ to explain the ‘resilience’ of Arab societies, both of which come with a negative connotation.⁴⁸ Hisham Sharabi describes ‘patriarchy’ as the ‘universal form of traditional society, which assumes a different character in each society’.⁴⁹ But because traditionally patriarchal societies have modernised, the term in vogue is now ‘neopatriarchy’: as Sharabi claims, when modernity as ‘a unique historical development’ meets patriarchy, the result appears to be ‘neopatriarchy’.⁵⁰ Since, according to Sharabi, the Arab state has neither ‘developed’ nor ‘modernised, this label seems best to characterise Arab society. His historical analysis of the Arab societies brings him to the conclusion that the external dependency and political and economic structures *have* brought about modern edifices and modern legislation; nevertheless, in Sharabi’s opinion, the neopatriarchal state remains ‘in many ways no more than a modernised version of the traditional patriarchal sultanate’.⁵¹ He then concludes that secular pluralism is the way forward for Arab societies.

The major drawback of Sharabi’s analysis is that, like Madhavy, and others, it is founded on the Orientalist axioms that Arabs are inherently ‘backward’, ‘uncivilised’, and in need of Western modernity. Sharabi categorises Arab countries into a single group and closes the chapter with a matter-of-fact statement: ‘As some of us know, the Arab world (Arab society) is, for the most part, a culturally and politically desolate and oppressive place in which to live and to work’.⁵² This limiting cultural explanation ultimately fails to see the complexity and diverse region of the Middle East—a restrictive analysis that has also filtered into discussions on democratisation.

⁴⁶ Shaxson (2007).

⁴⁷ Anderson (1987), p. 4.

⁴⁸ For details on the resilience of patriarchy see Joseph (1996).

⁴⁹ Sharabi (1988).

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Ibid., p. 6.

⁵² Sharabi (1988), p. 155.

3.1.4 Democratisation of Oil-Producing States

The rentier literature after the 1990s, or that which Gray has called ‘phase two’, particularly examines the inadequacies and fragile nature of economic and social structures in so-called rentier states. Interpreting a rentier economy as inherently negative, Michael Ross suggests that ‘claims about the rentier state can be sorted into two categories: those that suggest *oil wealth makes states less democratic* and those that suggest *oil wealth causes governments to do a poorer job of promoting economic development*’.⁵³ The theory further contends that the ruling class maintained the status quo by ‘redistributive mechanisms that bind state–society relations in rentier systems’.⁵⁴ With his analysis, Ross introduces a move in the literature to a discourse of democracy and civil society, linking the rentier economy to the absence of each. More contemporary authors also share their sentiments. Rolf Schwarz illustrates how the path to state formation in the Middle East was obfuscated due to the ‘rentier’ nature of the states, where abundant oil revenues ‘permitted a degree of militarisation’.⁵⁵ Schwarz then explains how the distribution of oil rents, though a ‘privilege’ to start with, becomes an ‘economic nightmare’ by impeding the consideration of long-term economic policies.⁵⁶ His general account links the economic failures to the lack of ‘long-term’ planning regardless of the ‘privileges’ the rulers had. In this respect, the ‘oil rents’ were mismanaged by the rentier state—and the discourse is linked to political formation following the will of the ‘autocratic’ leader. Like the others, Schwarz fails to account for the external variables and the agency of actors.

Perpetuating the belief that a rentier economy links intrinsically to autocratic rule and to a lack of civil society, Luciani argues that in a rentier state ‘there is always an opposition, but the opposition will not be any more democratic than the ruler’.⁵⁷ In another study, he states that access ‘to a source of external rent confers extraordinary resiliency on incumbent regimes even when faced with dramatic declines in economic and potential fortunes, and it emasculates the will of societal forces to coalesce and press for change’.⁵⁸ From these excerpts alone, it is evident that Luciani views rent as a primary and powerful force that shapes state structures and decision-making, and which gives the state its own agency, separating it from society. His view causes a number of problems, not the least of which includes the wedge it drives between state and society, for this division disguises the relationships of power invested in maintaining the existing system of governance.⁵⁹ Furthermore, Luciani makes no mention of how energy, particularly oil, might impact social, economic, and political relations; far less does he consider how it might *positively* create new discourses and practices. Ultimately, Luciani conceptualises oil simply

⁵³ Ross (1999) (added emphasis).

⁵⁴ Ulrichsen (2009).

⁵⁵ Schwarz (2008).

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 608.

⁵⁷ Luciani (1994).

⁵⁸ Luciani (2007).

⁵⁹ Mitchell (1991), p. 78.

as a form of rent that undermines societal forces calling for change. His assessment, however, cannot account for movements that have emerged post-Bouazizi as citizens across the Gulf, and especially in Oman and Bahrain, called for constitutional and representative changes.⁶⁰

More views are offered by Thad Dunning and Oliver Schlumberger, who reject the equation of rentierism with autocracy. Dunning, for example, examines why some states have the inclination to become rentier states, while others do not.⁶¹ Citing various states as case examples, he shows how certain mechanisms and structural characteristics can enable natural resources to promote *either* democracy (e.g. Norway and Botswana) or autocracy. Dunning's research, therefore, offers a direct challenge to the rent-authoritarianism linkage; his approach, too, is relatively context-dependent. Still, although it introduces a range of factors that affect the shapes of a state's economy and government, Dunning's focus remains narrow, preoccupied mainly with economic determinants, and not the shape or nature of society. His account, like many, could be supplemented by stronger sociological considerations.

Retaining a focus on autocracy, by contrast, Schlumberger moves the debate away from the frame of reference set by democracies and provides alternative explanations for why autocratic regimes are still intact. He notes that 'the rentier state remains by and large intact in many Arab countries, despite modifications in the sources of rent and the transformation of internal patterns of redistribution of resources'.⁶² The adaptive nature of regimes, he posits, can be attributed to a mix of 'norms, formal institutions and modes of political informality'.⁶³ Schlumberger therefore broadens the perspective on sources of political rule in the Arab world, as well as on how regimes organise and maintain power.

In a similar, more nuanced way, Lisa Anderson delineates state development in the region as a response to international development: '*The influence of historical patterns of state formation on post independence state-society relations is not simply a matter of the state's relative strength or weakness, however, but of the changing contours of those relations as they developed*'.⁶⁴ Contrary to the 'rentier state theory' assumptions, Anderson emphasises the unique path that Middle Eastern countries have taken. Her observations are especially astute in relation to the Gulf states, particularly when considering how oil influenced the formation and destruction of political coalitions and state institutions.⁶⁵ In the case of Oman, however—as noted by Calvin Allen Jr and W. Lynn Rigsbee II—state formation took an even different form, one in which 'traditional elites actually saw an increase in their political power following

⁶⁰ For details on protests in Bahrain post-Bouazizi refer to Matthiesen (2013); on protests in Oman refer to Valeri (2012).

⁶¹ Dunning (2008).

⁶² Schlumberger (2007).

⁶³ Ibid., p. 35.

⁶⁴ Anderson (1987), p. 7 (added emphasis).

⁶⁵ Similar discussions are included in Zahlan (1978); Heard-Bey (1982); Crystal (1990); Davidson (2009).

the coup of 1970 as state involvement in both economic and social programmes increased and the bureaucracy grew'.⁶⁶

As observed by Dunning, Schlumberger, and Anderson, a Eurocentric binary analysis, along with certain other assumptions maintained by rentier state theory—particularly its economic determinism and inattention to complex practices and power relations—calls for greater nuance and different conceptual tools. After all, as Mitchell has suggested, the abundance of oil did not hinder development; rather, the oil companies purposely hindered the discovery of oil to slow down development in the region.⁶⁷

This section has argued that rentier state theory adopts analytical essentialism and inadvertently perpetuates the reproduction of Orientalism. While it may generate useful insights into the processes of state formation in the Gulf countries, ultimately it remains theoretically limited. As an alternative, this study will approach state formation from a more sociological standpoint that seeks to track the development of energy discourses and practices throughout the country's history, especially as they become entangled with security. In this sense, Mitchell's analytical concepts will prove helpful. Relying on a sociological framework and turning directly to Oman, the next section will engage this task starting with a historical background since the early twentieth century.

3.2 State Formation, Security, and Oil

The previous section demonstrated that the majority of state formation literature concerning the Gulf states is premised upon theoretical blind spots assuming a static narrative. As a corrective to such views, this section aims to illustrate how an understanding of 'energy security' developed different meanings through critical historical junctures prior to the establishment of the modern Sultanate in 1970. Situated in the context of post-imperial Europe, it shows how the collapse of the European empires after World War II saw the emergence of development discourses in Oman. Thus, the deployment of new ways for justifying Western colonial empires by other means of intervention in postcolonial states took its course. In the case of Oman, this kind of development discourse was being promoted to a certain extent:

[t]he idea of development—and the relationship it implied between industrialised, affluent nations and poor, emerging nations—became the key to a new conceptual framework. Unlike the earlier claims of Europe to inherent superiority or a "civilizing mission", the notion of development appealed as much to leaders of "underdeveloped" societies as to the people of developed countries, and it gave citizens in both categories a share in the intellectual universe and in the moral community that grew up around the world-wide development initiative of the post-World War II era. This community shared a conviction that the alleviation of poverty would not occur simply by self-regulating processes of economic growth or social change. It required a concerted intervention by the national governments of both poor and

⁶⁶ Allen and Rigsbee (2000).

⁶⁷ Mitchell (2011), p. 43 (details reflected in the second section of this Chapter).

wealthy countries in cooperation with an emerging body of international aid and development organisations.⁶⁸

In Oman, the relationship of development to the state, international oil companies, and other actors became ambiguous and complex, most especially as the British government became increasingly engaged in promoting economic growth, alleviating poverty, and fostering social, economic, and political development in the country. Britain justified its control of the Sultanate by claiming that the country was ‘in need of development’—the same claim made by colonialists throughout the Middle East⁶⁹—imposed restrictions on oil production and development, acts which would have long-reaching impacts on the *rule of experts*’ power within the *security continuum*.

As part of a larger chronological narrative, this section begins with a historical background of Oman from the early twentieth century and shows how it developed into a unified state in 1970.⁷⁰ This sociological narrative is important for analysing the link between energy—namely oil—and security in Oman’s state formation process. It aims to explain (1) the role of colonial powers in the discovery of oil, and how energy was utilised through power relations of various actors; and (2) how PDO created an important and strategic partnership with Oman, establishing the basis for continuing influence in the country. In sum, this section traces the relationship between the semi-national oil company and the process of state formation, examining particularly how this relationship was constituted as the ‘other face of the state’.

3.2.1 *Before the Discourse of Energy*

In the seventeenth century, Oman was a significant empire under the Ya’ariba dynasty. Its territory stretched from Gwadar to Zanzibar, controlling the trade routes of the Indian Ocean. It was during the nineteenth century, however, that the Omani Empire suffered a severe economic blow as the British suppressed the slave trade and the Empire was partitioned in a family dispute.⁷¹ When the Ya’ariba dynasty was diminished, a civil war broke out between the Hinawi and Ghafiri confederations, who were competing for succession,⁷² leading to formal⁷³ opposition between the two

⁶⁸ Cooper and Packard (2005). For detailed discussions/debates on the concept of development refer to Edelman and Haugerud edited volume.

⁶⁹ Mitchell (2011), p. 83.

⁷⁰ A proliferation of literature covers this theme of ‘modern’ Oman: Jones and Ridout (2015); Skeet (1992); Allen (1987); Al-Sharooni (2006); van Scherpenzeel (2000); to name a few.

⁷¹ Julian Paxton ‘Oman Handbook’, 1965, Private Papers Collection (Box B, 1).

⁷² More is said on the two confederations and the Omani Bedu structure on page 106 of this study. For further details however refer to Peterson (2003).

⁷³ This formality has been used for a while due to the assumed usefulness of understanding the political tribes in Oman.

confederations for centuries.⁷⁴ It was not until 1913, when both factions agreed to appoint Salim bin Rashid Al-Kharusi as the Imam of Tanuf, that the Ghafiri and Hinawi tribes joined forces in an attempt to weaken the Sultan's dynastic regime and British hegemony. This act inaugurated the period of the Imamate, which was the religiously dominated form of government that preceded the establishment of the present Al-Busaidi (changed to Al-Sa'id) dynasty in 1741.⁷⁵

The rise of the Imamate coincided with pressure from the British upon Sultan Faisal bin Turki to accept financial assistance from the British government and, in return, pledge to honour the anti-slave trade and arms-traffic agreements. A number of Omani tribesmen considered such foreign influences to be interference in Oman's internal affairs. Consequently, the tribesmen launched an uprising against 'modern European politics in the Gulf on the internal affairs of Oman'.⁷⁶ The British reacted by bombarding the Imamate between 1914 and 1915. This took place under Taimur bin Faisal, who maintained power of the Sultanate from 1913 to 1932.

In 1920, after five years of negotiations, the warring factions finally produced a treaty ending the conflict. This treaty, known as the Seeb (Sib) Treaty, would have a profound effect on the subsequent exploration of oil.⁷⁷ In the agreement, the Imamate requested the removal of British troops, the Sultanate's adherence to Islamic culture, the elimination of British control of the sea (which economically constrained the Imams), the lifting of blockades preventing the transfer of goods into the interior, and the removal of the corrupt Muscat judiciary system.⁷⁸ These demands were accepted by the two parties, leading to a state of 'peace' for two years among the British, the Sultanate, and the Imamate. The 'peace' treaty allowed for the distribution of modern financial methods, supported by British India, by which Taimur bin Faisal could develop the country and 'liquidate the old debts and still leave a surplus which could be used to achieve the desired reforms'.⁷⁹ As Mitchell points out, from this point forward, the financial and social aspects of development

⁷⁴ John Peterson stresses that, 'these distinctions are not rigid since important ethnic and religious anomalies occur across confederation lines'. Peterson (2003).

⁷⁵ For more background information on the distinction between the Imamate and the Sultanate refer to Wilkinson (1987).

⁷⁶ The Imam's Rising 1913–1920, 18 August 1916, India Office Records (IOR) [L/P&S/18/B398/001].

⁷⁷ This was not a legal document (*mu'ahada*), it was a local peace agreement (*al-muslih al-mutafiq*). For more information on this, refer to Julian Paxton, 'Unpublished Manuscript', 1996, Private Papers Collection (Chap. 1). Furthermore, the 'treaty' does not stipulate an agreement between two different nations/states (i.e. Oman versus the Sultanate of Muscat)—this dichotomy never existed; however, this has been mentioned in various historical books). For example, John Wilkinson's seminal work in *The Imamate Tradition of Oman* (1987), where he begins his research on the axiom that prior to 1970 there existed two different traditions in Oman: The Imamate and the Sultanate. See also Takriti (2013).

⁷⁸ There is no text of the original treaty in the Public Records Office, only excerpts of the local peace agreement are found. Julian Paxton 'Oman Handbook', 1965, Private Papers Collection (Box B, 1).

⁷⁹ 'The Word of Sultan Said bin Taimur', In John Graham Collection, Box 1/1, [GB165-0327].

became intimately entwined and would be impossible to separate.⁸⁰ These issues would become increasingly complex with the granting of oil concessions in the beginning of the twentieth century.

3.2.2 *Discourse of Oil Begins*

The ‘peace’ was challenged when the discourse of oil monopolies in Oman began. In 1921, the Anglo-Persian Oil Company (APOC) expressed its desire to the British government to maintain exclusive rights to explore oil in Oman.⁸¹ The following year, Lieutenant Colonel A.P. Trevor, Political Resident in the Persian Gulf, sent a letter to the British government addressed from Sultan Taimur bin Faisal reporting oil seepage in the southern part of the Gulf of Masirah. Considering this, the British government asserted their imperial and strategic interest by saying that, if oil does exist, ‘future exploitation of it (if necessary) should be done by British interests’.⁸² Oman, in financial debt during this period, took a loan from the British ‘on an understanding that it would be repaid in ten years’.⁸³ Having accepted the loan, Taimur bin Faisal had no choice but to yield to British pressure concerning the oil reserves. If an oil concession were to be made, he assured, Taimur bin Faisal would ask permission from the government in British India. This assurance was guaranteed when he signed a political agreement in 1923, found in the treaties collated by Sir Aitchison,⁸⁴ effectively granting the British a full monopoly over oil concessions.⁸⁵ Oil exploration, however, did not immediately follow. The British government hesitated to commence

⁸⁰ Mitchell (1991), p. 90.

⁸¹ Contrary to John Wilkinson who states that the story of oil began in 1923 with Taimur bin Faisal, this study argues that the first discourse of oil began in 1921 from external actors: the Anglo-Persian Oil Company exchange with the British government. It is worthy to note that almost every historical account thus far quote Wilkinson. For reference see, Coal, Mining Rights and Monopolies: Anglo-Persian Oil Company, 1921–1928, 9 September 1921, IOR [R/15/6/24].

⁸² Lt. Col. A P Trevor, Political Resident in the Persian Gulf, Bushire to Mr. D de S Bray, Foreign Secretary to the Government of India, 2 June 1922, in Arabian Gulf Oil Concession 1911–1953, ‘Documents from the India Office, London, Muscat and Oman’, Archive Editions (1989), Vol. 12, p. 4.

⁸³ ‘The word of Sultan Said bin Taimur, Sultan of Muscat and Oman, about the history of the financial position of the Sultanate in the past and hopes for the future, after the export of oil’ In John Graham Collection, The Govt of Oman and General Papers c. 1968-1980, Box 1/1, [GB165-0327].

⁸⁴ There are a collection of historical treaties, engagements and charters signed between representatives of the British government and foreign rulers and dignitaries under a volume contributed by Sir Knight C. U. Aitchison. In this volume, Part III solely covers Oman whereby Britain and Muscat signed treaties and conventions from 1798 to 1928 on subjects related to the exclusion of the French from the Sultan of Muscat’s territories; suppression of the slave trade; commerce; and, specific here, on the arms traffic deal, to name a few. See the fifth edition of the volume in the British Library, India Office Records and Private Papers: IOR/L/PS/20/G3/12.

⁸⁵ Discussed in the next pages.

geological surveys; before long, a period of civil war ensued, delaying exploration further.

In 1925, the D'Arcy Exploration Company Ltd. (a subsidiary of APOC) signed the first land-based concession with the Sultan of Oman and the British government, entitling them to explore for oil for a period of fifty-five years. Declared as 'unsafe to enter',⁸⁶ some territories, however, were omitted from the concession agreement. Although the interior tribes and the Sultan assisted APOC in their exploration, in 1928 APOC gave up the concession noting that there was no oil in Oman.⁸⁷ The lack of commitment showed how the oil companies in the Middle East, as Mitchell points out, were not concerned 'simply with the supply of oil but with limiting its production and slowing the development of the petroleum industry'.⁸⁸ Mitchell claims that, during this period, the British government was mainly concerned with controlling the oil to serve British oil companies' interests. This becomes clearer when Said bin Taimur, the son and successor to Taimur bin Faisal, took over the Sultanate in 1932. When Said bin Taimur inherited the throne, the country was bankrupt. Englishman Bertram Thomas, who had been appointed as Finance Minister in 1925, had exceeded the approved budget and left the country in a pitiful state. The Sultan explains the conditions of Oman during that period in his own words:

This led to a deficit and disorder in State finances. The balance of payments was upset and unpaid instalments of the loan, and other expenditures, piled up, constituting a new debt, additional to the balance of the previous one. [...] While great hopes were pinned on Mr. Thomas to repay what others had destroyed, he in fact brought the finances to ruin and left them in an even sorer state.⁸⁹

In addition to the worldwide economic depression of the 1930s, the Sultanate's bankruptcy forced the Sultan's government into a state of austerity. In 1933, a year after taking over, Said bin Taimur reduced expenditures in all sectors and liquidated debts.⁹⁰

3.2.3 *Competition Over Concessions*

Historically, questions of 'energy security' were articulated by Churchill's epoch move, during the inter-war period, shifting Britain's main energy source from coal

⁸⁶ 'Letter from Taimur bin Faisal to Major M E Rae, His Britannic Majesty's Consul', 10 January 1923, in *Arabian Gulf Oil Concession 1911–1953*, Archive Editions (1989), Vol. 12, p. 19.

⁸⁷ 'Letter from Shaikh Isa bin Salih to H.B.M.'s Consul and Political Agent', 30 September 1925, in *Arabian Gulf Oil Concession 1911–1953*, Archive Editions (1989), Vol. 12, p. 56.

⁸⁸ Mitchel (2011), p. 86.

⁸⁹ John Graham Collection, The Govt of Oman and General Papers c. 1968–1980, Box 1/1, [GB165-0327].

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

to imported oil. It was upon this occasion that ‘energy security’ became a question of national and imperial strategy for the Western world.⁹¹ Energy supply was essential for the military sector, which consequently made the Middle East a battleground competing for concessions of oil fields. Turning specifically to Oman, ‘energy security’ (a concept seldom used in the Sultanate) in the early twentieth century can be seen to include internal and external concerns from local tribal disputes to British interest in oil. Development was a secondary concern during this period. The networks of external and internal actors, as well as the role of the military in suppressing unrest, show how fluid the articulation of ‘energy’ and ‘security’ was in the Omani context and how it was developed during the country’s formative years of state-building.

In 1934, after APOC gave up their concession agreement, Said bin Taimur informed the British government of his interest in finding an American company to survey the south region of Oman for petrol. He justified his request by insinuating that it was a matter of ‘national’ importance for Oman: ‘In view of my financial stringency, as you are aware, I deem it essential to see what is beneficial (to my country) and to pray to God for help’.⁹² This did not translate well for Britain. The British government swiftly asserted that their interests and monopoly over American firms remained a priority. A year and a half later, the British continued corresponding back and forth within their foreign office in an attempt to find a company that would serve its commercial interest. Regardless of their attempts, it took the British a year and a half to find a company. Said bin Taimur sent a follow-up letter stating that he was very anxious to have the survey concluded, and in the meantime, he sent an oil sample to the Standard Oil Company California (SOCAL) to be tested for minerals. In response to the Sultan’s actions, the Political Resident in the Gulf sent a confidential letter to the British government expressing anger:

I don’t quite know what game the Sultan thinks he is playing. He knows perfectly well he has undertaken to consult us before giving an oil concession to any company [...] these secret negotiations with the Standard Oil Company behind our backs; are of course directly at variance with [...] His Majesty’s government.⁹³

To avoid further delay, frustration, and the possibility that Said bin Taimur would indeed turn to the Americans, the British government proposed that the Iraq Petroleum Company (IPC)⁹⁴ carry out the Sultan’s requested survey.

In 1936, however, the government appointed a new company, Petroleum Concession Limited (PCL), a subsidiary company of IPC, to conduct the survey. This new company—PCL—agreed to guarantee that British interest would always come first.

⁹¹ Yergin (2006).

⁹² ‘Trade & Commerce: Mines and Minerals. Oil Concessions in Muscat’, 2 June 1937, Vol. 2, IOR, [R/15/6/424].

⁹³ Ibid.

⁹⁴ Interest in oil in the Gulf region aroused in 1932 when Bahrain discovered oil in commercial quantity. IPC was determined to have the concession rights to Bahrain’s oil fields and was competing with SOCAL, which earlier obtained a concession from Saudi Arabia. See Owtram (2004).

The processes of drafting and negotiating the agreement inevitably posed the question of territorial boundaries. The British felt that the concession agreement could act as an interim *de facto* boundary.⁹⁵ The Sultan, however, considered Dhofar ‘his personal garden’ and not part of Oman⁹⁶; therefore, he divided the concessions into two territories, one being Muscat with Oman, the other being Dhofar. Furthermore, stating that it was something he could not guarantee, the Sultan removed a clause which had stipulated that he would provide security for the company. A year later, on 24 June 1937, Sultan Said granted a seventy-five-year concession to manage oil operations to PCL, which later changed its name to Petroleum Development (Oman and Dhofar) Ltd. (PDOD). According to the agreement, the Chairman or Managing Director of PDOD would be a ‘British subject at all times’.⁹⁷ British control in Oman would continue in the name of oil development.

3.2.4 *The Affair of the Aitchison Treaties*

At the same time as the 1937 concession agreement, a second draft Political Agreement—regarding oil concession in Dhofar, Oman, and Muscat—was brought by the British to Said bin Taimur’s attention. In a confidential letter from the British government to the Political Resident in the Gulf shows that it upset him, for ‘whereas the Agreement with the company was merely one concerning money, the Political Agreement involved matters affecting his control over his state’.⁹⁸ Said bin Taimur sensed that the British were implicitly encroaching upon his sovereign rights. Noting that the concession agreement did *not* stipulate the need for a political agreement, he successfully avoided making one.

Said bin Taimur pushed further. Knowing that Oman maintaining sovereignty would require the British to import oil, rather than controlling it, Said bin Taimur declared that the collated 1923 Aitchison Treaties were not binding on him:

Muscat, he said, was independent, and it was called independent by Government, but if the approval of government were required before he could give an oil concession then he was really not free, and it was made obvious to others that his independence was not a reality.⁹⁹

The Sultan rejected the 1923 political agreement on the basis that its original terms and context, that is, concerning the sales of arms and ammunition subsidies, granted

⁹⁵ ‘Telegram from Political Agent, Muscat to Political Resident, Bushire’, 11 October 1936, in *Arabian Gulf Oil Concession 1911–1953*, Archive Editions (1989), Vol. 12, p. 148.

⁹⁶ The following book was written by the nephew of the Sultan. Faisal bin Ali bin Faisal Al-Said. (date of publication not available). *Al-Sultan wa Al-Isti'mar* [The Sultan and Colonisation], p. 10.

⁹⁷ ‘J C Walton to Lt Col. T C Fowle, Draft Political Agreements and Exchanges for Notes for the Muscat and Oman concession and the Dhofar concession’, 7 August 1937, in *Arabian Gulf Oil Concession 1911–1953*, Archive Editions (1989), Vol. 12, p. 265.

⁹⁸ ‘Confidential Letter from Major R P Watts to Lt. Col. T C Fowle, Political Resident in the Persian Gulf, Bushire’, 8 December 1937, IOR [R/15/6/425].

⁹⁹ ‘Muscat Oil Concessions in Muscat’, 27 April 1936, IOR [R/15/6/426].

to his father, did not extend to him. In 1923, the British had informed his father, Taimur bin Faisal, that the grant was personal to him and not hereditary to successors. In which case, Taimur bin Faisal replied to the British:

We with great sorrow explain to the High Government in this letter that all promises, treaties, conditions and agreements made by us or which may be made, and in which no mention is made about our successors, and not binding upon them, and they themselves and their government may act as they wish if such agreements should be against their interest, and every one of us will observe them only for the time of the contracting government or for his person and government.¹⁰⁰

Though furious, the British realised that there was truth in Sultan Said's claims. Therefore, when the Sultan asked for a new concession in 1944, rather than renewing the former treaty, renegotiations began. In secret correspondence, the Political Agent in Muscat explained to the British government that,

His Highness is well aware that subsidiaries of Anglo-Iranian Oil Company have oil concessions covering most of the Arabian Coast, and told me that he has seen a map of on which all their concessions were marked in red. *He feels that their object in acquiring these concessions is designed more to exclude other interests than to exploit and develop these areas themselves. I see from the correspondence on file that His Highness is not alone in this impression.*¹⁰¹

The Ministry of Fuel and Power in Britain informed the Political Agent that the delay in development had resulted because the British government had placed a ban on development during the time of war. Upon completing negotiations, a second concession agreement was signed allowing PDOD to enter the Al-Dhahira region (where the Duru' Bedu resided).¹⁰² With this step, the discourse concerning oil, which had begun in terms of colonial interest, now expanded to include spurring development, demarcating territorial boundaries, and suppressing social discontent.

It was not until 1944 that exploration for oil and minerals began in full force; when it did, problems immediately arose. Without consulting the Sultan, PDOD began negotiating directly with the locals in the Al-Dhahira region, violating the concession agreement. Although he did not sanction such interference, Said bin Taimur later accepted it, marking the beginning of PDOD's long-standing influence on the social fabric of the country. By contrast, when the Imamate heard of the Duru' negotiating with the oil companies, Omani tribesmen resisted, making it difficult for the oil companies to enter the Imamate area.

Before moving further into the history, it is important briefly to explain the Bedu structure in the context of the Al-Hinawi and Al-Ghafiri confederation. The Bedu in the north, which included Al-Bu Shamis and the Duru', were Ghafirirs; of those in the south, the Wahiba and Harasis were Hinawis, while the Jeneba were Ghafirirs. As opposed to Bedu in the neighbouring Gulf states, Omani Bedu were

¹⁰⁰ 'Letter from Taimur bin Faisal to Mr. Wingate PA', 19 March 1923, IOR [R/15/6/426].

¹⁰¹ 'Secret Letter from Captain R E Bird, Political Agency, Muscat to Captain R D Metcalfe, Political Agent, Muscat', 7 July 1944, IOR [R/15/6/427] (added emphasis).

¹⁰² Paxton, 'Unpublished Manuscript', 1996, Private Papers Collection (Chap. 9).

semi-nomadic and mostly financially poor. When oil was discovered in their territories, however, these dynamics among the tribes changed. Rather than depending on the Imam for territorial sovereignty, they obtained autonomy through PDOD exclusively employing these tribes. This brought forth tribal disputes and resentment from many other Omani tribes:

Disputes over tribal frontiers arise from oil company operations and the Sultan's ruling over tribal labour, which has the automatic effect of exciting bedu cupidity. The situation has been thoroughly complicated by conflicting government decisions on where the various frontiers lie. All this has led to a great deal of difficulty, time wasting and loss of efficiency in company operations [...].¹⁰³

Around 1945, insecurity ensued in Muscat and the Mahra territory (interior region of Oman). Tension grew between the Sultan and the Imam. The Sultan hoped that Imam Muhammed would die so that he could reign over the interior of Oman. Due to tribal conflicts, interior instability prevented the company from moving forward with its interests. In 1950, tribes in Al-Dhahira region declared that Said bin Taimur no longer reined over the country of Oman,¹⁰⁴ which impacted oil explorations.

At this point in history, then, oil represented a source of insecurity. Rooted in the terms sketched in the treaties from Aitchison in 1923, the development of the oil industry carried with it the spectre of British imperial influence and increasing instability. Soon, the inter-war conflicts would turn against external interference.

3.2.5 Consolidation Against the Saudis

In 1949, after a geological survey, ARAMCO concluded that commercial quantities of oil existed in Al-Buraimi oasis, a region in the Al-Dhahira province of Oman. Upon this announcement, Saudi Arabia claimed the oasis, which of course did not sit well with Oman.¹⁰⁵ It was clear, however, that the region was independent of the Sultan's control; to gain control of it, the British encouraged the Sultan to authorise the company IPC to sign concession agreements with local Al-Buraimi tribes.¹⁰⁶ He did so, and the IPC attempted a concession agreement with the local tribes (Bani Kaab, Na'im, Al Bu Shamis, the Hafit)¹⁰⁷; the Saudis, however, were busy doing

¹⁰³ Paxton 'Oman Handbook', 1965, Private Papers Collection.

¹⁰⁴ During that period, a pious leader (or Imam) had to be elected among the people.

¹⁰⁵ Morton (2013).

¹⁰⁶ 'The Iraq Petroleum Company's proposal that the Sultan's agreement should be sought for direct negotiation with the tribes for oil concession', December 1951 [FO 371/91214] in R.W. Bailey and Anita L. P. Burdett (eds.), Records of Oman, 1867–1947 [1867–1960], p. 195.

¹⁰⁷ It is noteworthy to mention that a list of the Sultans' walis (governors) in 1918 did not include the region of al-Buraimi in the British administrative reports. Therefore, while the British fought for al-Buraimi to be part of Oman, it was a sovereign region. 'Situation in central Oman now out of control', July 16–17, 1957 [FO 371/126875] in Bailey and Burdett (eds.), Records of Oman, 1867–1947 [1867–1960], Vol. 8, p. 206.

likewise, and successfully won their loyalty.¹⁰⁸ Meanwhile, the British also established agreements with the local tribes and acquired land from private individuals in return for financial considerations.¹⁰⁹ Here, then, through negotiations concerning the distribution of oil wealth, energy, in terms of its convertibility into massive economic wealth, became entwined with the social fabric of the country.

In 1952, the Saudi Emir Turki bin Ataishan was sent by the Saudi government to occupy Hamasa, one of the villages in Al-Buraimi, claiming it as part of the eastern province of Saudi Arabia.¹¹⁰ Declaring this act one of foreign invasion, the Sultanate and the Imamate united under the umbrella of self-determination. Aiming to occupy Al-Buraimi and to evict the Saudis, Sultan Said raised an army of eight thousand tribesmen in Sohar, while the Imam collected a force at Dariz.¹¹¹ Meanwhile, however, the British were negotiating with the Americans and Saudis; and, pending attempts to settle the dispute through arbitration, commanded that the Sultan disband and restrain his army. This move spelled doom for the cooperation between the Sultan and the Imam, for it forced a division of priorities. The Sultan, for example, was most immediately concerned with the Saudi threat; in a letter expressing his disapproval of Britain's call for a standstill agreement, the Sultan pleaded with the British to recognise that, by continuing to infiltrate in Al-Buraimi, the Saudis were not honouring the conditions of the halt.¹¹² As Julian Paxton, former Shell employee in Oman for ten years and advisor to PDOD, wrote, if the Sultan 'had been allowed to act he might, however, have gained great prestige and the concerted action of the Sultan and the Imam could have led to cooperation in the administration of a divided country'.¹¹³ This was inconsequential, however; the British, who sought Al-Buraimi for their own interest, obstructed the Sultan's action, and in doing so, deprived the Sultanate–Imamate alliance of its unifying ground. Thus, the Imam once more turned inward, determined to consolidate against further colonial interference.

By 1954, backed by the Americans, the Saudis continued to occupy Al-Buraimi territories. In the same year, the Sultan was asked by the British to cooperate with Abu Dhabi to evict the Saudis—the very plan the Sultan himself had proposed in 1952. The British government intervened as well, attacking the Saudis with 'the Trucial Oman Scouts (formerly the Trucial Oman Levies), who had been recruited

¹⁰⁸ Morton (2013), p. 86.

¹⁰⁹ 'Decision of British Government to assist the Sultan to re-establish his authority in central Oman', 19–20 July 1957 [FO 371/126875] in Bailey and Burdett (eds.), *Records of Oman, 1867–1947* [1867–1960], Vol. 8, p. 238.

¹¹⁰ 'The Iraq Petroleum Company's proposal that the Sultan's agreement should be sought for direct negotiation with the tribes for oil concession', December 1951 [FO 371/91214] in Bailey and Burdett (eds.), *Records of Oman, 1867–1947* [1867–1960], Vol. 8, p. 198.

¹¹¹ 'Letter from the Sultan requesting maximum military and air support. Leaflet to be dropped off central Oman', 24–25 July 1957, [FO 371/126876] in Bailey and Burdett (eds.), *Records of Oman, 1867–1947* [1867–1960], p. 238.

¹¹² 'The Huqf Force and the Buraimi Question. Letters from HH the Sultan to Major Chauncey', 6 & 9 December 1952, [FO 1016/196] in Bailey and Burdett (eds.), *Records of Oman, 1867–1947* [1867–1960], Vol. 8, p. 286.

¹¹³ Paxton 'Oman Handbook', 1965, Private Papers Collection.

and trained by the British Army'.¹¹⁴ At this stage, though the British successfully removed the Saudis from Al-Buraimi, the reunification of Oman was no longer a possibility. From 1952 to 1954, the Saudis had been arming the local tribes against the Sultan, who in the eyes of the Imamate was a traitor for obeying the wishes of the British. When Imam Mohammed passed away, social unrest reached its peak.

Confronted by interior instability, the British found it nearly impossible to carry out oil explorations, especially near Al-Fahud. Approaching through Al-Buraimi and Al-Dhahira looked futile; therefore, the British entered through Duqm. The Duqm expedition led to the preparatory drilling operation at Al-Fahud, where, in 1954, the first exploration well in Oman was found dry.¹¹⁵ Many other explorations took place, with no success. PDOD's continual explorations and inspection in Al-Fahud region, on the frontier of Imamate territory, infuriated the interior tribes who viewed the enterprise 'as an infringement of the independence of internal Oman and of the sovereignty of the imamate, even as a breach of the 1920 Treaty of Sib'.¹¹⁶ Collaboratively, the tribes 'protested against this aggression and prepared for a military confrontation',¹¹⁷ beginning what would become known as the Imamate revolt or the Jebel Al-Akhdhar (Green Mountain) revolution.

3.2.6 *Imamate Revolt 1955 to 1960*

In 1954, Imamate forces led by Talib bin Ali (who previously joined forces with the Sultan against the Saudi invasion) seized the city of Ibri, close to Al-Buraimi region, and sought political support for an Imamate regime independent from the Saudis. Upon Imam Mohammed's death, Ghalib bin Ali (brother of Talib bin Ali) was elected as Imam. Imam Ghalib was extremely influential as he came from the prominent tribe of Al-Hinawi and was supported by the Saudis that were mostly against the Sultanate. With the change of leadership and growing discontent among the tribes, PDOD created the Muscat and Oman Field Force (MOFF) to secure its exploration activities. The MOFF was funded annually by PDOD but was still held responsible by the Sultan. PDOD also played an integral role in negotiating with the British to increase funding for the development of the Country's security force.

It was at this time that discussions concerning oil development reignited. A request from the Secretary of State was sent to the British to assist the Sultan considering IPC's finding of 'oil prospects in central Oman that the company is prepared to spend something like £1.5 million to get drilling operations started by the end of the year'.¹¹⁸ Given Oman's economic and strategic military advantages with respect to

¹¹⁴ Paxton, 'Unpublished Manuscript', 1996, Private Papers Collection (Chap. 2).

¹¹⁵ Details of this expedition can be found in January Morris. 2002. *Sultan of Oman*.

¹¹⁶ Ghubash (2006).

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

¹¹⁸ 'Memorandum: Muscat and Oman: Assistance to the Sultan', 12 January 1955, Records of the Cabinet Office, [CAB 129/73/6].

the British, Her Majesty's Government (H.M.G.) increased its support for the Sultan to ensure its oil interest.

In support of the Imamate, by contrast, Suleiman bin Himyar, a sheikh of one of the major tribes from Jebel Al-Akhdhar,¹¹⁹ openly proclaimed his defiance of the Sultan and began a general uprising in the northern frontiers of Oman to defend the country. In response, the British sent the Royal Armed Force (RAF) to assist in repressing the uprising. The force consisted of the MOFF, RAF, and the Sultan Armed Forces (SAF), which was 'the physical extension of H.M.G.'s policy in Arabia [...and...] largely responsible for maintaining the Sultan in power'.¹²⁰ The Sultan, meanwhile, approved the initiative to occupy the whole of the interior and requested military and financial assistance from Britain, which would comprehensively address: (1) short-term measures to deal with the situation in Jebel Al-Akhdhar; (2) military re-organisation, civil development, and leasing the island of Masirah; and (3) foreign relations.¹²¹ The island of Masirah was significant as it safeguarded the sea and air routes to East Africa and Asia, and was considered a military base to protect Western links to Kuwait.

The British accepted the request, leading to several long-term arrangements. Under the '1958 Exchange of Letters', the island of Masirah was leased by the RAF for ninety-nine years for the development of an airfield; in return, the British promised to ensure security in Dhofar, provide naval and air support, and improve intelligence and security in Oman. Acting on this contract, the British forces bombed the village of Tanuf and occupied Ibbi, while the tribesmen took refuge in Jebel Al-Akhdhar, making it their base. While the Trucial states and Saudi Arabia continued to arm the Imamate, military operations persisted through 1958. By 1959, the British—through the Muscat Regiment and the Trucial Oman Levies from the neighbouring Trucial States—occupied Jebel Al-Akhdhar and suppressed the Imamate revolts. Talib and his brother Imam Ghalib fled to Saudi Arabia. In the absence of its leaders, the remaining resistance was weakened; as Hussein Ghubash contends, 'In trying to save themselves physically they shattered their image in the minds of the Imamates'.¹²²

The period of failed discoveries coincided with a parallel period of regional and global instability. The effects of the Cold War contributed to the rise of Arab nationalist movements, which in turn led to the nationalisation of the Suez Canal in Egypt in 1956, the 1958 overthrow of pro-Western Iraqi regime, the independence of Algeria in 1962, and the nationalisation of Western oil companies in Algeria, Iraq, and Libya. At the heart of liberation movements in the Arab world, national campaigns sought military and political autonomy from former colonial powers.¹²³ In

¹¹⁹ Suleiman bin Himyar was from the Al-Nabhani tribe, which was a prominent dynasty that ruled Oman from the twelfth to the seventeenth century. They are mostly from the north of Oman from Jebel al-Akhdhar. See Wilkinson (1987), pp. 304–306.

¹²⁰ Paxton, 'Unpublished Manuscript', 1996, Private Papers Collection (Chap. 5).

¹²¹ 'Negotiations in Muscat between the Sultan and Mr Julian Amery, Parliamentary Under-Secretary for War'. Text of heads of agreements, 4–25 January 1958 [FO 371/132781 & 132819], in Bailey and Burdett (eds.), *Records of Oman, 1867–1947 [1867–1960]*, Vol. 10, p. 143.

¹²² Ghubash (2006), p. 182.

¹²³ Faysal (1996).

Egypt, the Muslim Brotherhood spearheaded campaigns against Western policies in Palestine.¹²⁴ Animosity towards British and Western regimes peaked. In 1958, under the name of the United Arab Republic (UAR), the first pan-Arab country formed; due to his popularity throughout the Arab world, Jamal Abd Al-Nasser was elected as President. In Oman, where, having acquired rule of the Imamate, the Sultan was dealing with an expanded territory, pan-Arab trends did *not* take root. Rather, despite the change in rule, traditional administrative structures of the Imamate remained and were, in fact, solidified. Observing the continuity in administrative structures, Jeremy Jones and Nicholas Ridout suggest that the Sultan's decision could 'have been motivated by a desire not to emulate the rhetoric of nationalism promoted in Cairo'.¹²⁵

Britain, however, continued a war against the Imamate, which ultimately concluded in the relinquishment of the Dhofar concession by the British.¹²⁶ Due to the unsuccessful explorations and high expenditure, PDOD was re-organised (and became PDO), leaving IPC shareholders to cut back—the international oil companies, NEDCO (Jersey and Mobil) and BP, withdrew in 1960—leaving 85% of the shareholding with Shell (which took over sole operations), 10% with Compagnie Francaise des Pétrole, and 5% with Partex.¹²⁷ The following year, the British government started extricating itself from the Gulf region. Due to Britain's military presence and commitments, however, this proved difficult. The continued presence of the British and Western oil companies exacerbated the frustrations of many Omanis; a group of revolutionaries consequently sank the DARA, a British ship, and directed land-mine explosions at military targets.¹²⁸

The complexity of these issues begins to reveal the extent and depth of influence that PDO had by this time achieved. The oil company claimed a position from which it had the ability to (1) negotiate with the Sultan, to increase PDO's security force and expand its exploration boundaries; (2) negotiate with the Duru' tribes to assist PDO in its exploration; and (3) acquire a monopoly over Oman's oil concessions. From 1960, the country's development became essentially dependent on PDO actions. When the British, for example, rejected the Sultan's request for a Dhofar development loan, PDO stepped in and offered the funds. Oman's reliance on the energy company became more deeply entrenched.

Perhaps as significantly, the granting of this development loan would lead to the emergence of the modern state of Oman. To this point, relations between the Sultan and the tribes over which he ruled were characterised by a 'shifting pattern of local tribal loyalties based on the personality of individual sheikhs and the ups and down

¹²⁴ Details on Arab Nationalism history refer to Dawisha (2003).

¹²⁵ Jones and Ridout (2015), p. 122.

¹²⁶ In 1965, Continental took half of it.

¹²⁷ Clark (2007).

¹²⁸ 'Bahrain to Foreign Office, regarding a mine incident', 4 July 1961, in Anita L. P. Burdett (ed.), *Records of Oman 1961–1965*, p. 97.

of inter-tribal conflict'.¹²⁹ With the development loan, however, and endorsed by the British, Said bin Taimur sought to impose a 'central authority' on the Duru' tribes that paid him loyalty. In this very context, the emergence of a nation-state—as explained by Ernest Gellner, where the state was created without a unified nation—took its form in Oman. Thus, allowing the state to take precedence over the nation as invoked by 'modernity'.¹³⁰ The process included the 'prestige programme', providing status symbols for the tribes in the form of land-rovers, followed with the creation of a 'council of sheikhs' to appeal to the international (even though they had no power).¹³¹ In exploring this process further, the British pushed for the centralisation of government in order to suppress the tribes exploding military targets and threatening their strategic interest in the island of Masirah.

Despite the internal disputes among Omanis, Hugh Wilson, PDO Exploration Manager, continued to explore oil fields in the northern region of Oman. Development continued with the SAF constructing roads to facilitate exploration.¹³² In 1962, commercial quantities of oil were discovered in Yibal; in 1963, they were found in Al-Natih and Al-Fahud.¹³³ In 1964, Francis Hughes, the first Managing Director of PDO, found himself in a position managing Oman's most important development project—that is, its new oil industry.¹³⁴ Under Hughes, PDO observed traditional patterns of relationship with the *sheikhs* (tribal leaders) and local communities and, due to their past loyalty towards the Sultan, accorded the Duru' a monopoly over supply. Despite Hughes' best intentions, however, John Wilkinson points out that such policies 'defining and delimiting of boundaries between states', which were 'aimed at settling disputes and defining potential oil concession areas', in effect 'followed fissiparous rather than fusion tendencies'.¹³⁵

To bridge division and attempt to connect with the locals, PDO established an 'Annual Report' that would be presented to the Sultan of Oman. The effort, nonetheless, appeared to backfire. An Omani employee working in PDO refused a copy, citing the following reasons:

He took exception to the title—'Akhbar Sharikatna' [The news of our company'] in Arabic, saying it is not 'Our Company'—'it belongs to the foreigners for whom the company builds houses, provides meals etc.! He was referring to the accommodation provided for Indian and Pakistani junior staff at Mina al-Fahal. *There was certainly an undercurrent and depth*

¹²⁹ 'Bahrain to Phillips, Consul General, Muscat 29 December 1960, reporting visit to the Sultan, and enclosing additional letter of 29 December 1960 to the Foreign Office' [FO 371/156760], in Burdett (ed.), *Records of Oman 1961–1965*, Archive Editions (1997), Vol. 1, p. 26.

¹³⁰ See Gellner (1983).

¹³¹ 'Foreign Office Minutes of 3 March 1961, as to administration and rule by the Sultan, and possible devolution of power to local shaikhs', 30 March 1961 [FO 371/156764], in Burdett (ed.), *Records of Oman 1961–1965*, Archive Editions (1997), Vol. 1, p. 27.

¹³² 'Middle East Development Division, Beirut to Foreign Office', 28 January 1961, and response, 8 February 1961, Burdett (ed.), *Records of Oman 1961–1965*, Archive Editions (1997), Vol. 1, pp. 50–75.

¹³³ Clark (2007), p. 38.

¹³⁴ Paxton, 'Unpublished Manuscript', 1996, Private Papers Collection (Chap. 6).

¹³⁵ Wilkinson (1987), p. 318.

*of feeling amongst Omanis about their treatment compared with that of the foreign workers which was to cause problems for the company in the years to come.*¹³⁶

By the end of the 1960s, many Omanis considered PDO to be an infiltrator of their environments, livelihoods, and development. The presence and activity of PDO dramatically affected Omani social life. For example, this was found among the SAF employees' jealousy towards the PDO employees, as the latter was paid more. This was a policy imposed by the Sultan, but PDO was blamed for it since, by law, it is illegal in Oman to insult or criticise the actions of the Sultan.¹³⁷ Moreover, there were instances when the SAF field intelligence officer, Major Malcolm Dennison, for example, believed that PDO could afford anything and thus he would 'ask PDO to take an Omani for whom he wants to do a favour for political reasons. He [... also blamed] PDO for the army's failure to recruit soldiers'.¹³⁸ Although PDO carried out various training and development programmes for the Omanis, for some, this was not enough.

Nevertheless, in 1967, the first export of Omani oil took place. At this point, the north of Oman was more or less stable. The same however cannot be said about the south, where a revolt arose against the Sultanate.

3.2.7 *Instability in Dhofar*

Following PDO's efforts to engage with the Omani public, the Sultan drew out development plans for Dhofar, all of which necessitated financial revenue. Due to repressing the revolts in the north, the Sultan's funds were drying out, and discontent in the south was surfacing. In mid-1961, the American company, Dhofar-City Services Company (DCSC), had suspended its operations to explore for oil in Dhofar.¹³⁹ The next year, Wendell Phillips, an American archaeologist, had organised for Said bin Taimur to meet with John Mecom, an independent oil operator from Houston, who bought a 60% share of DCSC and signed a concession agreement for three years.¹⁴⁰ Disappointments followed, however: the oil flow in the Marmul field down south declined, and the oil substance proved too heavy to exploit commercially.

¹³⁶ Paxton, 'Unpublished Manuscript', 1996, Private Papers Collection (Chap. 6) (added emphasis). This resentment towards expatriates resonates today among some of the Omanis (see Chap. 6 of this study).

¹³⁷ There are many laws that criminalise insulting the Sultan. The law is not targeted at Omanis only; it applies to everyone. An example of this is Royal Decree No. 49/84. 'Press and Publications Law' issued on 26 May 1984.

¹³⁸ Paxton 'Oman Handbook', 1965, Private Papers Collection.

¹³⁹ 'Extract from Bahrain report, summing up oil activity in Muscat, 26 April 1961', [FO 371/156810], in Burdett (ed.), Records of Oman 1961–1965, Archive Editions (1997), Vol. 1, p. 643.

¹⁴⁰ 'Mecom Ltd. of USA have purchased into Dhofar City Services Company' [FO 371/162874], in Burdett (ed.), Records of Oman 1961–1965, Archive Editions (1997), Vol. 2, p. 697.

Although Sultan Said had quelled the Imamate and the 1959 Green Mountain revolution, a new round of unrest was stirring in Dhofar. To escape the unrest, and because development was stagnating, many of the Dhofaris immigrated north to the interior of Oman or on to other oil-producing countries, such as Kuwait and Saudi Arabia.¹⁴¹ It was during their time abroad, in flight, that Dhofaris were exposed to Arab nationalist movements, especially that which had assembled around Jamal Abd Al-Nasser.¹⁴² The Nasserite movement, represented by the Movement of Arab Nationalists (MAN), advocated the expatriate Dhofaris against Sultan Said and his British allies.¹⁴³ Imam Ghalib, for example, who was then residing in Saudi Arabia, pledged financial and military support to the Dhofaris if they would unite against the Sultan and his Western allies.¹⁴⁴ Domestically in Dhofar, sporadic attacks on the British military base and the oil companies followed. In 1964, the Dhofar Liberation Front (DLF) was established to create a separatist state of Dhofar.¹⁴⁵ The DLF carried out an armed revolt with wider political aspirations where their main goal was to guarantee the Omani people ‘freedom, unity, social justice, and dignity’.¹⁴⁶

The attacks in Dhofar continued until 1964 when Said bin Taimur arrested 50 men before they officially announced the revolution against the Sultan. The situation in Dhofar was dire regardless of the Sultan’s efforts to further its civil development.¹⁴⁷ Said bin Taimur imposed trivial laws such as the banning of wearing glasses, playing music, traveling, playing football, smoking cigarettes, and so forth, which only exacerbated further popular discontent. A UN report in, 1965 described the Dhofaris’ state as follows:

The people of Dhofar [...] were treated by the Sultan as slaves. He was cruel and imposed many arbitrary restrictions on the people. They could not travel outside; they were not permitted to build houses; food could only be bought in one walled market where the quantity was fixed; and they were not allowed to import or export goods. Further, there was no work in Dhofar, no schools, no hospitals, no economic life, no equality, and no right to participate in politics.¹⁴⁸

¹⁴¹ At a UN summit in Yugoslavia in 1959, the British were questioned on the ongoing revolts in Oman, and were accused of guarding their interests at the expense of national liberation: ‘Why doesn’t the British confess that the continuous warfare taking place in Oman is related to the finding of oil in the region?’ Fearing negative publicity, the British immediately opened a hospital in 1961. For more details refer to: Redha (1969).

¹⁴² Al-Saadi (1976).

¹⁴³ Halliday (1974).

¹⁴⁴ Al-Amri (2011).

¹⁴⁵ Townsend (1977).

¹⁴⁶ My translation of: ‘*al-huriya, wa al-wihda, wa al-‘adala al-ijtima’eyah, wa al-karama*’, cited in Ali Fayyad (1975).

¹⁴⁷ Differing from the dominant historical perspective on the Dhofar war, which claims that Said bin Taimur did not develop Dhofar (and therefore a rebellion took place). This research, in contrast, contends that modest development existed since the early 1960s, which included roads, some schools, and a broadcasting transmitter in Salalah. See Anita L. P. Burdett (ed.), *Records of Oman 1961–1965*, Archive Editions (1997), Vols. 1–6.

¹⁴⁸ As quoted in Trabulsi (1972).

At the same time, the Dhofari tribal leaders contacted the Imamates in Saudi Arabia with the aim of forming an alliance to fight against the British throughout the Gulf. This constituted the beginning of the first phase¹⁴⁹ of the official revolution. Calling for the abdication of Said bin Taimur's regime, the DLF launched attempts to assassinate the Sultan. Their efforts failed.

By 1966, what had begun as a national rebellion had escalated to a regional scale.¹⁵⁰ Libya, Iraq, Egypt, Syria, Palestine¹⁵¹, and Algeria¹⁵² joined with the Imamates, Dhofaris, and Nasserite Arab nationalists to assist the revolutionary efforts of the Omanis in the north. However, in the first three years of the rebellion, the DLF did not develop a strategic agenda and platform. Moreover, following the decline of *al-qawmiya al- 'Arabiya* (Arab nationalism) in 1967, the unity of the Arabs deteriorated.

Oman, at this time, seemed virtually a playground for global and regional powers including the Soviet Union, China, the Americans and the British, the Shah of Iran, Saudi Arabia, and South Yemen.¹⁵³ Each of the regional powers allied with a global power; South Yemen allied with the Soviet Union and China, extending communist ideology to Dhofar while benefiting from the supply of weapons and other logistical needs.¹⁵⁴ The external influences facilitated the wide political aspirations of the rebellion:

East versus West, Communist versus Capitalist confrontation. The Dhofaris were influenced by Chinese and Soviet Communism. If they won the war, Omani oil would have gone to communist countries. All the weapons [for the rebels] were communist. Some were trained in Russia and some in China. I have a photo of them training in China. We got this information from intelligence. The rebellion was a regional aspiration that was communist backed.¹⁵⁵

In this regard, the south of Oman was a base for proxy wars where Western regimes fought against communist regimes. As competing parties battled for control of Omani oil, ideologies battled too.

In phase two of the revolution (1968–1970), the British and SAF tried to weaken the Dhofari tribes by dividing them. As Fred Halliday notes, 'One of the first acts of the Front was to divide Dhofar and into three geographic units (West, Centre,

¹⁴⁹ Some authors divide the stages of the Dhofar revolution into two, three, or six phases, while others do not make a division. This study follows Halliday and Trabulsi's structure and divides the historical struggle in Dhofar into three phases (1) 1965–1967; (2) 1968–1970, and (3) 1971–1976. Given the historical period, this Chapter covers the first two phases, while the next Chapter covers phase three.

¹⁵⁰ For more on the Dhofar rebellion refer to Takriti (2013).

¹⁵¹ In 1973 when the Iranian troops landed on the shores of Dhofar, *Harakat al-Tahrir al-Watani al-Filastini* (FATAH) was the major movement that helped Dhofaris fight against the Iranians.

¹⁵² Algeria is the first country that accepted to open an office for the people's liberation movement in Algiers.

¹⁵³ Iraq was another regional power; however, it was an indirect power as its influence was carried out through political organisations.

¹⁵⁴ Halliday (1974), p. 228.

¹⁵⁵ Interview with Michael Wilson, Retired Lieutenant General SAF, Royal Army of Oman until 1976 and fought in the Dhofar war. 16 January 2016, Muscat.

East) in order to supersede definition by tribal area'.¹⁵⁶ The divide-and-conquer strategy backfired. Prompted by the Sultan's decision to impose more blockades on the Dhofaris, in 1968, many more Dhofaris joined the struggle. The independence of South Yemen, the rise of the Palestinian struggle, and the exchange of Arab nationalism for Marxist ideology transformed the DLF into the People's Front for the Liberation of the Occupied Arabian Gulf (PFLOAG). Fawwaz Trabulsi, journalist and author, offers a firsthand account of the events that followed in 1969:

With this started the radical transformation of consciousness and social relations in the liberated areas: the wide-scale literacy campaign, the liberation of women through the abolition of the bride-price, polygamy, and the granting of equal rights to women in choosing their partners. But most remarkable of all is the work on the demolition of the tribal system and its values. This is the work that Britain and her agents are seeking to stop by bombing innocent civilians, demolishing huts, and wells, and killing livestock.¹⁵⁷

At this stage, the western province of Dhofar remained independent of the British and the Sultan. The British efforts to isolate Dhofar from southern Yemen were to no avail; underpinning support for South Yemen, in the same year, NLF member Faisal Al-Sha 'ab was appointed Prime Minister of the People's Democratic Republic of South Yemen.

Meanwhile, contrary to claims that the Sultan opposed development,¹⁵⁸ Said bin Taimur continued to advance the country—especially in Muscat—by authorising projects to develop, for example, water schemes, a port, and a school for girls.¹⁵⁹ Along with development plans came an inflow of consultants and experts specialising in medicine, agriculture, and road construction—all of whom would play an integral role in forming the Sultanate of Oman in 1970 (as discussed in Chap. 4). The Sultan did not oppose development in Dhofar; if anything, he despised its delay, which he attributed to both the British and a lack of finance. In his opinion, the British policies in South Yemen had directly caused discontent in Dhofar; through the 1958 agreement, the British had assumed responsibility for ensuring security in Dhofar, which, in the Sultan's estimation, fundamentally required investment in development.¹⁶⁰ Adding a bit of nuance, Abdel Razzaq Takriti claims that PDO also shared some blame, since it failed effectively to redistribute the oil income to the Omani people and ascribed to a labour policy which discriminated against the Omani workforce in favour of British employees.¹⁶¹ Nevertheless, PDO continued its operations unhampered in the northern region of Oman. Furthermore, by the end of the 1960s, it concluded

¹⁵⁶ Halliday (1974), p. 331.

¹⁵⁷ Trabulsi (1972), p. 12.

¹⁵⁸ Al-Amri (2011), p. 138.

¹⁵⁹ 'Forwarding valedictory Address by outgoing British Consul, D. C. Carden: summary and despatch of 30 June 1969, summarising developments in Muscat over four years' [partly withheld by Foreign Office] [FO 1016/790], in Anita L. P. Burdett (ed.), *Records of Oman 1966–1971*, Archive Editions (1948), Vol. 4, p. 4.

¹⁶⁰ D.G. Crawford, Her Majesty's Consul-General, Muscat to HE Sir Stewart Crawford, Political Resident in the Persian Gulf, 4 January 1971, *Annual Review for 1970*, [DEF25/186], in Burdett (ed.), *Records of Oman 1966–1971*, Vol. 5, pp. 3–5.

¹⁶¹ Takriti (2013), p. 151.

with the Sultan giving PDO the concession for Dhofar.¹⁶² Despite the prospect of development, however, the situation in Dhofar grew worse.

By the end of the 1960s, the discovery of oil in commercial quantities precipitated moves towards the securitisation of energy in order to further Oman's commitment to development. The process for civil and defence development strengthened the state and allowed for the channelling of British imperial influence in the name of 'development'. These changes emerged after the Imamate revolt of 1955 and during the Dhofar revolution, thus, reformulating the paradigms of development. In this respect, as the next Chapters chapters will demonstrate, the direction for further development in the country did not go uncontested. The connection between informal British imperialism and the securitisation of energy in Oman are in this context unified, and, as will be revealed in Chapter four, the Sultan, and his experts (which includes internal and external economic consultants, politicians, as well as military personnel and former intelligence officers) all played a role in this process.

Conclusion

This chapter first illustrated how new iterations and practices emerged and are consequently transformed in association with different forces and different groups of experts well prior to the establishment of the modern state of Oman. Utilising a sociological approach embedded in history, it deconstructed the notion that a linear narrative might relate to how 'energy security' has been formed in Oman. By contrast, it suggested that any understanding of energy in Oman must account for a trajectory marked by both continuity and rupture. Moreover, by highlighting the integration of issues of state formation, colonial interest, competition, and unrest, this chapter underscored the complexity of how relations between 'energy' and 'security' are framed, which moves the understanding of 'energy security' beyond the prism of development and welfare and attends to how 'energy' becomes connected to security discourses as well as practices. When looking at the link between energy and security, one finds that 'energy security' comes to incorporate issues ranging from unemployment to governance, international relations, and social security. Thus, plural discourses and practices contribute to the way in which 'energy security' has been conceived in Oman. These discourses and practices will be discussed further in the next chapters, in which questions of development, diversification, and conservation, are reflected post-1970. Secondly, this chapter showed that there is no straightforward process of securitising energy. Energy and security were connected in diverse ways by different actors: the British and their imperial strategy, the Sultan, tribal actors in Oman, and international actors as well (elaborated in Chap. 4). The emergence of 'energy security' as shown in the second section thwarts processes of domestic development.

The first section aimed to explicate the limitations of current analytical paradigms, especially the most predominant, namely, rentier state theory. Though helpful in

¹⁶² 'D.G. Crawford, Consulate General, Muscat, to HE Sir Stewart Crawford, Political Resident', Bahrain, 30 December 1969, Annual Review for 1969 [FO1016/791], in Burdett (ed.), *Records of Oman 1966–1971*, Archive Editions (1948), Vol. 4, p. 9.

explaining certain factors related to the emergence of state structures, ‘rentier state theory’ and other state formation models fail to question over-simplified and, in many cases, Eurocentric, Orientalist visions of the region. Furthermore, none of these models has yet been able to provide a clear answer as to why oil wealth seemingly increases the likelihood of violent conflict.

The second section revealed how the origins of Oman’s energy discourse, which began in 1921, between two external parties (the British government and the APOC) complicated the notion of development by prioritising the interests of oil operations and explorations at the expense of national unity. The imperial role of the British government consolidated the belief that securitising energy—through civil development programmes and military operations—would smooth the path for the accumulation of oil wealth. British imperial influence further established its deeply rooted influence on the country’s development. In this context, certain ideas about development were shaped; all of which influenced the pattern of inclusion and exclusion when managing energy in Oman during the 1970s.

Finally, this chapter showed the dominant threads of influence—the flow of actors, the British imperial history, the tribal conflicts, and the Sultan’s regime—that have been constant throughout Omani history. Reflecting on this extensive history, the first thread is the affiliation of the state with PDO, which is found in PDO’s Managing Director’s direct relationship with the Sultan of Oman from the twentieth century to this present day. The relationship is one predicated on suppressing uprisings, expanding Oman’s security force, creating a state–society binary, eradicating unemployment, and maintaining social security. The second thread is related to Oman’s relationship with the British. Although no formal British administrative rule exists or ever has, Oman’s energy history alone reveals how deeply British influence has penetrated since the late nineteenth century.¹⁶³ While British colonial interests were perhaps more explicit than they are today, nevertheless, their embedded influence remains. Important to add is the implicit influence of other actors and institutions that have also asserted the boundaries of state–society. These actors include business opportunists and merchants to the Sultanate’s government institutions and private enterprises in the country (discussed in Chaps. 4 and 5).

The case of Oman, through its political and sociological history, illustrates the various dimensions and elements that constitute ‘energy security’. Accordingly, the following chapter will turn to the next period of Omani history, that is, the Cold War, to examine how global and local dynamics connect to the ongoing process of securitisation within, and the concurrent rapid growth of the modern state of Oman.

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¹⁶³ Common (2008).

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Chapter 4

Competition or Cooperation? Energy Discourse During 1970 to 1989



'As you know, there is no homeland, no security, no stability and no prestige without the army. The country that has no army, or a weak army, is a target for attacks from outside.'
~The Late Sultan Qaboos bin Said, April 23, 1971

Introduction

Following upon the previous chapter, which focused on the relationship between energy and security prior to 1970, the historical analysis in this chapter mainly concerns itself with the latter two decades of the Cold War. Highlighting the relationship between energy, development, conservation, and security from 1970 to 1989, and tracing the networks of international, regional, and domestic actors, it argues that the British and Americans, especially—through their political, social, and economic influence—played defining roles in shaping the energy complex in Oman, as well as contributing to the plural understandings and formations of 'energy security'.

This chapter begins by tracing the various discourses and practices that have historically connected energy to security in Oman. Since few formal processes govern decision-making in the Sultanate, an evaluation of decisions will have to consider the informal practices carried out, for example, among merchants, society, officials, and experts. Drawing on the work of Didier Bigo, it will also consider how collective actions and 'informal rules' created a particular context for understanding how an energy *security continuum* emerged.¹ This chapter will pay particular attention to the part played by 'energy' in national security-building processes, civil war, and the international rivalry between the US and the UK. Section 4.1, therefore, will demonstrate how British–American rivalry positioned Oman regionally and internationally, and how these competing and often collaborating actors securitised energy. Section 4.2 will illustrate the impact of consultants and advisers upon the energy

¹ Bigo (2001).

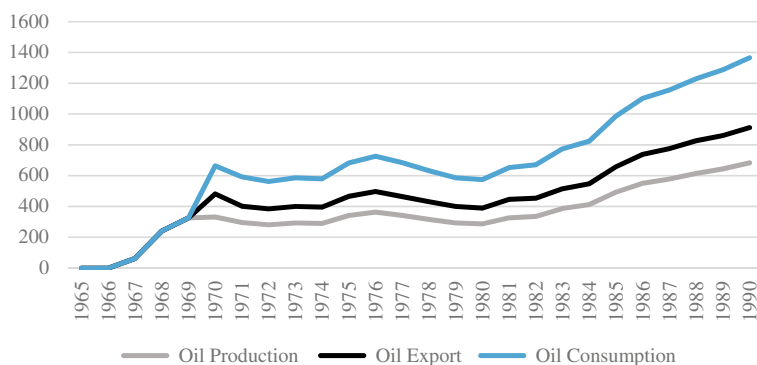


Fig. 4.1 Oil production, export and consumption (1965–1990)

discourse and practices in Oman. Given the undefined nature of security threats stemming from energy issues,² especially in Oman's 'modern'³ historical context, this chapter seeks to identify (for the first time) the key securitising actors and policies in the *security continuum*. Here, Timothy Mitchell's concept of the *rule of experts* will reveal the role in which internal and external 'experts' produced certain discourses and influenced practices through their entanglement within the regimes of power.⁴

Ultimately, this chapter will argue that in Oman, the link between energy and security has largely come by way of non-discursive practices, producing a situation in which security is 'essentially a contested concept'.⁵ By drawing on the concepts of the *security continuum* and the *rule of experts*, and by utilising a sociological approach of *securitisation*, it aims to uncover the multifarious formulations of 'energy security' and its attendant discourses and practices. The chapter will show that new discourses of development and diversification arose with the inflow of consultants and 'experts' both during colonial times and later in 1970 under the name of developing the Sultanate. In both contexts, as a means of leveraging foreign influence over the future development of the country, energy became highly securitised.

In 1970, energy in the Sultanate developed into the primary substance utilised to distribute wealth. The material production base of oil in Oman from 1970 to 1989 is reflected in Fig. 4.1.⁶ As mentioned in the previous chapter, oil was discovered in commercial quantity in 1962, but it was only in 1967 that the Sultanate began exporting oil.⁷

² Discussed in detail in Chap. 2 of this study.

³ 'Modern' in this context means a state represented by a government and not by a singular individual.

⁴ Mitchell (2002).

⁵ Buzan (1983).

⁶ Mackenzie (2017).

⁷ According to the Ministry of Oil and Gas, the National Centre for Statistics and Information and the current Managing Director of Petroleum Development of Oman, further data is not available given that Oman did not export or import gas during this period (however, associated gas during 1979 was found but in minimal quantities, and it was only produced in large quantities in 2004), and since the discovery of oil in 1962 the Sultanate never imported oil.

Until 1980, oil production levels were fluctuating as shown above. The production level of crude oil then began increasing steadily from 1980 onwards making oil central in the country's economy.

Moreover, as Fig. 4.1 demonstrates, the consumption and export curve of oil followed the production level during the 1970s and towards 1989. Most of the consumption during this period went towards development projects and state-building, in an aim to move the country into a so-called modern state, as well as suppressing the unrest in Dhofar. This played a significant role in the social history of Oman and in the process of state-formation (as discussed in Chap. 3). By introducing the social history into the equation, the assemblage of actors became instrumental in mediating political negotiations, contractual deals, and planning for long-term development of the oil complex, generating the foundations of Oman's *security continuum*. This web of influences through which energy becomes securitised can be traced from the establishment of the modern state of Oman, in 1970, to the Dhofar Revolution, which ended in 1979. During this time, energy became entwined with securitised issues that included development, technological advancements, and diversification. This brought the flow of experts and consultants, some of which sought self-interest. Many experts were ex-intelligence American officers and British military officers or served in some official capacity in Oman. These individuals, among other influential actors (as will be discussed), shifted their roles nearly seamlessly between government, military service, diplomatic responsibilities, and corporate occupations, during the 1970s.

The context in 1970

With the revenue from hydrocarbon exports, by 1970, oil had become the largest, most lucrative industry in Oman. The battle for oil control among the international companies, local regimes, and global powers, would impact the formation of national boundaries, the concept of Omani nationalism (*al-nahdha al-mubarak*a—the Omani renaissance), and the war in Dhofar.

Despite the prospect of development in 1970, as discussed in Chap. 3, the situation in Dhofar grew worse. Therefore, the son of Said bin Taimur, Qaboos along with British assistance conducted a bloodless coup overthrowing his father, thus making him the new Sultan of the Sultanate of Oman.⁸ After the coup, the Dhofari rebels continued calling for national liberation and the removal of the British-supported monarch. The British, meanwhile, justified the use of intelligence and military force to combat the so-called *adoo* (enemy).⁹ When Qaboos acquired the monarchy, the British armed forces temporarily contained the revolutionary fighters from People's Front for the Liberation of the Occupied Arabian Gulf (PFLOAG). The Sultan thus pledged that: 'we will offer everything, even our lives, to restore security in that part of our country' and will lead the country towards 'the path of social reform

⁸ For details on the coup refer to: 'Review of the Coup d'état'. Anita (1948), Vol. 5, pp. 135–143.

⁹ The British counter-insurgency efforts from the mid-1970 to 1975 in Dhofar were regarded as a 'model' campaign for other contemporary campaigns (for example Iraq and Afghanistan). For more information refer to: Hughes (2009), p. 273.

and comprehensive development'.¹⁰ To establish social development, the Omani government created a development board bringing in experts and technicians to assist with the cavalcade of expansion. In the first year alone, the Sultanate spent more than £20 million of its £55 million in oil revenues on defence to suppress the guerrilla fighters in Dhofar.¹¹ Here, the process of development became intertwined with security processes as Oman's finances were mostly spent on the military sector.

In this period, another revolutionary group called the National Democratic Front for the Liberation of Oman and the Gulf (NDFLOAG)¹² planned an attack on the SAF (Sultan Armed Forces) in Nizwa and Izki, in the northern interior of Oman. The SAF captured and arrested the NDFLOAG members. To weaken the tribal unity among the revolutionaries, the British forces started distributing money to prominent tribes in return for handing over PFLQAG fighters. While attacks occurred sporadically throughout the country, the weakening of the left-wing movement took place when Musallam bin Nufl, who began the rebellion and initiated the Dhofar Liberation Front (DLF), called on his comrades to stop their attacks. He said, 'there remains no reason for Dhofaris to go on fighting, for Qaboos has already promised us more than we ever sought from his father'.¹³ With this, many of the Dhofari rebels stopped fighting against the SAF and assisted the Sultanate in suppressing other revolutionaries.

The importance placed by the British on maintaining the Omani monarchy cannot be underestimated. British interests hinged on the monarchy's continuance, as did those of other Western countries. Oman's economic and geo-strategic position was the principal reason for any Western presence in the region, especially during the 1970s and 1980s, when the inflow of intelligence and military officers into the country became the norm. Given the 'expertise' of the military officials, a large sum of finances from the Omani budget would be spent to fund the war against the Dhofaris.¹⁴ As the Sultanate's military expenditure increased, communist presence also increased. Through their support of the Dhofari revolutionaries, the USSR and China became vital in the ideological struggle between communism and capitalism. This in turn elicited distress among Western countries, especially the US and the UK, which feared that the USSR and China would overthrow and replace the Gulf monarchies with left-wing regimes, therefore, threatening oil supplies to the Western world. As the Commander of the SAF, John Graham, explained as the 'Western interest in maintaining the political status quo in the Gulf is primarily concerned with oil supply, so the potential for mischievous and disruptive actions by the Soviet

¹⁰ 'His Majesty July 23rd, 1971, first National Day anniversary speech, 1971', John Graham Collection, Box 1/1, The Government of Oman and General Papers c. 1968–1980 [GB 165-0327].

¹¹ 'The Economist—International Report 'The Dhofar War', 3 April 1971' John Graham Collection, Box 7/3, Newspaper Articles, 1970–2000 [GB 165-0327].

¹² The NDF is another group that joined in the struggle with the Dhofari revolutionaries. They came from the northern interior of Oman, and had cells stretched to the UAE.

¹³ 'The Persian Gulf: Security after British withdrawal' issued 1973, John Graham Collection, Box 1/3 [GB 165-0327].

¹⁴ Expenditure of OR 12 million, OR 16.3 million, and OR 30 million, was spent in the years 1970, 1971, and 1972 consecutively. The Omani Rial (OR) has been pegged to the US Dollar since the mid-1980s at an exchange rate of US\$1 = OR 0.385. Prior to this, the US Dollar currency equivalents to the OR is as follows: Before August 15, 1971, is OR 1 = \$2.4; 1972 – OR 1 = \$2.60; 1973 – OR 1 = \$2.89; and in 1974 – OR 1 = \$2.895. Allen and Rigsbee (2000), p. 65.

Union was limited by her own growing interest in Gulf oil'.¹⁵ The complex web of events shows how oil, a mere material substance, was characterised to have gained nearly indomitable power over political and economic interests.

By the year 1972, the Sultanate's budget was drained due to high military expenditures,¹⁶ along with other personal expenditures made by the Sultan.¹⁷ Nonetheless, the SAF continued to develop into a larger force equipped with modern weapons bought from Britain.¹⁸ The Chief of Staff for SAF, Ahmad Al-Nabhani, explains that throughout the 1970s it was essential that there existed 'a form of balance between the Sultan Armed Forces and the progression of development in the country'.¹⁹ By selling arms to the SAF, therefore, British intervention continued in the name of development. The rhetoric of civil development, according to John Peterson, became the official British historiography of why the UK was in Oman in the 1970s.²⁰ When the UN called on Britain to explain its suppression of the revolutionary front in Dhofar, the British explained how the Omani monarchy had committed itself 'to devot[ing] all its resources to economic and social development'.²¹ This pledge of development assured the UN that the war has been suppressed due to British assistance. In a confidential letter marked for 'UK Eyes Only', the British government noted that Taylor Woodrow,²² a British construction company founded in 1921, would take care of the development schemes for the country.²³ These development efforts nonetheless were not apparent to the people of Oman, nor were they any government policies targeted to improve the local conditions.²⁴ In actuality, the British in 1972 continued expanding their military strength and increased their weaponry to support the SAF military actions in Dhofar.²⁵ In this respect, the rhetoric of development cloaked the true British motives.

¹⁵ 'The Persian Gulf: Security after British withdrawal, 1973' John Graham Collection, Box 1/3 [GB 165-0327].

¹⁶ 'Welfare (Budget) Proposals 1972' issued 10 October 1971, John Graham Collection, Box 1/4 [GB 165-0327].

¹⁷ Takriti (2013), p. 218.

¹⁸ The Sultan's Armed Force (SAF) is divided as follows: Royal Armed Force, Royal Air Force, and the Royal Navy of Oman. The SAF is supported by other departments that includes the Ministry of Defence Engineering Services and other departments within the Ministry.

¹⁹ Interview # 1 with Lieutenant General Ahmad bin Harith Al-Nabhani, Chief of Staff Sultan's Armed Forces. 26 April 2016, Muscat. While the Chief of Staff was still in office when this interview was conducted in 2016, he was officially retired since 2019.

²⁰ Peterson (2007).

²¹ 'CSAF's Assessment of the Military Situation in Dhofar on 14 February 1972', John Graham Collection, Box 2/1 [GB 165-0327].

²² Taylor Woodrow expanded into Oman in the 1960s. In 1973, they joined hands with W. J. Towell to form Taylor Woodrow Towell (TWT). They contracted several projects across the country including hospitals, TV Studio's, roads, Bowshar Stadium, Nizwa Stadium, Sohar Stadium, Salalah Hilton, and in the case of Madinat Sultan Qaboos, a completely new township.

²³ 'Confidential: UK Eyes Only: Resume of Events 1 January–20 July 1971', John Graham Collection, Box 2/5 [GB 165-0327].

²⁴ 'The Dhofaris' draft paper, John Graham Collection, Box 2/1 [GB 165-0327].

²⁵ 'The Sultan's Armed Forces (SAF)' John Graham Collection, Box 2/1 [GB 165-0327].

Even with the change of leadership in 1970, the military conflict continued, which affected the Sultanate's financial, economic, and political position. Therefore, Qaboos requested training for the SAF in order to carry out civil development plans to appease his subjects.²⁶ The economic effects of high military expenditure, however, caused Omanis mistrust towards the new Sultan. Michael Wilson, who served in the SAF during the 1970s, explained that the people's uncertainty of Qaboos' leadership was also because the Sultan was unknown to them: 'I remember one man, Al-Harthy, saying that we do not know about this Sultan, the son of a snake is a snake'.²⁷ This was the prevailing opinion since Qaboos was not known to the Omani people as his father, fearing he would challenge his policies, locked him in the palace in Dhofar. Their inability to trust Qaboos motivated the Dhofaris to continue attacks throughout Oman, leading to an escalation that did not aid Oman's plans to develop the southern oil fields; hence, Qaboos called for more military support.²⁸ In 1977, the Shah of Iran also sent military assistance to Dhofar, where the Iranians established bases on three of Khuriya Muriya's islands; however, their aid was ineffective.²⁹

Meanwhile, the Chinese opened relations with Western regimes and withdrew its support of South Yemen, further weakening the revolt in Dhofar. Writing on Chinese foreign policy in the Middle East, Lillian Craig Harris observes that Chinese assistance to the rebels entirely diminished 'in favour of diplomatic ties with Iran, which sponsored the Sultanate of Oman as a force for regional stability'.³⁰ In the same year, the Sultanate began gaining political support from the global powers, while the regional powers were diminishing one at a time.³¹ By the mid-1970s, the region was left with only two global powers, the USSR and the Americans. During this time, Oman entered its final period of the Dhofari revolution, guided by British counter-insurgency methods, which led to the deaths of many Omanis.³² Against seemingly insurmountable odds, the PFLOAG reconsidered whether to continue the struggle, or to follow the moderate factions within the front that advocated for an end to the opposition. As a result, in 1974, the leadership of PFLOAG was divided

²⁶ This included the success of the Ministry of Health to contain cholera and use the inflow of engineers to set up and drill water wells, as well as build and repair roads. See: 'Address given by HM Sultan Qaboos bin Said, Radio Oman, Muscat—23rd April 1971' John Graham Collection, Box 3/3 [GB 165-0327].

²⁷ Interview # 2 with Michael Wilson, former Lieutenant General in the Sultan Armed Forces Royal Army during the 1970s. 16 January 2016, Muscat.

²⁸ 'Economic Development in Oman 1970–1985 delivered by Dr. Sherif Lotfy, 16 December 1980' John Graham Collection, Box 1/1 [GB 165-0327].

²⁹ The Islands are located southeast of the Omani coast. It used to be part of Aden's settlement (which is in Yemen) in 1868, however, in 1967 the British included it as part of Oman's territory while Oman was (and one can argue, still is) under British colony.

³⁰ Harris (1995), p. 338.

³¹ At this stage, Yemen suffered economically and politically. To add to this, Yemen's relationship with the Soviet Union was strained as the USSR failed to deliver promised arms to Sanaa and provide economic assistance to the north of Yemen. Therefore, Yemen sought to improve its relationship with Saudi and the US to obtain military and economic aid, thus rendering the Soviet Union's support insignificant.

³² Halliday (1974), p. 362.

into two independent political entities: The Popular Front for the Liberation of Oman and the Popular Front for the Liberation of Bahrain.³³ On 11 December 1975, the rebellion was weakened as British, Jordanian, and Iranian troops, suppressed the remaining rebels, and the SAF contained the rebellion.

The first five years of Qaboos' reign were therefore dominated by the suppression of revolt in the north and south of the country. The historical background detailing the processes by which Omanis, in this period of transition, navigated issues of development, security-building, civil war, and radical politics, brings into light the context to investigate British and American investments and the cooperation and competition between them.

4.1 British–American Competitive Cooperation

By tracing the emergence and power of informal networks, this section aims to illustrate the dominant roles the British and Americans played in Oman, in the 1970s. Stemming from an interest in securing energy supply, commercial and economic stakes, and military strongholds, the Western powers aimed to keep Soviet naval presence in the Indian Ocean area under surveillance. Through the converging actions of diplomats, military, and intelligence officers, the British and Americans coordinated response to the so-called communist threat and other external influences.

Despite their commonalities, however, the two countries arrived in Oman through very different circumstances. A comparative look will show how Britain's relationship gradually transformed from one of colonial involvement to one of broader, strategic interest driven by the Cold War. The United States, by contrast, was mainly drawn into the relationship in the 1970s for strategic, Cold War reasons, along with the need to compensate for a loss of influence in Iran. Particularly after the 1979 Iranian revolution, Oman offered the US attractive military access. Oil, too, played a major part in American policies in the region, especially in Saudi Arabia and some parts of Iran.

4.1.1 *Oman's Link to Britain and America*

One of the earliest British–Omani agreements signed in the nineteenth century proclaimed that 'the friendship of the two States may remain unshook till the end of time, and till the sun and moon have finished their revolving career'.³⁴ Highlighting the longstanding relationship between the two countries, this quote is still parroted

³³ For a detailed account on how exactly the rebellion ended refer to Takriti (2013), pp. 298–303.

³⁴ Laing and Alston (2014).

by various British and Omani officials in formal events. Unlike the Trucial States³⁵ in the Gulf region, Oman never formally became a British protectorate. Since the nineteenth century, Oman has retained significant autonomy over its internal affairs, limiting external intervention.³⁶ The country's alliance with Britain has been part of its security framework; Britain is bound by a treaty to protect the Sultanate if ever the need should arise. More than anything, the relationship between these two countries has been based on close military and security ties, which are cemented, in turn, by oil revenues.

During the 1970s, military support from Britain came mainly from the supply of troops, military training, and arms. The British army supplied both loan and contracted officers, the former of which served for a maximum of two years before returning to the British army, the latter of which were mercenary and fought permanently for the Omani army. British companies, too, contributed to defence. BAE Systems, for example—a British multinational defence, security, and aerospace company—has traded weapons, arms, and a range of defence services to the Sultanate for over fifty years.³⁷

The first two decades of Qaboos' reign, military expenditure was assumed compulsory by the Omani government. Hugh Oldman, who commanded the SAF in the 1960s, advised the Sultan to increase British officers in Dhofar and 'pay them handsomely'.³⁸ The justification for increasing the military force, according to former British military officer Wilson, assumed that it was not possible to pursue any political, developmental, or educational policies without internal security and stability.³⁹ Nothing fancy was needed, simply quantities. According to Al-Nabhani:

In the seventies, we needed armament [...] we didn't need sophisticated expensive armaments, we simply needed weapons that enabled us to suppress the war in Dhofar. The rebels had very simple weaponry that was not advanced, which is what helped us defeat them, since our weapons was better than theirs.⁴⁰

To meet this need, in the name of 'internal security', the British—deflecting its military responsibilities per the 1958 Exchange of Letters—encouraged Qaboos to

³⁵ The Trucial States, also known as the Trucial States of the Coast of Oman, were signatories to treaties with the British government, making the sheikhdoms (Abu Dhabi, Ajman, Dubai, Fujairah, Kalba, Ras al-Khaimah, Sharjah, and Umm Al Quwain) under the informal protectorate of Britain from 1820 to 1971.

³⁶ Valeri (2014).

³⁷ BAE delivered Oman its first aircraft. Its services include various sectors: security sector, cyber security, financial services, and fraud control, as well as inward investment from technology transfer to domestic manufactures. While its services extend to providing Farsi courses for Omanis, which was essential considering the threat of Iranian power throughout the Arab region, particularly so in the 1980s (detailed in section of this chapter). Interview # 3 with Anonymous individual works with the military sector. 5 February 2015, Muscat.

³⁸ 'The Guardian: 'Sultan to Boost Muscat's army' by David Holden issued on 3 August 1970' John Graham Collection, Box 7/2 [GB 165-0327].

³⁹ Interview # 2. 16 January 2016, Muscat.

⁴⁰ Interview # 1. 26 April 2016, Muscat.

increase oil exports and to use the revenues to grow the military sector.⁴¹ Throughout the Cold War, most of the oil revenues were indeed directed to military expenditures. The Sultanate's objective, during this unstable period, was to maintain the 'independence and security of the regime'⁴²; oil served as the means of doing so.

This attachment of oil to regime security continued the process of energy securitisation. As Robert Alston, former British Ambassador to Oman (1986), explains, as part of his development plan for Oman, the Sultan 'had to include the build-up of the internal forces'.⁴³ However:

To have an adequate military force to support regional political and diplomatic policies that led him to have requirements for aircrafts, weapons, army vehicles and so on, which brought in Britain, France, not just two, to secure that business.⁴⁴

Thus, alongside of Britain, the United States entered the market. Britain focused on the military complex, whereas the US became preoccupied with access routes and facilities. While Oman's link to Britain dated to the seventeenth century, ties with the US began when American merchant ships arrived in the late eighteenth century.⁴⁵ It was not until a shift in Soviet policy in Yemen, however, that the US took a concerted interest in the Gulf region. In 1972, the US opened an embassy in Muscat, and in 1974, William Wollé became the first US Ambassador to Oman. In 1977, the Americans established a military base on Masirah Island, which would play a crucial role in various Gulf conflicts.

In 1979, Oman played an integral role in supporting the US throughout the American hostage situation in Iran. Qaboos further solidified the relationship by advocating on behalf of the US before the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries, suggesting that the GCC look at the US as a key security guarantor in the region and encouraged defence cooperation among them. Oman became the first Gulf state to formalise defence relations with the US, allowing 'US forces access to Omani military facilities on April 21, 1980'.⁴⁶

The Sultanate's security cooperation with the UK and the US also provided a means to political alliances. Former Secretary General of the GCC Secretariat, Saif Hashil Al-Maskari, explains that the strength of a country is not measured by military might, but rather, by the strength of its national unity and its society.⁴⁷ According

⁴¹ Also see Halliday (1974).

⁴² Interview # 5 with Ahmed Ali Al-Mukhaini, former Assistant Secretary General for Information at the Omani *majlis al-shura* and currently an Economic Expert in Capital Market Authority. 29 December 2014, Muscat.

⁴³ Interview # 4 with Robert Alston, Former British Ambassador to Iran and then Oman (1986) and Chairman to the Anglo-Omani Society (2016). 17 March 2016, London.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ The first official agreements between the two countries—'Treaty of Friendship and Navigation'—was signed in 1833, and a few years later, Oman was the first Arab nation to recognise the US's sovereignty. Later it was replaced as Treaty of Amity, Economic Relations, and Consular Rights in 1958, see Dietl (2013).

⁴⁶ Katzman (2013).

⁴⁷ Interview # 6 with Saif Al-Maskari, Former Secretary General of the GCC secretariat. 31 January 2016, Muscat.

to Al-Maskari, weapons were procured not as ends in themselves, but as ‘the price Oman paid for alliances’.⁴⁸ While the British and Americans competed over selling weapons to Oman, they nevertheless cooperated in securing energy supplies and controlling Oman’s oil fields.⁴⁹ This was especially apparent during the Dhofar campaign, when the British decided to establish an ‘intelligence cycle’ that would enable them to understand, map out and exploit the Dhofari terrain.⁵⁰ Although the British were mostly concerned with matters of oil operations, their cooperation with Oman, Wilson notes, extended to building close relations with its people; whereby, British intelligence officers spoke Arabic and made it a point to know all the sheikhs and *walis* (governors).⁵¹ These relations promoted the five-point strategy for the ‘hearts and minds’ campaign, which Graham developed to acquire intelligence.⁵² Another way the British obtained information was through their oscillating roles as intelligence officers and advisors to the Sultanate. For example, Malcolm Dennison, formerly Said bin Taimur’s intelligence officer, became Qaboos’ national security advisor for two years after the coup. His responsibilities converged with that of the *diwan*,⁵³ drawing a thin line between Omani and foreign intelligence services.⁵⁴

The convergence of responsibilities became common practice under the rule of Qaboos. As Marc Valeri explains, during the 1970s, Qaboos ‘aligned himself with traditional political and merchant elites, giving strategic positions to secure public contracts and control over the distribution of the oil wealth to the merchants’.⁵⁵ In many ways, the state operated through personal relationship, both in relations with Britain and America, and on the local level. The conflation of business and political domains complicates any effort to trace the influences upon Omani understandings of energy security; nevertheless, the next subsection will attempt to do just that.⁵⁶

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ As discussed in Chap. 3, in the 1950s, Americans and British cooperated to solve the al-Buraimi war through arbitration. However, Britain eventually realised (a little too late) that it was in their benefit to have fought the Saudis, regardless of their agreement with the US, since the US left the Saudis to occupy Oman’s geographical boundaries.

⁵⁰ Jones (2014), p. 3.

⁵¹ Interview # 2. 16 January 2016, Muscat.

⁵² The five-point strategy included: intelligence, medical services, information (Psy-ops), veterinary services and military operation ‘Correspondence between John Graham and Ian Skeet’ Ian Skeet Collection, Box 1/1 [GB 165-039].

⁵³ The *diwan* is a parallel ministerial structure created by Qaboos, whereby his personal affairs are relayed to the *diwan* of royal court affairs. However, ‘it quickly emerged as a major spender of state revenues, generally issuing more contracts than all ministries combined.’ The *diwan* (created in 1972) was changed to the Ministry of *Diwan* in 1974, and had the power to filter files coming to the Sultan. For further details refer to Allen and Rigsbee (2000), p. 41.

⁵⁴ Eickelman and Dennison (1994), p. 11.

⁵⁵ Valeri (2009), p. 116.

⁵⁶ For details on the merchants see Valeri (2009), pp. 101–117.

4.1.2 *The Role of Foreign Consultants and Advisors*

During the Sultanate's move towards *al-nahdha*, a group of foreign consultants was brought in to assist a team of local merchants in their efforts to unify the country and establish international recognition. The team of external consultants included a number of former intelligence officers, such as Timothy Landon, the Sultan's most trusted advisor, who had helped orchestrate the 1970 bloodless coup deposing Said bin Taimur.⁵⁷ Other influential actors included Yehia Mohammed Omer⁵⁸ and Ghassan Ibrahim Shaker.⁵⁹

After successfully establishing external relations⁶⁰ and beginning a gradual withdraw of British troops from Dhofar, Qaboos announced his plans to build:

the new Oman, putting together the best of twentieth century technology with the traditional elements of Oman society. A modern infrastructure—ports, roads, schools, and hospitals have priority. Housing, offices, and factories are being built and equipped. Agriculture and fisheries, *our traditional occupations, are being modernised and expanded.*⁶¹

In the making of 'modern' Oman, the need arose for 'expertise' that could help to introduce and integrate twentieth-century technologies. Seeking consultants, the Sultanate turned to the Americans, funding the process of 'modernisation' with a plentiful supply of oil revenues. Longer-term, the arrangement would impact Oman's governmental landscape.

The first American advisor to establish contact with the Sultan in 1970 was James Critchfield, a former CIA national intelligence officer.⁶² Sir Terence Clark, former British Ambassador to Oman (1990), explains how the practice was not uncommon: 'during the Cold War, it was particularly normal to witness security officers providing advice to government and oil companies on their security'.⁶³ Some, Clark adds,

⁵⁷ Captain Timothy Landon was known in England as the equerry to Qaboos and was the most prominent British advisor to the Sultan (they met during the Sultan's time in Sandhurst). His official role ended in 1979; however, he remained the Sultan's military and national security advisor until 2007.

⁵⁸ Yehia Mohammed Omer, a Libyan, educated in the US, Egypt and Germany. He started as an entrepreneur, and later became a trader and commercial agent. As a very wealthy businessman, Omer owned homes all over Europe, the Middle East and Washington. His diverse lifestyle allowed him to have close connections to North-African countries making him invaluable to Qaboos.

⁵⁹ Ghassan Ibrahim Shaker, born in Saudi Arabia and educated at Cambridge University and formerly in Egypt, is the son of a long-time financial advisor to the Saudi royal family. Shaker's close friendship with the Saudi royals and King Hussein of Jordan allowed him to arrange Qaboos' first visit to meet King Faisal of Saudi and King Hussein of Jordan in 1971. These visits were made a month after Oman was recognised as a nation-state by the United Nations.

⁶⁰ In 1973, Oman became a member of the Non-Aligned Countries, building upon multilateral partnerships.

⁶¹ 'The Times Newspaper 'Oman' issued on 18 November 1974' John Graham Collection, Box 7/3 [GB 165-0327] (added emphasis).

⁶² This post was given to Critchfield after the first OPEC oil crisis.

⁶³ Interview # 7 with Sir Terence Clark, Former British Ambassador to Iraq (1986) and to Oman (1990) and British Diplomat in the Middle East. 16 March 2016, London.

‘when they retire, go into security consultancy’.⁶⁴ Fifteen years later, however, as President of Tetra Tech International (TTI),⁶⁵ Critchfield re-established ties with the Sultan and started advising Oman on a number of ambitious projects. The American engineering company guided the Omani government on issues ranging from oil-production and pricing to reservoir-engineering. Ultimately, Critchfield’s role in advising the Sultanate in the multiple sectors created a political struggle to control the interconnected and complex processes.

In his meeting with Qaboos, Critchfield shared his opinion of how PDO was mismanaging the country’s oil industry. He revealed to the Sultan that PDO was putting the nation at risk, that Oman’s revenue would deplete in twenty years, and that new discoveries were lagging; thus, urging long-term planning.⁶⁶ The Americans, therefore, succeeded in wresting away some of PDO’s business. TTI began conducting studies on whether Oman should maximise its oil production to increase revenue at present or spread oil production over a longer period while exploring for more oil field. PDO, however, favoured and pushed for maximising production in light of the projected limited reserves, ‘Tetra Tech International’s oil consultants consistently warned the Ministry of Petroleum—to extreme displeasure of PDO—of the economic consequences of over-production’.⁶⁷ Regardless of whether the recommendations of TTI were credible or not, it became clear that Qaboos held PDO in high regards which made the Sultan wary of TTI’s objectives in Oman.

The intentions of the Americans were made more explicit in the commission given to another CIA officer, Robert Anderson, who, in 1971, after serving as Secretary of the Treasury in the Eisenhower Administration, became an unpaid Economic Adviser to the Sultan.⁶⁸ In the words of a *New York Times* reporter, Anderson’s charge was to consult on how to improve the economy and get Oman ‘out from under the dominance of the British’.⁶⁹ In general, Anderson’s relationship to the CIA and his position in Oman were not common-knowledge. According to Clifford Quinlan, US Charge d’Affaires, when he ‘discovered that the CIA had connections with Robert Anderson and Omer’, it was unknown ‘what representation they were making to His Majesty in the name of the US. They were unofficial representatives of the US government’.⁷⁰

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ TTI is a Honeywell Inc. subsidiary. Various sources claim that TTI was used by the CIA for information gathering, see Allen and Rigsbee (2000), p. 106.

⁶⁶ Critchfield (2010), p. xv. This book is based on the compilation of James H. Critchfield’s ‘Oman Papers 1968–1991’ found in the Georgetown Laninger Library. It should be noted that the interpretation of the materials in *Oman Emerges* may be biased given that the author is the wife of the late James H. Critchfield. In this respect, I have conducted further interviews with actors referenced in *Oman Emerges*, as well as other officials working during that period to obtain a more comprehensive and less bias view of Critchfield’s narration. Moreover, I have used other authors that are perhaps critically distanced from any biases.

⁶⁷ Critchfield (2010), p. xxi.

⁶⁸ This arrangement was made possible by Shaker.

⁶⁹ Gerth (1985).

⁷⁰ Skeet (1992).

Not aware of Anderson connection to the CIA, the Sultan gave him the offshore concession indicating the degree of esteem he held for him.⁷¹

As talks concerning the modernisation of Oman progressed, while unrest lingered in Dhofar, Qaboos found it more convenient to meet with his advisors in London.⁷² Initially, Hugh Oldman, former Commander of the SAF, organised a group to advise Qaboos on development issues such as infrastructure, roads, schools, and healthcare. This group, which came to be known as the semi-formal ‘Interim Advisory Council’, was, and remains, an elusive body; to this day, no records of its proposals are known to exist.⁷³ The informal nature of this body, however, rendered it insufficient for dealing with day-to-day finances and the management of oil revenues. Therefore, the Omani government established the Supreme Council for Petroleum and Natural Gas (SCPNG) to develop and manage an oil policy. Its members included Qaboos (chair), Omer (vice-chair), John Townsend,⁷⁴ Shaker, Qais Al-Zawawi,⁷⁵ Omar Al-Zawawi⁷⁶ (grandsons of Yusuf Al-Zawawi),⁷⁷ Landon, Salem Makki, and Tom Hill (executive secretary). Makki, who was appointed as Director for Petroleum and Mineral Resources, was the first Omani to spend time in the US aiming to develop a

⁷¹ New York Lawyer Thomas W. Hill, the Sultan’s legal advisor from 1972 to 1975, negotiated this oil concession. The concession was previously held by Wendell Phillip, who, in 1954, was granted Dhofar’s oil concession because of his close friendship with Said bin Taimur.

⁷² Interview # 8 with Maqbool Sultan, former Minister of Commerce and Industry. 4 February 2016, Muscat.

⁷³ For details on the core group refer to: ‘Developments in Muscat from annotated chapter from Skeet’s forthcoming book’ Ian Skeet Collection, Box 1/1, Correspondence 26 March 1972 to 8 December 1990 [GB 165-0329].

⁷⁴ Townsend was the economic advisor to the Omani government until 1975, and author of *Oman: The Making of a Modern State* (1977).

⁷⁵ Qais Abdul-Munim Al-Zawawi (who died in a car accident in 1995) served as Oman’s Foreign Minister from 1973 to 1982 and later as Deputy Prime Minister for economic and financial affairs (1982–1995). After his education in India, he travelled to Kuwait, where he worked for the British Bank of the Middle East and then the British embassy. Subsequently, he established business relations in Dubai with Sheikh Rashid Saeed Al-Maktoum, Ruler of Dubai (1958–1990), and other prominent executives. In mid-1970, Qais established the Alawi Enterprises (also known as Zawawi Group), which today constitutes over twenty companies. For more information on Zawawi Group see Alawi Enterprises (2015).

⁷⁶ Omar was born in Karachi (then part British India, today it is part of Pakistan) and educated in Bombay. He has a medical degree from Cairo University and a medical economics degree from Harvard University. While his brother Qais went to Kuwait, Omar left for Saudi Arabia where he established close relations with Shaker. He returned to Oman in 1971 to join his brother in the family business established in 1950, which is known as the OMZEST Group. Today, Omar is the Special Adviser for External Affairs to the Sultan (since 1974) and is one of richest men in the Middle East. For detailed biographical information on Dr. Omar Al-Zawawi refer to Fischbach (2008).

⁷⁷ Yusuf Al-Zawawi, who in the nineteenth century came to Muscat from Mecca and became a prominent merchant of Muscat port and was the personal advisor to both Sultan Faisal bin Turki (1888–1913) and Sultan Taimur bin Faisal (1913–1932). His son, Abdul-Munim served as a commercial agent for Sultan Said bin Taimur.

national oil policy.⁷⁸ In the years to follow, Stribling Snodgrass, Petroleum Advisor to the government, recommended the following objectives:

(1) To ensure that the revenue coming to the Sultanate would be at least as high per barrel of oil as any obtained under the other Gulf states' participation agreements; (2) to provide an immediate and positive cash flow to Oman; (3) to assure that the Sultanate could not be accused by the oil companies of leapfrogging or by its Arab neighbours of caving in to the oil companies; (4) to recognise the limitations of Omani manpower and material resources; (5) to link the oil sector to the national economy in such a way as to closely relate it to Oman's overall development requirements; and (6) to foster the growth of industries to eventually replace petroleum, which must be viewed as a dwindling resource.⁷⁹

As is clear from this passage, due to the regional and domestic insecurity of the time, Oman prioritised the assurance of a 'positive cash flow' and the arrival of 'oil revenue'. Accordingly, Makki's 'national oil policy' emphasised economic competition over and above conservation, intergenerational equity, and societal concerns. In a letter addressed to Snodgrass, Makki—in his official capacity as a member of SCPNG—encouraged the government to reclaim some acreage from Shell and to offer it to other companies, creating a competitive environment that would ultimately lower drilling costs and lead to the discovery of new oil reserves.⁸⁰ Makki's plan, however, was not to ensue in the early years of Qaboos' *nahdha*. The Sultanate's initial priorities remained more immediately focused, centring on the maximisation of oil revenue rather than the management of a long-term energy portfolio. From 1974 onwards, several new companies⁸¹ arrived in Oman to compete for the flow of energy revenue.

The new actors entering Oman's energy matrix brought with them social, political, and economic influences that still reverberate in Oman today, and which, in some cases, developed through unconventional channels. For example, while the British dominated the Omani market, the CIA worked to undercut British dominance. As reported in an American newspaper article, Critchfield and the CIA 'persuaded British intelligence agents in the early 1970s that it was in their interest for the Americans to supplement the British involvement in the country. [...] CIA intermediaries also helped bring US businesses to the country'.⁸² Patrick Quinian, who headed the US embassy in Muscat from 1972 to 1974, stated that the CIA carried out its activities 'through questionable business people and then denied its existence to the department'.⁸³ The British and Americans both relied on Landon as an intermediary

⁷⁸ This is the first mention of an oil policy in the Sultanate.

⁷⁹ Critchfield (2010), p. 45.

⁸⁰ Critchfield (2010), p. 57.

⁸¹ When the first gas project, for example, was opened to international gas exploration companies, the following companies became involved: The Gulf-Quintana Group, The Elf offshore concession, Elf-Sumitomo group, Amoco, BP-Deminex, Elf-Aquitaine, Gulf/Quintana, and Cluff.

⁸² 'Minneapolis Star and Tribune 'CIA, not diplomats, led the way in Oman' by Joe Rigert, 5 July 1983' Ian Skeet Collection, Box 4/4, Newspaper Cuttings 26 May to 20 May 1985, Skeet Box 4/4 [GB 165-0329].

⁸³ Ibid.

who worked with Anderson, Shaker, and Omer. Because of their assistance in politics, finances, and intelligence, they would be rewarded by commercial firms and commissions.

As most of the foreign experts were retired CIA officers who had served in South Yemen during the Cold War,⁸⁴ their concerns with Oman shifted from international politics to matters of social and economic development. It is not difficult to see how the whole range of actors sought to exploit the oil wealth for their benefit. In a covering note, Dennison writes to Ian Skeet, Management Liaison Representative for PDO (1966–1968): ‘I still feel the mafia robbed Oman and enriched themselves at Oman’s expense. I cannot forgive them for this’.⁸⁵ Given that these foreign experts were fully integrated into the Sultanate’s political order, the ‘mafia’ (i.e. the ‘experts’) played an essential part in formulating ways to secure energy. In many ways, their relationship with the state was symbiotic, blurring the lines between external and internal. Considering this, and the high financial expenditures incurred in 1973, the financial crisis that followed expanded energy discourses and practices to include issues related to conservation, diversification, and five-year development plans.

4.1.3 *The 1974 Financial Crisis*

At the beginning of 1973, the general development organisations existing in Oman diffused into the Financial Council and Development Council (FCDC). Meanwhile, the oil embargo of 1973 enabled the oil-producing countries to accumulate large amounts of wealth (as the oil prices went up),⁸⁶ which in turn allowed for the seven-fold increase of government expenditure in 1974. A World Bank (WB) report on Oman’s economic position notes that, compared to OR 92.8 million in 1973, total spending rose to OR 385.6 million in 1974.⁸⁷ Moreover, between 1971 and 1974, defence expenditures rose from OR 16.1 million to OR 138 million, and development expenditures rose from OR 20 million to OR 178.7 million.⁸⁸ Despite the fact that revenue quadrupled from \$200 million to over \$800 million in 1974, however, Oman’s overall budgetary situation worsened, resulting in a record deficit. Shortly after, the global financial crisis took a further toll. The FCDC hired Morgan Grenfell and Company, Ltd. to determine how to avert financial crisis.

⁸⁴ Interview # 8. 4 February 2016, Muscat.

⁸⁵ ‘Letter from Malcolm Dennison to Ian Skeet (27 March 1991), with an annotated chapter from Skeet’s forthcoming book.’ Ian Skeet Collection, Box 1/1, Correspondence 26 March 1972 to 8 December 1990 [GB 165-0329].

⁸⁶ It is worth noting that previous oil embargoes against Western countries took place in 1956 and 1967. In addition, the United States also historically imposed a greater number of oil embargoes prior to World War II on Japan, in the sixties on the Soviet Union, and during the last two decades on Arab nations from Libya, Iraq, Iran, and Sudan, and to non-Arab nations, South Africa, Burma, Serbia, and Haiti.

⁸⁷ Marto et al. (1976).

⁸⁸ Ibid.

In March 1975, Morgan Grenfell provided a list of strongly recommended steps. Most urgently, they advised, Oman should cut military and development expenditures, starting with allocations to the Jaguar fighter aircraft and Rapier air defence missiles.⁸⁹ The Advisory Council, however, advised against these cuts. Later in the year, the British Aircraft Corporation (BAC) managed to sell to Oman an integrated air defence system based on 28 Rapier guided missile units, radar and ground installations, and 12 Jaguar strike aircrafts, for a cost of around £200 million.⁹⁰ The crisis affected several markets globally, and Britain experienced the largest economic fall (68.5%) of all.⁹¹ The sale of arms constituted a priority for the survival of Britain's own economy.⁹² The Omanis, by contrast, seemed to reverse these priorities: economic benefits from potential energy agreements were 'sacrificed for political and military considerations'.⁹³

The reduction of revenue was not only tied to over expenditure, but also to PDO reducing the price of Oman's oil. Although not a member of the Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC), Oman had generally followed OPEC's decisions on oil prices, which were averaging at \$10.12 per barrel.⁹⁴ PDO, however, stopped following OPEC and reduced Oman's oil price to \$9.96, inflicting further losses.⁹⁵ At the same time, PDO expanded production in order to meet the increasing demands of the global market. In 1975, the Sultanate continued giving incentives to its buyers (Shell, CFP, Partex, and independent clients), making Oman's oil most attractive globally, but negatively impacting its own economy.

Meanwhile, the low prices of Omani oil attracted the attention of Thomas Berger, retired CEO of Aramco. He suggested increasing Oman's oil prices as well as investing in oil fields in Oman to have complete ownership. This issue of ownership was shelved, but the negotiation on pricing continued, due to Oman's stringent cash flow situation.

The lead negotiator in the PDO meeting from the Omani side was Dr. Al-Zawawi.⁹⁶ Shell, with a 34% share and responsible for production in PDO, insisted on a 54% margin on each barrel lifted, while the Omani government wanted a 22 cent marginal increase. The final oil-pricing meeting concluded with a price that was 22% short of what the Omani government asked for and what was standardised by OPEC.⁹⁷ Shell was producing and marketing its crude oil at a maximum rate but

⁸⁹ Allen and Rigsbee (2000), p. 104.

⁹⁰ 'Annotated chapter from Skeet's forthcoming book.' Ian Skeet Collection, Box 1/1 [GB 165-0329].

⁹¹ Davis (2003), p. 78.

⁹² Ibid.

⁹³ Christou and Adamides (2013), p. 514.

⁹⁴ MEES (1974).

⁹⁵ National Centre for Statistics and Information (2013).

⁹⁶ To distinguish the two brothers, Omar and Qais Al-Zawawi, I use Omar's title—'Dr.'—accordingly.

⁹⁷ Oman accepted Shell's terms, given its historical relationship with Shell during the 1960s and their aid in suppressing the Dhofari revolutionaries.

without maximum financial return. Given that Oman's foreign currency revenues were derived almost entirely from oil exports, the country's 'national oil policy' continued solely to focus on short-term planning. TTI accordingly presented to Mohammed Al-Zubair, then Minister of the Commerce and Industry,⁹⁸ a conservation programme that went against PDO's production maximisation policy. PDO pushed to maximise production, while TTI accused them of promoting a strategy 'to maintain maximum off-take with minimum investment'.⁹⁹ In response to this strategy and the increasing deficit in 1974, the government undertook a major reorganisation of its institutional framework for economic planning, delegating greater accountability to its ministers. Meanwhile, the Sultan sought to integrate greater coordination, regulation, and control into decisions involving financial commitments and contract-signing.¹⁰⁰ In this process, Critchfield, Al-Zawawi, and others became part of the same 'social cluster of power', united by intersecting, albeit different, agendas.

In 1975, faced with economic problems in allocating available resources among the much larger requirements for economic development, Oman remained an energy importing country, thereby accumulating large deficits. In 1976, however, aiming to reset, Oman launched its first comprehensive five-year development plan (1976–1980). As Sherif Lotfy, Secretary General of the Development Council, explains: 'Its principal objective was to promote the non-oil, income-generation sectors in order that such sectors would eventually replace oil as the major source of national income. It is also aimed at reversing the trend of decline in oil production'.¹⁰¹ Diversifying the economy away from oil had the effect of expanding the realm of 'energy security' as new discourses and practices about development and state-building were constructed in tandem with the country's economic policies. Reducing dependence on oil meant looking towards the private sector (which becomes the dominant discourse in Oman during the 1990s as discussed in Chap. 5). But impacts went further, beyond mere economics and into the political and social fabric of Oman. New mechanisms were introduced to review project proposals and approve government expenditures, resulting in a reorganisation of the ministerial structure. A decree was issued stipulating that no contract was binding unless Qaboos authorised it,¹⁰² which had the effect of increasing the power of those in his advisory circle. Furthering the linkage

⁹⁸ Mohammed Al-Zubair is considered today a well-established merchant in Oman. He occupies the position of Special advisor to the Sultan on Economic Affairs since 1984. His father was Minister of Justice (1936) and a close advisor to Said bin Taimur, while his grandfather, Ali bin Jumah, served under three Omani sultans. Influenced by his ancestors, Mohammed registered the first Omani company, Muscat Trading Company (1967), which later changed its name to The Zubair Corporation. The corporation comprises of about sixty leading companies in Oman. For details see, The Zubair Corporation (2015).

⁹⁹ Critchfield (2010), p. 179.

¹⁰⁰ Detailed in section two of this chapter. See also 'Current Economic Position and Prospects of Oman' issued 10 February 1976 as World Bank Report No. 934a-OM.

¹⁰¹ 'Introductory Speech Delivered by Dr. Sherif Lotfy Secretary General of the Development Council, at the seminar held by the Confederation of the British Industry in London on Tuesday 16th December 1980' John Graham Collection, Box 1/1 [GB 165-0327].

¹⁰² Royal Decree No. 26/75. 'Organising the Administrative Apparatus of the State' issued on 28 June 1975.

between security and energy, official dealings began to take place in the *diwan*—a security institution.

In 1979, the Sultanate signed a new agreement with PDO, giving them sole control of operations. While many would criticise Shell for its monopoly and profiteering strategies, the overall benefit of Oman's relationship with Shell outweighed its costs. As Hatim Al-Shanfari, Professor of Economics at Sultan Qaboos University, explains, despite a series of obstacles, 'His Majesty did not walk away from an important and strategic partnership'.¹⁰³

Cultivating another relationship in 1979, Orin Atkins, President of the Ashland Oil Company Inc—who was introduced by Omer—met with Critchfield expressing interest in purchasing crude oil in Oman. As Critchfield held no part in crude sales, he recommended that Atkins meet with Said Al-Shanfari, Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries, Minerals, and Petroleum,¹⁰⁴ resulting in a contract between Ashland and Oman. Shortly thereafter, in 1980, the first oil refinery was constructed in the Sultanate, overseen by the Japanese company Mitsui, and operated by Ashland's staff.

The growth of national and private fortunes attracted further international oil companies, consultants, and 'ex'-intelligence officers, whose initiatives to finance joint-ventures with local businessmen would have long-term political impacts.¹⁰⁵ Following the agreement with Ashland, the non-Omani members of Qaboos' advisory group (Omer, Shaker, Critchfield, and Landon) were charged with corruption for obtaining money directly from the Ashland Oil Company. Contrary to the claims of Lois Critchfield, it was reported that TTI had acquired \$18 million of business in Oman in 1981 and was deeply involved in the efforts of Ashland Oil, where Critchfield paid Omer \$1.35 million in 'commission'.¹⁰⁶ British and American experts cooperated to obtain commercial benefits at the expense of the Sultanate's reputation. From their perspectives, however, this kind of behaviour was part of everyday practice and governance in Oman.

The following year, Jeff Gerth of the *New York Times* accused Ashland of two cases of corruption in the UAE and Oman, respectively. Although it had been unsuccessful, reportedly the company had tried to retain crude oil contracts with Abu Dhabi National Oil Company by paying \$17 million. Moreover, the United States

¹⁰³ Interview # 9 with Dr. Hatim Bakheet Al-Shanfari, Member of the Board of Governors at the Central Bank of Oman, and Professor of Economics in Sultan Qaboos University. 1 January 2015, Muscat.

¹⁰⁴ Given the multiple individuals with the last name Al-Shanfari, I use the full to differentiate between them.

¹⁰⁵ Some of these local businessmen included Said Al-Shanfari, Mohammed Al-Zubair, Ahmed Abdulnabi Macki (Omani Ambassador to the UN in the 1970s, and later Minister of National Economy), and Maqbool Ali Sultan (former Minister of Commerce and Industry), and other leading advisors to Qaboos. For further details on the Omani actors, refer to Chap. 2 in Allen and Rigsbee (2000).

¹⁰⁶ 'Minneapolis Star and Tribune 'CIA, not diplomats, led the way in Oman' by Joe Rigert, 5 July 1983' Ian Skeet Collection, Box 4/4, Newspaper Cuttings 26 May to 20 May 1985, Skeet Box 4/4 [GB 165-0329].

Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC)¹⁰⁷ conducted inquiries and investigation on transactions made by Ashland exceeding \$25 million to obtain crude oil from Oman, which involved two Omani advisers and their relatives.¹⁰⁸ The investigations took years, and at the end of the inquiry, no party was found guilty. Omer, Landon, and John Hall (Ashland's CEO) were suspected of violating the US Foreign Corrupt Practices Act. Because TTI had introduced Ashland to Said Al-Shanfari, they too were embroiled. Suspicion stirred in Oman over the corruption of government contracts, which many locals perceived to be enmeshed with Western interests.¹⁰⁹ The investigations, however, concluded that the payments did not violate the law. Still, due to media coverage, Qaboos felt that the case had tainted Oman's reputation.¹¹⁰ The Ashland scandal demonstrated the extent to which the commercial connections created by the CIA prioritised American companies at the expense of Oman's global reputation.

When British and American experts, officials, and intelligence officers entered Oman to exploit its commercial and economic benefits, they frequently developed relationships with local merchants. While these relationships can be construed as mutually beneficial, undertaken in exchange for expertise, ultimately, they amount to little more than the pursuit of personal gain (whether in terms of wealth or political power). Although at first glance they may seem negligible, the mundane practices of the consultants and experts in fact built up the fabric of the state's political, social, and economic structure. It is, however, significant to point out that the commercial monopoly created by the 'experts' simultaneously interlinked the Sultanate's different sectors (i.e. military, intelligence, energy, security, and so forth) thus including a complex web of events, processes, and actors into the purview of 'energy security'. In this respect, the battle to control these interconnected sectors cannot be attributed to a sole actor or event. In the next section, certain mechanism by which the Sultanate leverages different social clusters and its network of experts, namely, through the use of contracts is revealed.

4.2 Austerity During the Eighties

In 1976, Oman adopted a rationalisation policy under the first five-year development plan to balance its rapid growth due to the increasing oil wealth. However, the strategy was never implemented. The oscillation of the Sultanate's policies is entrenched within the global reality of energy, which is to say, the fact that 'energy'

¹⁰⁷ The US permits oil and gas companies, in their filings with the SEC, to disclose only proved reserves that a company has demonstrated by actual production or conclusive formation tests to be economically and legally producible under existing economic and operating conditions.

¹⁰⁸ Gerth (1983).

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

¹¹⁰ By the end of 1990, the Ashland contract ended, and Shell assumed the role of operating the refinery.

remains volatile and uncertain (as discussed in Chap. 1). This fact, coupled with the geopolitics of the region (the Iran–Iraq War, the Afghan War, the Israeli treaty with Egypt), prevented the European Economic Community (EEC) from dialoguing with the Arab League. Moreover, the minor oil shock in 1979 resulted in reduced energy demand and high oil prices, which brought integrated development plans addressing what needed to be done in all the major economic sectors. However, the surge of development continued to focus on infrastructure. As illustrated in the previous section, a confluence of roles blurred the divisions between private and public, international, and local, engraining energy, too, in the complex institutions of the country. The point of this section is to argue that, when it comes to energy, trends in supply and demand are not simply indicators of price changes, but a range of technical, social, political, and institutional factors.

4.2.1 Energy Governance

Subjecting its reserves to the laws of supply and demand that came through the country's first five-year development plan, in 1980, the Omani government set up the State General Reserve Fund (SGRF)¹¹¹ to act as a foreign reserve for the current and all future five-year plans.¹¹² The SGRF was the first body to manage the country's energy resources and take into consideration intergenerational equity. In line with this, Oman's oil policy was placed within the framework of a conservation programme. Drafted by Critchfield of TTI, the conservation programme countered PDO's production policy¹¹³ insofar as it aimed to reduce production to protect the oil fields from damage. While in principle Qaboos supported the conservation programme, production levels were nevertheless pushed by PDO to the maximum. In 1981, to meet Oman's increasing expenditure costs, the Sultan set the production target at 350 thousand barrels per day.¹¹⁴ There had been a miscalculation, however; PDO had overestimated the capacity of available oil reserves, and it would not be possible to meet the target.¹¹⁵

As the oil prices increased in 1980, the state went on a spending spree. When the second five-year plan was drafted (1981–1985), as Lotfy reveals, it was a 'more ambitious plan in size' but 'still adhere[d] to the same principles of realism and

¹¹¹ Royal Decree No. 1/80. 'Establishment of the State General Reserve Fund' issued on 6 January 1980.

¹¹² The Development Council developed the five-year development plans in 1975. The first five-year plan was issued under Royal Decree No. 32/76. 'The Adoption of the Five-Year Development Plan (1976–1980)' issued on 17 August 1976.

¹¹³ As oil prices doubled in 1979, PDO invested on second-recovery techniques to increase oil production.

¹¹⁴ Critchfield (2010), pp. 184–187.

¹¹⁵ Interview # 12 with Abdullah Al-Lamki, former Deputy Managing Director of PDO. 2 February 2015, Muscat.

rationalisation that were implemented in the first five-year plan'.¹¹⁶ The projects approved within the plan—which included the construction of an industrial zone in Rusayl, a refinery (1981), copper mining and smelting project (1982), a cement project (1983), and the expansion of the gas industry—prioritised extending services and improving the quality of life for the people in the interior of the country, which in turn encouraged the private sector to invest in income-generating sectors. As the Omani economy was maturing, opportunities for competitive enterprises and industries blossomed.

In the years 1982 to 1985, a period of austerity followed. Oil prices plummeted, the amount of oil found in the country was decreasing, and what was discovered was very expensive to extract. Stan Thurber, TTI's resident reservoir, argued that this austerity was due to the country's disregard for planning:

Now given the fact that the government is dedicated to all-out production, it appears that an intensified exploration programme, if it were successful, would only give the government more oil to produce. Does that sound like long range conservation and resource planning? No, that sounds like '*rape and run*', the very thing for which we have castigated PDO, and I, for one, will have no part of it. For as surely as PDO was playing with Oman's resources in the mid to late 1970s, an increase in discoveries, as a result of our recommended increase in exploration activities, would be rapidly exploited by the government. This would put us in a position of allowing the government to play that game itself.¹¹⁷

Regardless of the effects of drilling and extracting resources,¹¹⁸ political concerns were prioritised over the sustainability of the environment. Long-standing territorial disputes between Oman and the GCC states dragged on, and it was not until mid-1990s that they were fully resolved (reflected in Chap. 5).¹¹⁹ Despite the fall of oil prices in 1982, Qaboos decreed that the al-Buraimi region would have unlimited funds for its development projects. In the same year, the Committee of Regional Development introduced the Long-Term Energy Plan (LTEP), which, born under the advisory of TTI, was based on the second five-year plan (1981–1985).¹²⁰ The LTEP covered a wide array of economic-centred considerations from assessment of future supply to demand for revenue, enhanced recovery, gas supply and demand, electric power generation, energy conservation, and alternatives for electric power.

¹¹⁶ 'Introductory Speech Delivered by Dr. Sherif Lotfy' John Graham Collection, Box 1/1 [GB 165-0327].

¹¹⁷ Critchfield (2010), p. 275 (added emphasis).

¹¹⁸ Thurber's use of the words '*rape and run*' is suggestive. '*Rape*' signifies power, control, and domination of another entity. In many ways, the penetration, drilling and extraction of resources, can be interpreted symbolically as a predator raping its victim, thus creating an insecure environment. Its effects are explicit at first and implicit in the future. The activities of the international companies, and the influential actors, representing the Sultanate, welcoming it all in the name of modernisation, according to Thurber, can be construed as a form of '*rape*'. Furthermore, by putting the words '*rape and run*' together in quotation marks, he implies that no one is taking responsibility and are consequently '*running*' away from their crimes.

¹¹⁹ For details on the Gulf states boundary disputes: Peterson (2011).

¹²⁰ According to an Omani source who worked in high-ranking positions in the government for over thirty-five years, there was no such thing as an LTEP. Interview # 10. 15 February 2016, Muscat.

In addition to the LTEP, the World Bank (WB) report of 1979 highlighted the need for Oman to develop a long-term plan to address Oman's high level of defence expenditure and its failure in mobilising domestic resource.¹²¹ Considering the report, the British did not know whether to encourage the Omanis to cut down their expenditures, or influence them 'to buy a great deal of sophisticated military hardware because Britain is their major supplier [...]?'¹²² Since Britain advised Oman on an Air Defence Scheme, which benefited the UK, the Omani government paid no attention to the WB report. A similar 'oversight' occurred with the International Monetary Fund (IMF). In a private document (not issued to the public), the IMF advised Oman to develop its agriculture sector, since it comprised a major portion of the workforce. Agriculture, however, contributed a mere 2% to Oman's GDP, while the oil sector contributed to over 90%. Despite the IMF's recommendation, Oman increased oil production and invested further in second-oil recovery techniques, while not investing in the agriculture sector.¹²³

These cases serve to illustrate the ways in which, during the 1970s and 1980s, energy entwined itself with issues of development, economics, and military cooperation. Several idiosyncrasies have emerged. While the Sultanate's second five-year development plan aimed to reduce dependence on oil by boosting expansion of the gas industry, such a plan did not come to fruition, nor did plans to reduce military expenditure. In fact, the state expenditure for defence from 1980 to 1985 increased from 28.7 to 46%.¹²⁴ When seeking to account for these contradictions, one must consider the full range of influences and actors. At the time of drafting the five-year plan, in a private correspondence, the British government warned that the high expenditure on defence and the reduction of civil development in Oman could lead to 'the greatest threat to the regime', which accordingly 'is likely to be one of internal security'.¹²⁵ The British did not share this warning with the Sultanate's government as it went against their personal interest. While the British government knew that Oman's high defence expenditure was not wise—particularly in a situation where, if there were any external threat, Oman must depend on its allies for assistance—they chose personal gains at the expense of Oman's sustainable future. The British knew well that budgetary decisions, especially those regarding weapons and development, are embroiled in 'energy politics'.

¹²¹ 'Oman Current Economic Position and Prospects' issued 16 October 1979 as World Bank Report No. 2528-OM.

¹²² 'Correspondence between the British Embassy, Muscat and Lord Carrington, secretary state for foreign and commonwealth affairs, 'The Oman Economy', 29 December 1979' [FCO 8/3549].

¹²³ 'Statement by Mr. Amuzegar on Oman Executive Board Meeting 80/76, 18 April 1980, Document of International Monetary Fund and not for public use' Oman—Economy [FCO 8/3549].

¹²⁴ 'Mr Patterson (MED) Oman: The Five-Year Plan 1981–1985' Oman—Economy [FCO 8/3549].

¹²⁵ 'Correspondence between Richard Palmer (MED, FCO) and Mr Patterson (MED)' Oman—Economy [FCO 8/3549].

4.2.2 *Oil Revenues for Political Alliance*

In December 1983, Qais Al-Zawawi, Deputy-Prime Minister for Economic and Financial Affairs, hosted a scoping visit for the UK Export Finance (ECGD),¹²⁶ which was seeking to provide loans to assist in the country's development. By the meeting's conclusion, ECGD had guaranteed loans for a hotel (Al-Bustan Hotel), a national university (Sultan Qaboos University), a district hospital (in al-Ghubrah), and 'large defence business looming on the horizon'.¹²⁷ These development loans were part of Oman's overall strategy to re-establish long-term political alliances with Britain. Meanwhile, Cementation Ltd (which partnered with the Minister of Petroleum, Al-Shanfari) and Taylor Woodrow competed for a contract on a Salalah Sewage Project, while the Sultan promised oversight of a rural electrification project to three British members of parliament.

The move towards development was also threaded by favouritism. The university contract, for example, involved a £3 million landscaping contract offered for tender by Cementation Ltd, competitor of Taylor Woodrow.¹²⁸ Both the husband and the son of British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher, using their political status for personal gains, lobbied against awarding the bid to Taylor Woodrow. Cementation Sico, an Oman-registered subsidiary, which they had ties to, won the contract, and by 1984, Omani ministers¹²⁹ held 35% of its shares.¹³⁰ Furthermore, in cooperation with Britain, the UK companies 'were selected either as consultants, architects or contractors for all but two of 11 major projects that were valued at \$635 million'.¹³¹

According to Abdulkarim Al-Shanfari, nephew of the Minister of Petroleum, allocating contracts to key political figures was common practice during the Cold War period, mostly for politically and economically motivated reasons:

Most of the companies that obtained contracts were connected to certain prominent families in Britain. For example, the son of Margaret Thatcher built Sultan Qaboos University. It was more of a political help. The country came out of a civil war; there was no money, while the oil prices were only \$2 a barrel—how would you pay people developing infrastructure for you? By giving them commercial favours. The Towel Group, how did they get most of

¹²⁶ ECGD is the operating name of the Export Credits Guarantee Department, the UK's export credit agency.

¹²⁷ In the long-term, under the Export Finance scheme, the British government guaranteed loans to Oman for arms sales. 'Letter from R J Dalton to Mrs A. Clarke MEC FCO on 'ECGD visit to Oman' 20 December 1983' Oman ECGD Policy [FCO 8/5092].

¹²⁸ 'The Observer 'Denis Thatcher link to Oman deal' by David Leigh and Paul Lashmar, 5 February 1984' John Graham Collection, Box 7/3 [GB 165-0327].

¹²⁹ These included Yusuf bin Alawi, Minister Responsible for Foreign Affairs, and Abdulaziz Al-Rawas, Minister of Information (all of whom have sold their shares).

¹³⁰ Significant to note is that the documents on 'Mark Thatcher and the Omanis', which were meant to be declassified last year by the National Archives, have been withheld by No. 10. See Bowcott (2016). While the official archives have yet to be declassified, John Graham's personal collection provides sufficient references for the commercial dealings of Mark Thatcher in Oman. See 'The Observer 'Denis Thatcher link to Oman deal' by David Leigh and Paul Lashmar, 5 February 1984' John Graham Collection, Box 7/3 [GB 165-0327].

¹³¹ Gerth and Miller (1985a).

Madinat Qaboos? They constructed a road for Oman and the government was unable to pay them financially, so they were given a plot of land and they developed it. A country with no resources has to find other ways to pay; therefore, they were given contracts.¹³²

Commercial favours were extended to intelligence officers, the Omani ‘experts’ and local merchants, and families with global political influence. In many instances, the government would contract with several international companies to spread the distribution of power and wealth to multiple parties. Although this strategy seemed to succeed in the early years of the Sultan’s reign, it proved unsustainable and, in hindsight, brought forth other issues, many of which surfaced in the 1980s. For one, international companies partnered *only* with people and companies of power and status in Oman; this led to the creation of monopolies, which squeezed out smaller enterprises. As observed by a former British official, when the Grand Mosque was constructed in Oman, Qaboos was given the impression that there was more than one company involved. Interested in investigating the dynamics, the official hired a consultant to map out where the contractors and companies were from, and he found out that 90% were from the same consortium. ‘The squeeze-out effect has been very important’, the official concluded.¹³³ The same official described the process in which economic competition becomes political. When big contracts are awarded ‘from the top’, by executive decision, ‘politics and business get mixed up. If you look at which companies are building His Majesty’s mosques, palaces, and roads’, he adds, ‘they all tend to be the same company: the Zawawi/Wimpey, British–Omani consortium’.¹³⁴ Under the guise of public investments, political actors merge with economic merchants and pursue private business interests. In Oman, this situation has allowed foreign actors to enter the country and influence its social, economic, and political fabric for the pursuit of financial gains.

In addition to building alliances domestically, the need for regional cooperation was as important. Since the Iranian revolution of 1979, Britain and America assumed low profiles in the region mainly to avoid creating a foreign presence that could ultimately destabilise Iran.¹³⁵ The shift in Iran’s regime was particularly important since the Gulf countries feared the spread of Iranian dominance throughout the region. Fear of Iranian hegemony prompted the 1981 formation of the GCC, which is comprised of six Gulf states (excluding Iran and Iraq) that share similar social backgrounds; but differ in political and economic aspirations.¹³⁶ Iran, however, was not the only

¹³² Interview # 11 with Abdulkarim Al-Shanfari, nephew of former Minister of Petroleum, Fisheries and Minerals, has a scientific and engineering background, is now working in Mott MacDonald Group (where his father is the director of the Group). 25 April 2016, Muscat.

¹³³ Interview # 40 with former British High-ranking official that lived-in Oman for over five years and continues visit. 17 March 2016, London.

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*

¹³⁵ Gerth and Miller (1985b).

¹³⁶ In 1976, Oman hosted a regional meeting where it proposed an association that included the current GCC states plus Iraq and Iran. However, Kuwait refused immediately since it saw the GCC as an economic project and not a security cooperation, while Saudi Arabia abstained. The proposal was henceforth shelved.

threat; as Matteo Legrenzi explains, Iraq was also a ‘formidable regional threat’ that many of the Gulf states feared.¹³⁷

In 1983, the spread of the Iran–Iraq War made Kuwait vulnerable due to its geographical proximity.¹³⁸ The UN Security Council, therefore, proposed that the GCC create a military umbrella, which was set up in 1983. A year later, when the war escalated, Kuwait requested the GCC states to move the *dir’ al-jazira* (Peninsula Shield)¹³⁹ base to Kuwait to deter Iran from approaching its border. The Saudis however refused to transfer the base and were uninterested in a military cooperation. Given the Saudis questionable commitment, Oman sought guidance from Britain and America, since *dir’ al-jazira* was more of a symbolic military base with no significant force.¹⁴⁰ Furthermore, due to the strategic location of the Strait of Hormuz, Oman sought to create an economic and security organisation that included Britain and America to maintain stability in the region amid ongoing wars.

Given these regional dynamics, according to Al-Maskari, the Sultan found it only pragmatic to nurture relationships with the British and Americans.¹⁴¹ As many of the foreign advisers came from backgrounds in intelligence, the Sultan found continued partnership with them beneficial especially in the latter years of the Cold War. In exchange for the military base at Masirah, for example, the Americans understood that they would contribute to improving Oman’s military facilities and civil development. Largely, however, the arrangement served Britain and the US, affording them ‘a base for Western intelligence operations, military manoeuvres, and logistical preparations for any defence of the oil-producing Persian Gulf’.¹⁴²

In the 1980s, Oman began to also seek military alliance from the US, which was largely the result of personal relationships that certain actors had with the Sultan.¹⁴³ Through characters such as Omer and Shaker, for example, and the ‘CIA-commercial connection’, American companies received ‘contracts they wouldn’t have gotten’.¹⁴⁴ Because of the agreement in which America committed to modernise Oman’s four military bases in exchange for access to Omani installations,¹⁴⁵ the US Army Corps of Engineers was granted a contract.¹⁴⁶ Individual intelligence officers benefited, as well, including Chester Nagle, a former CIA employee. Nagle was involved in the sale of security equipment to Oman and was listed in the State Department

¹³⁷ Legrenzi (2002), p. 30.

¹³⁸ Gold (1987), p. 378.

¹³⁹ This was a nascent collective defence force that was based in Saudi Arabia and created in 1983.

¹⁴⁰ Interview # 6. 31 January 2016, Muscat.

¹⁴¹ Ibid.

¹⁴² Gerth and Miller (1985a, b).

¹⁴³ ‘Minneapolis Star and Tribune ‘CIA, not diplomats, led the way in Oman’ by Joe Rigert, 5 July 1983’ Ian Skeet Collection, Box 4/4, Newspaper Cuttings 26 May to 20 May 1985, Skeet Box 4/4 [GB 165-0329].

¹⁴⁴ Ibid.

¹⁴⁵ The bases were stationed at Masirah Island, Seeb, Thumrait and Khasab on Musandam.

¹⁴⁶ Katzman (2014).

documents in 1983 as a Special Assistant to the Sultan's palace office.¹⁴⁷ Initiated by the need to secure energy resources, Western military personnel became influential in all aspects of Oman's social, economic, and political fabric. In this respect, the different actors do not emerge from a single field, as argued by Bigo, but are multiple experts emerging from distinctive arenas that necessitate an analysis of the network of experts.

In a similar way, the financial institutions in the West played a role in deepening their influence in Oman by providing monetary assistance. As the oil prices started to stagnate in 1984, the British Bank of the Middle East (BBME) was closing down, and the American bank, Chase Manhattan, sought to acquire it.¹⁴⁸ However, Lloyds Bank, a British bank strategically partnered with Oman International Bank, which was chaired by Dr. Al-Zawawi, and acquired later by BBME.¹⁴⁹ To influence this merger, Dr. Al-Zawawi's brother, Qais,¹⁵⁰ informed the bankers 'that Oman would shortly sign a new contract with Shell which would give the oil company a somewhat larger margin in return for a guaranteed revenue for Oman'.¹⁵¹ Because of the increase of revenue, the Sultan's local advisors in the Finance Council suggested that given its initial interest Chase Manhattan, 'could be used as a channel for "political" money'.¹⁵² By the mid-1980s, several overseas banks were providing financial services and expertise to assist Oman.¹⁵³ Nonetheless, even if the banks offered to loan money to the Sultanate, Shell promised that it would offer an equivalent of \$125 million in royalties if it was 'politically desirable'.¹⁵⁴

Whether through the military, business, or financial sectors, external and internal involvements in Oman have reshaped Oman's *security continuum* and its relationship with energy. In an attempt to highlight the business interests at stake, this subsection has especially considered the multifarious dimensions of Oman's relationships to the British and American actors and their involvement in its 'modernisation'. As discussed, despite advice from international bodies and lessons from the first and

¹⁴⁷ Ibid.

¹⁴⁸ In 1975, during the economic crisis, Chase Manhattan, BBME and Midland Bank were all interested in lending money to Oman. BBME was the first bank functioning in Muscat. When Oman wanted to change its currency to the Omani Rial, British experts were brought in to manage the process through BBME. Most consultants were recruited through Peter Mason, who at the time was the head of the BBME, and maintained a close relationship to Qaboos, as well as to his father previously. Interview # 4. 17 March 2016, London.

¹⁴⁹ 'Oman: international financial relations' 1 January–31 December 1984, [FCO 8/5520].

¹⁵⁰ When it comes to construction projects in Oman, it is interesting to note that while Qais's companies' partner with the British company Wimpey, Omar's consortium partners with American companies—this creates a balance between British and American firms. Interview # 7. 16 March 2016, London.

¹⁵¹ 'Oman: international financial relations' 1 January–31 December 1984, [FCO 8/5520].

¹⁵² Ibid.

¹⁵³ Interview # 4. 17 March 2016, London.

¹⁵⁴ 'Letter No. 82: M.I.P.T.: Oman's Economy, 19 February 1975' Economic Situation in Oman, [FCO 8/2463].

second five-year plans, those heading Oman's government prioritised defence and political benefit over long-term economic development.¹⁵⁵

4.2.3 *Self-interest Versus the Common Good*

In 1986, another oil glut ensued, no less turbulent than the crisis of 1973–1974. The oil shock came at the expense of OPEC members inflating their reserves to achieve higher quotas.¹⁵⁶ In Oman, the finances SGRF presented to fill the budget deficit was not enough, so the country borrowed bonds and treasury bills from the Central Bank of Oman. During the oil glut period, most of the country's oil revenues were utilised for development and security. The development policy focused on implementing a national agenda for the management of water as well as providing education opportunities for the country's military personnel. To assist with these objectives, Qaboos petitioned his American consultants to provide military training for Omani security officials, and to develop an extra-curricular education programme. The consultants designed a programme that included a visit to the American military academy, the US Congress, and national training facilities. Among its first attendees was Colonel Ali bin Majid Al-Ma 'amari.¹⁵⁷ Shortly after his return from the US, Al-Ma 'amari replaced Landon as equerry to Qaboos, becoming the Directorate of Intelligence and Head of the Royal Palace Office.

What is significant during the crisis is the merging of roles in the security and economic sectors. The integration of role differed from Oman's earlier historical periods. Prior to 1970, the country was an empty state with a relatively simple bureaucracy. Given the tribal structures, as discussed in Chap. 3, and the role of the British in building a system that was conducive to the political and social environment during that period, Oman was not equipped to negotiate and handle major transactions and events. The way roles were distributed were relatively uncomplicated. The ad hoc system of governance, however, changed with the establishment of the Sultanate, where the roles of internal and external actors became more complex after 1970 (as shown in this chapter). With the rise of the Sultanate, came the construction and institutionalisation of the economic, security, and political roles. The British thus positioned themselves within the Omani government, further complicating the established roles of governance. This integration of roles was first represented when the Sultan established three Councils (Development, Finance, and Petroleum) to regulate and coordinate the ministries and deal with the ongoing crisis.¹⁵⁸ As former member

¹⁵⁵ Among those items put on hold was the development of the private sector, along with that of agriculture, fisheries, manufacturing and handicrafts. 'Speech on the second Five-Year Development plan delivered by the Minister of State for Foreign Affairs and Deputy Chairman of the Development Council, Qais Al-Zawawi' Oman—Economy [FCO 8/3549].

¹⁵⁶ Yergin (1991).

¹⁵⁷ Al-Ma 'amari was removed from his ministerial position after the 2011 protests.

¹⁵⁸ The Oil and Gas Council is chaired by Qaboos, and includes six ministerial representatives, representatives from the Department of Finance, and the Secretary General of the Development

of the Development and Financial Council, Al-Zubair explains how important it was to have ‘political will’ during that period:

In 1986 when the oil price dipped, the development council and financial council suggested to His Majesty to take action. We either borrow or devalue the Omani Rial. This was to show that the government has a will. Another group of people from the security, I shall not name them, said that this would affect our people. His Majesty luckily agreed with us and devalued the currency. A few months later, the oil price went up. The people then said that we were hasty and when the second oil crisis happened in the 1990’s no one wanted to hear from us.¹⁵⁹ We now have a history of not acting quickly; we wait, see, and think positively. After this, the appetite to spend more increased: five airports, building in great proportions, the sense of a developing country was gone. We have done well, but it is not sustainable. We are spending more in the oil sector, which is expensive.¹⁶⁰

The ‘other group’ are said to be Al-Ma’amari and his close-circle, who work in the Royal Office.¹⁶¹

When understanding how ‘energy security’ has been conceptualised in Oman, one cannot neglect the causes of rivalry between businessmen and security personnel in political positions, since they reveal both new and old discourses and practices for managing energy. Because these competing social networks have so greatly influenced the terms of power in the country, its policies and practices are embedded within social relationships. In discussing the economic issues around the 1986 oil price collapse, due to social and personal rivalry, the government was unable to cut down on expenditure. As a result, Oman devalued its currency and turned to the international finance market, from which it obtained a \$500 million syndicated Euroloan.¹⁶² In addition, since the Sultanate’s state budget was 24% in deficit, SGRF—which was meant to stabilise the country’s revenue and maintain intergenerational equity—funded 70% of the country’s development budget.¹⁶³ By 1989, the Petroleum Council was less active and only met sporadically to award concessions to international exploration energy companies.

After the oil prices collapsed in 1986, Oman’s dependency on the market price for a single commodity slowed its economic growth in 1989. It was in this context that ‘diversification’ emerged as ‘the famous catchword’ for years to come.¹⁶⁴ According

Council. It merged with the Financial Council in 1996 and became the Financial Affairs and Energy Resource Council (FAERC), which is the body that governs energy resources in Oman today. Its key terms of reference are listed in Appendix D.

¹⁵⁹ During the interview, I asked Al-Zubair who by ‘us’; he responded: ‘Qais Al-Zawawi, Mohammed Al-Yousef, and an Egyptian from the World Bank—those in the Development Council.’ Interview # 41 with Mohammed Ali Al-Zubair, Economic Advisor to the Sultan. 27 January 2015, Muscat.

¹⁶⁰ Interview # 41. 27 January 2015, Muscat.

¹⁶¹ Interview # 44 with former high-ranking individual working with government since 1970. 15 February 2016, Muscat.

¹⁶² The major sponsors of Euroloan were Gulf International Bank and Chase Investment Bank. Allen and Rigsbee (2000), p. 107.

¹⁶³ Al-Yousef (1996).

¹⁶⁴ Interview # 7. 16 March 2016, London.

to Sir Terence Clark, the dire forecast had an interesting effect on Qaboos. The Sultan, Clark reports, was ‘delighted’:

It meant that the ministers reigned in their ambitions. When the oil prices were constantly rising and money was easy to find, the ministries came forward with more and more ambitious projects. And he, as the keeper of the treasury, was always concerned that maybe this income will not continue rising and that these ambitious proposals would collapse in some future date. You must be careful, put money away for a rainy day, difficult time.¹⁶⁵

In contrast to the ministers, Qaboos saw the fall of oil prices as an opportunity to diversify. Rather than implementing the national agenda to diversify, many ministers—while agents of economic and political change—sought financial-interest over the common good.

To summarise, the section above showed how heterogeneous understandings of ‘energy security’ arose in the context of the historical relationship between Oman and both Britain and the US. The influence of the two countries, which continues today, has come by way of external ‘experts’—such as intelligence officers, consultants, foreign companies and international organisations—who interfaced with powerful local merchants, who also held government positions. This *network of experts* has influenced the Sultanate’s decision-making processes, including how energy is managed politically, economically, and socially, in an informal and often ad hoc fashion. However, the underlying motive that brought the ‘experts’ to Oman was their desire for wealth. Whether for the benefit of Oman or for themselves, the range of social clusters and actors competed and collaborated in pursuit of financial gain generated by oil.

Conclusion

This chapter has considered how, in the Omani context, energy became attached to contested terms such as development, diversification, modernisation and security. The Sultanate relied on hydrocarbon revenues to drive its economic development; however, the energy challenges were more complex and multidimensional.

Looking back to the origins of British and American involvement, the chapter showed how energy was most prioritised for military and security purposes, which in turn continued the development of energy securitisation. Throughout the Cold War, energy sustained Oman’s national security interest by generating the revenue needed to finance weapons and arms from the US and the UK. Moreover, the procurement of arms guaranteed British and American support of the GCC’s regional security. It further balanced the US and the UK competitive and collaborative relationship in Oman, whereby the island of Masirah was handed to the Americans thus eclipsing British hegemony in the Gulf. During the period of austerities in the 1980s, the collaboration continued with Oman’s invitation to American and British companies to partner and join forces in the development of the country.

By sketching the convergence of internal and external actors and policies, this chapter has aimed to demonstrate how certain practices and power relations derived

¹⁶⁵ Ibid.

from a range of interests from personal finance to regional security. In many ways, the relationships between external ‘experts’ and local political/economic authorities played out in a competitive and collaborative quest to control oil wealth in Oman. As illustrated by the lives of ‘porous’ government figures who leveraged their power in various domains, including the private sector, the transnational *network of experts* calls into question the traditional dichotomy between public and private. Incidentally, these dynamics proved vital to the consolidation of the Sultanate’s state apparatus.

The intersection of modernisation and development during the 1970s arose from a firm commitment to create a diverse economy and later move towards neoliberal policies in the late-1980s (see Chap. 5). The international competition and collaboration that ensued, however, amid tensions of the Cold War, delayed efforts to lessen oil dependency and develop the private sector. This chapter illustrated the multiple layers involved in trying to link between energy and security. Rather than looking simply at how ‘oil rents’ are distributed—as ‘rentier state theory’ aims to do—this chapter considered who controlled the rents, what social clusters and classes emerged from this control, and what dynamics influenced such control and distribution. In particular, it examined the way in which ‘experts’ wielded power through local merchants, whereby influencing, indirectly and directly, the Sultanate’s management of energy resources.

The trends depicted in this chapter reverberate in Oman today, where social clusters influence on governance, and lack of emphasis on conservation, remain to secure their individual benefit from oil at the expense of national interest. Furthermore, the government’s role in maintaining a securitised energy framework permits the absence of a national conservation policy. The next chapter will underscore this continuity, turning to the 1990s and the impact of *neoliberalism* on ‘energy security’.

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Chapter 5

Neoliberalising Energy Post-1990



'The forthcoming phase requires that the private sector undertakes the greatest role in it by developing its capabilities in utilising its experiences and diversifying its skills, in order to enhance its contribution to both economic and social development.'

~ The Late Sultan Qaboos bin Said, June 2, 1995

Introduction

By the end of the Cold War, a host of security-based and economic challenges had converged in the Gulf region, ranging from the dramatic drop in oil prices to rebuilding following the Iran–Iraq War and the beginning of the Gulf War. At this point in history, energy security, or the uninterrupted flow of energy, became the essential aspect of British and American involvement in the region. Other factors, such as economic and military interdependence, were considered by the US and Russia to ensure a ‘new world order’.¹ As the call for economic diversification brought in a group of experts, it brought in, too, their ideologies, which sometimes clashed with and within the state apparatus, but ultimately left a lasting imprint. The 1990s in Oman might best be described as a turning point during which *neoliberalism* and technocracy were introduced, from which point on became entrenched.

Deploying the concept of *neoliberalism* as developed in Aihwa Ong’s work, this chapter will demonstrate how, in the period following the Cold War, a network of experts utilised neoliberal principles not only to create new economic possibilities, but also to reinforce particular agendas.² Ong’s framework reveals how such agendas gained traction through Western ‘experts’, whose involvement in Oman’s development shaped the way in which neoliberal ideas (i.e. the rule of the market, cutting

¹ The use of this term dates to Woodrow Wilson after WWI, but in this context, Mikhail Gorbachev and George Bush used it to define the nature of the post-Cold War era and the hopes that the great powers would cooperate.

² Ong (2007).

public expenditure, deregulation, and privatisation)³ were absorbed by its political regime.⁴ By sketching the re-emergence of the Sultanate's engagement with privatisation, the analysis will reveal how 'energy security' discourses and practices reinforced and promoted a hegemony of neoliberal principles.

This chapter will also demonstrate the way in which global neoliberal practices intersect with local practices. Informed by the historical evolution of Omani culture and society, it will highlight aspects of the energy discourse that have remained static while simultaneously tracking those that have changed, particularly because of neoliberal discourses. As we will see, for example, while a relationship between energy, security, and economics existed prior to the 1990s (see Chap. 4), energy discourses in this following period were far more dominated by the adoption of neoliberal policies.

Moving chronologically, through a close reading of 'Oman Vision 2020', the Sultanate's long-term development strategy 1996–2020, the first section will analyse the processes involved in economic liberalisation, including the different stages of privatisation beginning from the late-1980s. The second section, in turn, will focus on how, since the year 2000, understandings of 'energy security' have been impacted by the development of Oman's LNG (liquefied natural gas) plant, and a scandal of the oil company Shell. Finally, it will consider how both a push towards privatising the electricity sector, and the rise of environmental concerns, have expanded conceptualisations of 'energy security'.

5.1 Shades of Neoliberalism

Although the establishment of neoliberalism in the West is often located in the 1980s (associated with policies from the Reagan and Thatcher era)—its roots go as far back as the beginning of the twentieth century with the resurgence of nineteenth-century ideas associated with *laissez-faire* liberalism. However, the global extension of neoliberalism in Oman was a gradual process. After the 1986 oil crisis (discussed in Chap. 4), these neoliberal ideas and policies were introduced by the distinctive interplay of external and local actors in Oman (i.e. partnerships among foreign consultants, intelligence officers, etc., and Omani merchants and politicians) encouraging new economic trends. Even though the first three five-year development plans⁵ proclaimed the goal of moving away from an oil-based economy, Oman continued to rely on hydrocarbons. The consumption/export split of oil in Oman, as well as the production level during 1986 to 2010, is shown in Fig. 5.1.⁶ It shows how the articulation of 'energy security' also expands to the material base of crude oil.

³ Refer to Chap. 2 for detailed discussion on neoliberalism.

⁴ Ong (2007), p. 5.

⁵ The economic plan began in 1976 whereby the first five-year development plan was drafted.

⁶ National Centre for Statistics and Information. 'Oman Statistical Yearbook' issued in 2015, last accessed 23 December 2017, <https://data.gov.om/>.

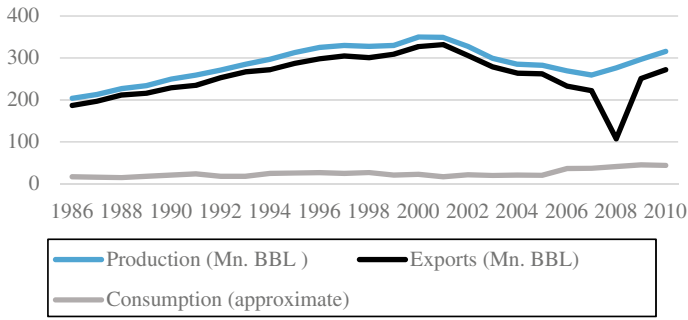


Fig. 5.1 Crude oil production, exports and consumption (1986–2010)

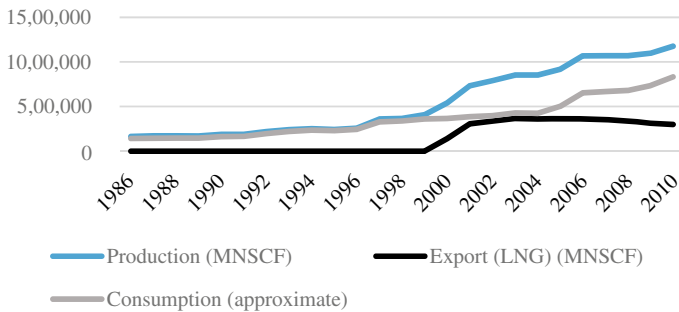


Fig. 5.2 Natural gas production, export and consumption (1986–2010)

Figure 5.1 also demonstrates how crude oil production levels gradually increased towards the year 2000. This gradual increase was followed by fluctuating production levels during 2000–2007, which led the Sultanate to adopt Enhanced Oil Recovery (EOR) techniques in 2005 to increase the production rate. The export curve followed the same pattern as oil production with the exception of the year 2008 as the demand for oil decreased due to the global financial crisis. Overall, oil consumption remained at an increasing steady rate during the three decades of production, which was averaged around fifty-thousand barrels every year. In Fig. 5.2, a different pattern for gas production and consumption/export during the same period is illustrated⁷:

From the end of the 1980s and approaching the year 2000, there has been a gradual steady increase in production and consumption (mostly associated with gas), and no exports took place. Prior to the 1990s, gas was not considered a favourable commodity, most countries, and energy companies sought after oil. When it came to the transportation of gas, the traditional method of pipelines was usually adopted making the material property of transporting gas during that period difficult. It was only during the late-1990s, that the concept of LNG began gaining economic momentum globally. In Oman, the government started exporting gas through its LNG plant only when it discovered commercial quantities of gas and the technology of LNG advanced.

⁷ National Centre for Statistics and Information. ‘Oman Statistical Yearbook’ issued in 2015.

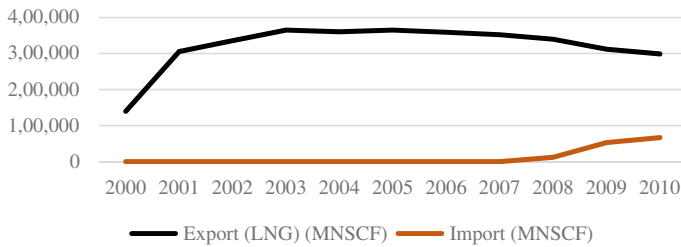


Fig. 5.3 Natural gas imports/exports (2000–2010)

In Fig. 5.3, it illustrates how gas exports increased dramatically between the years 2001 and the end of 2003, followed by a levelled curved towards the year 2010. In reference to imports, Oman only began importing gas in 2008 from the Dolphin Project Pipeline.⁸ While production level remained steady during these years, the consumption level increased as reflected in Fig. 5.2. This played a role in the decreasing (though minimal) level of exports and the increasing (also minimal) import of gas.⁹

Based on the aforementioned, these material elements cannot be considered outside international discourses and practices. Rather than focusing on addressing consumption, for instance, this chapter shows how neoliberal ideas of promoting private sector activity allowed for ‘energy security’ to be rearticulated again. Therefore, this section unpacks the neoliberalisation of ‘energy security and the concrete form it takes in the case of Oman.

5.1.1 *Towards Neoliberalisation*

As the late-1980s were characterised by the importance of oil as a source of foreign currency, many countries outside of OPEC (Organisation of the Petroleum Exporting Countries), including Oman, were affected by the price fall of 1986. Faced with declining world oil demand and increasing non-OPEC production, Said Al-Shanfari, former Minister of Petroleum, together with the Oil ministers of Egypt and Mexico, founded IPEC (Independent Petroleum Exporting Countries)¹⁰ in 1987, to cooperate openly with OPEC to stabilise energy prices and to cut oil production. In the same year, Oman announced a 5% production cut.¹¹ Regardless of these efforts, the price of oil did not rise.

⁸ The Dolphin gas pipeline produces and transports LNG from Qatar’s North Field to Abu Dhabi and Oman. It is developed and ran by a company from Abu Dhabi, Dolphin Energy.

⁹ National Centre for Statistics and Information. ‘Oman Statistical Yearbook’ issued in 2015.

¹⁰ IPEC never evolved as OPEC since there was no political will to move forward.

¹¹ Berger et al. (1990).

Faced by the dire forecast, in 1988, Mohammed Al-Yousef, the Minister of Planning, commissioned a study to set up a long-term strategy on how to diversify the economy.¹² Shortly after the study was concluded, the government started building a copper mine and a refining plant at Sohar, two cement factories, and light industries (marble, limestone, and gypsum) in the Rusayl industrial zone. It also sold some of its shares in Oman Flour Mills Company, undertaking steps towards privatisation through divestment of assets.

As Maqbool Sultan, former Minister of Commerce and Industry (1991–2011), explains, the process of privatisation unfolded in a piecemeal fashion, since the private sector was not yet equipped to play a dominant role in the economy.¹³ In 1989, the government withdrew RO 1,254 million from the State General Reserve Fund (SGRF) to support its third five-year plan (1986–1990), which pushed for liberalising the economy.¹⁴ A deficit on the Fund, however, followed as government expenditure exceeded generated revenue.¹⁵ Clearly, the practice was unsustainable and insufficient funds made it difficult to support the plan for privatisation. To address Oman's struggling economy against a backdrop of volatile prices, the 'experts' advised that Oman drastically shift its economic policies by depending less on the government and more on the private sector.

Meanwhile, in late-1988, World Bank (WB) personnel were brought in by the Sultanate to conduct another report assessing Oman's economic development and to find solutions to the country's financial constraints.¹⁶ The report highlighted the government's progress in providing public goods and services, and in expanding the portfolio to include sectors other than oil-financed activities. It also noted that unequal distribution of public goods and services had created acute disparities between living standards in the capital, Muscat, and the rest of the country. Therefore, the WB stressed that Oman needed 'to formulate the appropriate strategy in trying to have increasing segments of the population, especially rural, participate in a development effort which has been made more complicated by increasingly serious financial constraint'.¹⁷ While Oman was facing pressure to adopt neoliberal policies, it resisted compliance with the WB's recommendations because the WB fiscal policies called on the Sultanate to reduce public expenditure which would result in job losses for Omanis.

The report further underscored the need for Oman to move away from a narrow, production-based economy, overwhelmingly dependent upon oil. The WB report painted the situation in stark terms:

¹² The study was conducted under British Aid arrangement by Whitehead Middle East Ltd. and Birks Sinclair Ltd. See Skeet (1992).

¹³ Interview # 1 with Maqbool Ali Sultan, former Minister of Commerce and Industry (1991–2011) who played a key role in the privatisation of the power sector. He was replaced post-Bouazizi demonstrations in Sohar where the dissidents called for his removal. Muscat, 4 February 2016.

¹⁴ McBriety and Al-Zubair (2004).

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ World Bank (1988).

¹⁷ Ibid.

The country is highly susceptible to external shocks as clearly demonstrated by the 1986 sharp drop in oil prices which brought down its per capita income by 25% to about US\$4,900. This narrow production structure also continues to depend largely on expatriate expertise and workers. In a given year, 10–15% of national income is remitted abroad to pay for these foreign expertise and workers, while Omanis are being trained to replace them. Because it takes time to diversify the production structure and to acquire skills, the Omani economic base will remain very narrow, supported by a large contingent of expatriates for many years to come.¹⁸

Even though the Omani government had established comprehensive regulatory frameworks, capital market institutions, and modern industrial estates to promote private sector activity, the WB experts were incapable of influencing the decision-makers to adopt neoliberal policies in the 1980s, despite actively encouraging the Sultanate to remove trade restrictions, to privatise, and curtail state expenditures in vital areas needed for competitive manufacturing.

While neoliberalism posits a divorce between the state and the market, Al-Yousef, in contrast, points out that the roles of the Omani state and the market were ‘not conflicting but complementary, and these two institutions have so far worked in tandem, with the result that their contributions to the development process in Oman have been synergetic and not mutually exclusive’.¹⁹ This perspective of the role of the state/market is however not unique to Oman, a few developing states view it in a similar way. To this end, and due to the increasing oil prices, the status quo remained intact, and no further moves were made towards privatisation until the 1990s.

5.1.2 *Misleading Equations*

As the oil prices in 1991 continued to decline, making them lower than the prices of 1987, the ideas of *conservation*, *diversification* and *privatisation* resurfaced. Reflecting these concerns, the fourth five-year plan (1991–1995) integrated as objectives diversifying the economy, developing the nation’s human resource, and facilitating greater private sector participation.²⁰ For the first time and to this end, *majlis al-shura* (the Consultative Council) and the Chamber of Commerce and Industry cooperated on the country’s plan to privatise. To reduce government intervention in the infrastructure sector, and to transition to a market-oriented economy, the government encouraged partnerships between the private and government sector. Analysing Oman’s development from 1970 to 1995, Al-Yousef concludes that, while calling for a more active private sector, the government nevertheless continued to play a dominant role in Oman’s social and economic development—going against what was suggested by the five-year development plans.²¹ His point, in part, is to show that the ‘state versus market’ divide does not correspond historically to the economic

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Al-Yousef (1998).

²⁰ Al-Zubair (2004), pp. 119–120.

²¹ Al-Yousef (1998), p. 26.

situation in Oman; it emerges only later, as a construct, in tandem with social dissent in the mid-1990s.

Furthermore, Al-Yousef cautions that those aspects of neoliberalism introduced in Oman have typically yielded negative impacts. While Oman's poor export performance from 1981 to 1993 can be attributed to the low oil price levels in the late-1980s, he posits alternatively, that it 'lies perhaps in the fact that Oman had relied on liberal trade policies and a *laissez-faire* approach towards industrialisation'.²² Al-Yousef likewise attributes the Sultanate's failure to diversify to its adoption of neoliberal principles, especially its policy of non-intervention. According to Al-Yousef's critique, neoliberal non-intervention grants inevitable advantage to sectors already developed, diminishing the chances of growth and diversification. In Oman, the predominant sector is that of oil; without intervention, he suggests, other sectors will remain undeveloped, resulting in societal disproportion.

Not *all* of Oman's failures to diversify during this period, however, derived from its adoption of neoliberal principles that were proposed by internal and external advisors to the Sultan. Al-Yousef identifies other problems, too, including the government's (1) declining savings ratio, (2) growing fiscal deficit, (3) inability to control public current expenditure, (4) neo-classical approach to industrial and trade policy, (5) heavy reliance on expatriate labour and purchase of services from abroad, and (6) lack of [an import substitution industrialisation] protection for domestic industries.²³ He makes no mention of corruption, however, or of the importance of a clear legal and regulatory framework—two issues that, according to an economic analyst working in the Central Bank of Oman (CBO), are in fact interrelated. Corruption, this interviewee explains, stems from the lack of regulation and monitoring.²⁴ Therefore, to avoid corruption, a legal architecture is needed that includes structures for transparency, mechanisms that foster the growth of human capital (such as good education), tools and policies for monitoring, a functioning legal system, and incentives to punish and reward.²⁵ Reflecting on the 1990s, he added passionately that Oman should have aimed to privatise the state-owned enterprises without decreasing the living standard of citizens.²⁶

In 1994, the WB issued a new report reiterating the importance of diversification and the move towards a neoliberal economy. The report entitled 'Sustainable Growth and Economic Diversification' critiques private sector development in Oman, where, according to the WB perspective,

[...] private sector services meant that private investment was channelled into low-risk, high-yield activities in import and domestic trade (under government-sanctioned monopolistic agency arrangements). With the expanding public and private demand for labour [...] private businessmen increasingly became rent-seekers and risk-averters.²⁷

²² Al-Yousef (2015).

²³ Al-Yousef (2015), pp. 115–133.

²⁴ Interview #3 with Economic and Financial Analyst working in the CBO. 4 January 2015, Muscat.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ World Bank (1994).

The fact that private sector contribution to Oman's GDP remained low only reinforced the WB's conclusions that diversification efforts have not been successful. In this respect, the government adopted the WB's advice and in turn sanctioned monopolistic practices and distorted the priorities and allocation of resources. As the report illustrates, the framing of Oman's market is restricted to corporate monopoly, bringing with it social networks that wield power and control. This issue of corruption, through 'government-sanctioned' monopolistic actions, among others, set the foundation for political and social dissent.

5.1.3 *Discourses of Corruption*

Despite the plummeting oil prices in the early 1990s, the Omani government continued to spend a disproportionate amount on civil service, defence, and infrastructural development, such as Al-Bustan Palace Hotel, which cost, at that time, OR 23 million (approx. \$60 million).²⁸

On 18 November 1994, the government announced that two hundred individuals had been arrested and convicted for allegedly conspiring with a secret organisation from the Muslim Brotherhood to overthrow the Sultanate's regime.²⁹ The secret service of Oman had been informed of the plot by Egypt's President, Hosni Mubarak, who disclosed that it had been uncovered during a police interrogation in Cairo.³⁰ Immediately, the Sultan's security officials launched a comprehensive surveillance programme and discovered stores of weapons linked to foreign agencies and hidden in a garage.³¹ While framed as an Islamist coup (an external threat), Francis Owtram suggests that dissident complaints, which included allegations of nepotism and corruption, indicate that the movement in fact had internal origins.³² The government did not release any official statement regarding the details of the plot; the prosecution gave the 135 accused plotters severe life-term sentences on charges of undermining state security. The Sultan later pardoned all those accused.³³

²⁸ Royal Decree No. 1/1986. 'The Ratification of the State Budget for the Year 1986' issued on 1 January 1986; Royal Decree No. 1/1990. 'The Ratification of the State Budget for the Year 1990' issued on 1 January 1990; Royal Decree No. 1/1994. 'The Ratification of the State Budget for the Year 1994' issued on 1 January 1994; Royal Decree No. 1/1998. 'The Ratification of the State Budget for the Year 1998' issued on 1 January 1998; Royal Decree No. 1/2002. 'The Ratification of the State Budget for the Year 2002' issued on 1 January 2002.

²⁹ November 18 is celebrated as Oman's national day and Qaboos' birthday.

³⁰ Beasant (2013).

³¹ Owtram (2004).

³² Owtram (2004), p. 196. Particular complaints cited conflicts of interest and the use of high-ranking positions to promote private business opportunities.

³³ In a footnote, N. Janardhan states the following: 'The Islamists accused the Sultan of being influenced by Western powers and criticised the visit of Israelis to Oman, as well as Muscat's steps to cooperate with Tel Aviv at a time when the Palestinian issue was not resolved. Muscat also swapped economic representation offices with Tel Aviv, which were closed in 2000 for lack

What is intriguing about this ‘attempted-coup’, or ‘Islamic fundamentalism’, as John Beasant describes it, was that senior officials³⁴ were ‘bound by a sense of resentment [...] and] conspired to unleash a chain of events that would have led to the assassination of the man to whom, in several instances, they [had] taken solemn oaths of allegiance’.³⁵ While Beasant focuses on the disloyalty fomenting among high government officials, Owtram’s point is to attribute it to inequality and corruption within government. Because of these and other insecurities that emerged in the first half of the 1990s, the WB stepped in again, calling for a reduction in government interference in the private sector, an end to nepotism, and the creation of an ‘Oman Vision 2020’ plan. Oman acquiesced, drafting a ‘neoliberal manifesto’ to appease the critics and deal with the economic challenges of the country. This Omani neoliberal manifesto, however, in many ways, masked the realities on ground, played lip-service to the WB, and misled a population that had hoped for tangible change.

5.1.4 *The Neoliberal Manifesto*

On 2 June 1995, before opening ‘Oman Vision 2020’, the Conference for the Sultanate’s Future Vision, Qaboos addressed the Council of Ministers in a private session:

*Development is not an end in itself, but is aimed to enable the man, who is its tool and its maker. Thus, it should not stop at the concept of achieving material wealth and building a diversified economy but goes beyond that; forming the Omani citizens who are capable of contributing to the development process and comprehensive construction with full competence and awareness. This can be achieved by improving their technical and professional abilities, stimulating their creative and academic potentials, refining their diverse skills, and directing all of that towards the service of citizens and their happiness.*³⁶

Qaboos’ point is that being human has value in and of itself and therefore should *not* be treated as a means to something else. Development, on the other hand, is a means to serve *the human*. Qaboos’ vision is based upon assumptions that ‘material wealth’ equals, or immediately corresponds to, or solves all the problems of, development. In Oman, for example, neoliberal agendas assumed that pulling down all barriers to foreign investment would cause the restructuring of the labour force, the privatisation of industries, and the reorganisation of social life through individual achievement of

of progress in the Middle East peace process and Israel’s reaction to the Palestinian intifada.’ See Janardhan (2006).

³⁴ Among these officials were Khamis Mubarak al-Kiyumi (Under Secretary for Commerce and Industry); Musallim Salim al-Qatan (Under Secretary for Fisheries); Mohammed al-Ghazali (a Dhofari religious leader) and his brother; and several employees in PDO, the military and the university. For further details, see Calvin H Allen Jr. and W. Lynn Rigsbee II. 2000. *Oman Under Qaboos*, pp. 60–62.

³⁵ Beasant (2013), p. 38.

³⁶ Excerpt from the speech of His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said on the Occasion of the Omani Economy Conference Future Vision 2020, 2 June 1995 (added emphasis).

‘material wealth’. Qaboos, by contrast, saw that by emphasising human capital, the pillars of his strategy would begin with training and education and end in the ‘service of citizens and their happiness’.³⁷ According to the Sultan, these goals required ‘that the private sector undertake the greatest role’ in developing skills, capabilities, and training to enable Omani citizens to become entrepreneurs.³⁸ Development begins and ends with the citizen; the Sultan’s vision was, at its core, socially grounded. Oman Vision 2020, he emphasised, must aim to ensure that economic development is consistent with social development.

A day after the Sultan’s address to the ministers, the conference ‘Vision for Oman’s Economy—Oman Vision 2020’ formally convened. Presided over by the Deputy Prime-Minister for Financial and Economic Affairs, Qais Al-Zawawi, its purpose was to discuss Oman’s long-term socio-economic plan. As stated in the final document, Oman Vision 2020 is a ‘crossroad’ between the social and economic stages of development, and was issued in December 1996 as part of the fifth five-year development plan.³⁹ According to a Minister present at the meetings, Oman Vision 2020 was premised on four pillars: (1) diversification, (2) human resource development, (3) social concerns, such as welfare and health, and (4) private sector development.⁴⁰ According to the same Minister, the strategy aimed to achieve sustainable growth centred on an ‘intensifying linkage between the Omani economy and the *global economy*’. The intentional move to turn towards global markets invited, naturally, brought a new host of external actors (from the ‘global sphere’), discourses and practices that promised to help Oman move away from dependence upon oil. Additionally, however—to apply a point from Mitchell—the introduction of new actors made possible ‘new claims to expertise, new equivalence, and new silences’,⁴¹ with ambivalent results. Only a certain number of individuals, after all, were able to acquire the knowledge needed to understand the new order.⁴² The change in economic orientation, therefore, witnessed a power shift. The most valuable players became those who possessed the knowledge and could advise the Sultanate on how to develop into a technologically advanced country.

In view of the impending technological changes, Oman Vision 2020 also underscored the need to develop human resources⁴³ ‘in a way that ensures maintaining

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Ministry of National Economy (1996).

⁴⁰ Interview #4 with former Minister that dealt with issues relating to the economy and development 1 February 2015, Muscat.

⁴¹ Mitchell (2002), p. 83.

⁴² Mitchell (2002), p. 38.

⁴³ The human resources development sector included many subsectors: health, general education, higher education, technical education, vocational training, social affairs and employment in the public and private sectors. For detailed information on each subsector see Ministry of National Economy (1996), pp. 72–94.

Omani values and traditions'.⁴⁴ This balance of development and maintaining tradition can be traced back to the Sultanate's 'omni-balancing'⁴⁵ policy. While the government had a strong desire to have Omanis play a leading role in all areas of trading and professional employment, the Ministry of Education (MoE) was expected to commit to a sector that—while maintaining traditional values—was modern and advanced. This balance is reflected in the MoE's range of educational programmes designed to meet the demands of modern science and culture in the information age. The Sultanate prioritised education and training, making it the cornerstone of Oman Vision 2020, because of the lack of productivity, competitiveness, and variation of positions within the labour force. The weakness of Oman's labour force is a direct effect of the increasing employment in the public sector. The document observed that, in 1993, 73% of employees were working in the public sector, compared to 68% in 1990.⁴⁶

Another significant programme within Oman Vision 2020 included increasing the number of Omanis in the workforce (Omanisation) through industrialisation and privatisation: 'The aim was to achieve an Omanisation rate of 95% in the public sector by 2020, against 68% in 1995'.⁴⁷ It was anticipated that these policy changes would serve the structure and growth rates of the GDP, mainly by moving away from over-reliance on the public sector. The GDP growth rate, according to Oman Vision 2020, was predicted to increase from 5.8% in 1995, to more than 7.4% in 2020, driven by growth of non-oil sectors.⁴⁸ Accordingly, 'energy security' evolved in Oman to include broader, complex questions that surpass the realist and liberal concerns of securing oil supplies.

Economic diversification comprised another core strategy for Oman Vision 2020. For the first time, the concept of 'rentier mentality' made an explicit appearance in Oman Vision 2020 which reveals a commitment to a counter strategy. The document attributed the lack of diversification in earlier five-year plans to 'price imbalances between good production and service production sectors [and] *the emergence of monopolies and rentier mentality*'.⁴⁹ To combat the former, while decreasing oil's contribution to the GDP, the vision called for increasing contributions from the gas sector, and others such as agriculture, fisheries, electricity, tourism, banking, telecom, and the private sector. Whereas Al-Yousef, then, compliments cooperation between the government and the private sector, the Vision adopts a more cautious perspective, criticising government involvement as responsible for a lack of entrepreneurialism and increased 'rentier tendencies and dependency' within the private sector.⁵⁰ Its alternative includes the following four elements⁵¹:

⁴⁴ Ministry of National Economy (1996), p. 71.

⁴⁵ Concept explained in Chap. 1 of this study.

⁴⁶ Ministry of National Economy (1996), p. 70.

⁴⁷ Valeri (2005).

⁴⁸ Ministry of National Economy (1996), p. 70.

⁴⁹ Ministry of National Economy (1996), p. 104 (added emphasis).

⁵⁰ Ministry of National Economy (1996), p. 132.

⁵¹ Ministry of National Economy (1996), p. 131.

1. The creation of a leading and highly competitive private sector characterised by being efficient, self-reliant, and integrated into the global economy.
2. The private sector, whether institutional or informal, shall be the main national income generator.
3. The private sector shall be the main source of provision of fair employment opportunities for people.
4. The provision of a private sector which is socially and environmentally responsible.

As the list of strategies above demonstrate, while Oman Vision 2020 did not simply focus on ‘neoliberal’ issues, development of the private sector had begun to feature prominently thus expanding the formation of ‘energy security’. It was not the exclusive focus of Oman Vision 2020, however; the document addressed, as well, issues of bureaucracy, coordination between various bodies, and intellectual property rights. In the final pages of the neoliberal manifesto, the government called for the restructuring of the socio-political fabric of Oman: ‘[t]he government will utilise the power of mass media to prepare society to accept forthcoming changes in the economic and industrial structure of the country’.⁵² The drafters of Oman Vision 2020 continued to promote a neoliberal agenda including bringing more neoliberally minded people into the country to advise in the short term on the national economic plan.

According to Mahdi Al-Abdawani, then Director-General of Development Planning in the Ministry of National Economy (MoNE), the MoNE and other government and non-government entities had contributed to the initial drafts of Oman Vision 2020.⁵³ The final compilation, which had evolved from ‘specialised sectoral reports’,⁵⁴ ultimately represented ‘the culmination of efforts exerted by the Ministry of Development, who sought earnestly to coordinate with international experts from the WB, IMF, and other recommended international economic experts’.⁵⁵ These experts included representatives of the Petroleum Finance Company⁵⁶ and independent consultants recommended by the WB, who came from diverse Western and non-Western backgrounds.⁵⁷ Despite their diversity, however, the foreign consultants

⁵² Ministry of National Economy (1996), p. 132.

⁵³ The other government entities included the Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Oil and Gas, Ministry of Commerce and Industry, Ministry of Labour, and Ministry of Social Development.

⁵⁴ These sectoral reports were drafted in coordination with key ministers: Minister of Development, under the direct supervision of the Vice Chairman of the Development Council and the Deputy Prime Minister for Cabinet Affairs.

⁵⁵ Interview # 5 with Mahdi Al-Abdawani, Technical Coordinator for the Committee for Formulating the fifth five-year Development Plan, and Vision Conference: Oman Vision 2020 and former Director General of Development and Planning in the Ministry of National Economy. 10 April 2017, Muscat.

⁵⁶ Petroleum Finance Company (PFC Energy) is a consultancy that focused exclusively on the energy sector since 1984 and was based in Washington, D.C. It was later acquired in 2013 by IHS Inc, a London-based company that provides information and analysis to businesses and governments in industries such as, defence, security, energy, and trade and technology.

⁵⁷ They included the late Dr Abel Haleem Sharshar and Dr George Karam, a former Lebanese Finance Minister, both from William and Mary College, Virginia, US; the late Dr Mahmoud Essayed

were united by a preference for neoliberal principles that could be applied in varied formulations. In welcoming an assemblage of global and local actors promoting a near-hegemonic vision, the Sultanate in 1995 adopted the neoliberal logics and policies encoded in Oman Vision 2020.

5.1.5 *The Rule of Experts*

To implement the long-term economic strategy the government focused its industrial policies on three pillars: (1) to add value to the Sultanate's hydrocarbon reserves by establishing downstream industries and energy-intensive manufacturing, (2) to create more jobs for Omanis, and (3) to build export-oriented industries that could sustain themselves and adhere to international prices for services.⁵⁸ In 1996, the Sultanate established Oman Oil Company (OOC) to invest abroad and locally, and attract foreign investors, mainly in the energy sector. As told by Isam Al-Zadjali, CEO of OOC:

Oman Oil has primarily served as a vehicle for the government to fully or partially sponsor Oman's diversification strategy in the energy sector on the domestic front, as well as jointly pursue some of the investment opportunities presented by our foreign partners. As a result, Oman Oil currently holds a rather diversified portfolio, in addition to several important projects in the pipeline.⁵⁹

OOC's projects included: the Caspian Sea-line exploration; an Oman-Indian gas pipeline; a refinery in India; and a fertiliser plant to supply the Indian market. However, most of the projects were shelved or simply failed to come to fruition. Moreover, instead of moving away from government intervention in investment portfolios, the introduction of OOC (a state-owned company) asserted the government's role. Contradictions abounded between plans to implement Oman Vision 2020 and the practices that ensued. Despite the articulated aims, the Sultanate remained directly

Mahgoub, a former UN National Accounts Expert (he worked on the Sustainable Development and Macroeconomic Framework Report for Oman Vision 2020); Dr Ibrahim K. M. Kursany, who was the Economic Advisor to the Undersecretary for Development Affairs currently works with B'huth in Dubai, UAE (he worked on the Private Sector Development Report and Economic Diversification Report); Dr. Mohamed Al-Awad Jalal Eldin, an independent consultant (who temporarily worked on initiating the Human Resources Development Report); Dr Abdul Rahim Al-Rayah, who was an Economic Consultant and currently works in Abu Dhabi Chamber (he worked on the Manufacturing Sector Report and later wrote a book on the privatisation experience in the Gulf); Dr Abdel Fattah Odeh, a Lebanese Canadian expert (who wrote a report on Global Changes); and Dr Abu Al-Ainain, from Egypt (who wrote on Oman's cultural vision). This information, which is not found in any research on Oman, was obtained from Interview # 5. 10 April 2017, Muscat.

⁵⁸ Interview # 6 with High-ranking official in the Ministry of Commerce and Industry. 10 March 2015, Muscat.

⁵⁹ Interview # 47 with Isam Saud Al-Zadjali, CEO of Oman Oil Company, formerly President of Occidental of Oman. 16 February 2015, Muscat. It should be noted that Oman Oil Company in 2019 was merged with another state owned company 'Orpic', and is now known as the integrated energy company OQ.

Table 5.1 Oman's annual GDP growth percentage⁶⁰

Sectors	1995	1996	1997
Oil and gas	4.9	4.6	2.4
Agriculture and fisheries	13.9	-0.7	7.1
Industry	7.0	-4.1	19.1
Services	4.5	3.4	7.6
GDP at market prices	4.8	2.9	6.4

dependent on the oil sector. Constrained as it was by the price of oil on international markets, reliance upon this sector was unsustainable and unsafe. Table 5.1 shows the annual GDP percentage growth of Oman's economic sectors:

Table 5.1 also illustrates how the non-oil sectors' performance is directly contingent on the oil sector. Following the release of Oman Vision 2020, 1997 witnessed high growth in the agricultural, fisheries, and industry sectors.⁶¹ This was a direct outcome of the positive economic growth resulting from increasing hydrocarbon revenues, followed by an increase in domestic expenditure. According to Maqbool, the private sector, by contrast, contributed little.⁶² He attributes the low performance of the private sector to a degree of unpreparedness. It took until the late-1990s, he suggests, for many of the government-owned companies to privatise, and this was also done gradually as the private sector grew stronger and was more financially capable of investing in big projects.⁶³

Others, however, offer a different perspective. A former Minister who has worked in the government since the 1970s attributes the failure to opposition by 'Ali bin Majid, *el-jama'a fouq el-jabal* [the group on top of the mountain]'.⁶⁴ His expression is a euphemism for the security personnel working in the Royal Office, which is located on a mountain top. 'There is no trust in government', he explains, 'They [the security personnel] have been through certain events and so their mentality' is centred on security concerns at the expense of the country's economic wellbeing.⁶⁵ There is a clear divide between the security personnel that are providing security in Oman and the technocrats that are seeking economic development.

The Minister went on to describe Oman's economic environment during the 1990s, claiming that the government focused on infrastructure development rather than a strategic plan to liberalise the economy and allow the private sector to lead:

⁶⁰ National Centre for Statistics and Information. 'Oman Statistical Yearbook' issued in 2016, pp. 351–352.

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Interview # 1. Muscat, 4 February 2016.

⁶³ Examples of partially privatised companies: Oman Cement Company, Oman Flour Mill, and Omantel.

⁶⁴ Interview # 8 with former Minister working in the government for over thirty-five years and was very influential in many decision-making in government. 15 February 2016, Muscat.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

We were over doing things; the government spent a lot of money on roads and infrastructure. Because we are a rentier state (giving a lot of privileges to the people), there is no taxation, nothing, no fees, no toll, no no no [...] the impact of that is the problem we are facing today. [...] I started with the toll road between Muscat-Qurayat-Sur, they stopped it. My idea was not the revenue, it was to *acquaint the people to participate in the economy and then build on it*. [...] Unfortunately, when I left the government, they cancelled the toll road. Now I am sure that they regret it. *It was in my vision to build the economy to go normally, without depending on oil. That is our security. It is not to depend on oil heavily*. There are a lot of fees since the government is responsible for the security of the country and all individuals. But who is running the country? Not the people, the government is running it! Therefore, *the government wants to make the people happy*.⁶⁶

While the government in Oman 2020 wanted the private sector to lead development projects in the country, the state continued to lead construction projects in Oman. A mixture of neoliberal ideas of entrepreneurial citizens and role of the state (making people happy) permeate the former Minister's analysis. Normative statements such as 'normal rules' and 'not their right' reveal that the former Minister sees himself as an 'expert', in possession of advanced knowledge needed to move the country towards a market-oriented economy. On the other hand, it also ties into the Sultan's speech (quoted above) to push for a neoliberal agenda that includes Omani entrepreneurs and the private sector participation in the economy. The former Minister also asserts that Oman's economy should not rely heavily on oil as such dependence creates insecurity. This insecurity follows the realist view of 'energy security', particularly elements within the resource curse, and the economic impediments that emerge because of a state's over-reliance on one source of income.

Ultimately, the section above revealed how the 'neoliberal manifesto' is assumed by Omani technocrats as the path towards national security. While, in contrast, the security personnel, see the supply of an abundance of jobs (whether in the private or public sectors) as a guarantee towards social security—a priority for Oman.⁶⁷ In this respect, the country's decision-makers are conflicted. As a result, long-term strategies are ineffectively implemented, thus maintaining the status quo; this trend continues as Oman replaces its dependency from oil to gas.

5.2 The 'Limits of Oil' as a Security Problem

The rise of gas in Oman contributed a new dimension to the discourses surrounding energy and security. As neoliberal principles worked their way more deeply into the mindsets of Omani policymakers, the energy sector began to shift from almost sole reliance upon oil to accommodate gas and other alternative forms of energy. The increased presence of these forms generated new notions of 'energy security' which,

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ The priority differences between Omani technocrats and security personnel are detailed in Chap. 4.

for the first time, confronted issues such as overbooking (i.e. overestimating hydrocarbon reserves), liberalising attempts through downstream industries, privatisation of electricity and environmental security.

*'A miracle happened'*⁶⁸

The story of gas in Oman begins with Shell. As a major supplier of LNG to the Far East, Shell mainly derived its supply of LNG from Australia, but when this supply began to dwindle, Shell reached a point where it needed to look elsewhere. In 1989, Tony Hanna, Shell Gas and Power's Business Development Manager for the Middle East and Africa, turned his eyes towards Oman.⁶⁹ Hanna sent a proposal to Qaboos for Oman to consider exporting LNG. At that time, the Sultan was weighing a competing proposal (i.e. the construction of an oil pipeline to India); ultimately, however, he opted to invest in an LNG plant.⁷⁰ In 1992, after identification studies and PDO's discoveries of gas in Saih Rawl,⁷¹ Yibal, and Barik, the government signed a Memorandum of Understanding with Shell International Gas Limited to establish an LNG export terminal by 1999.⁷²

A year later, the industry expanded further. The government ratified a twenty-five-year lease to export gas to Korea Gas Company. Meanwhile, Japan and Korea were becoming major global economic hubs and needed sources of energy to sustain their growth. At that time, LNG appeared to be the most viable option. In its very early stages of developing plants for LNG-export, Japan and Korea approached Oman. Public discussions followed; in *Sablat Oman*, for example, an Omani online forum where the public can discuss all matters concerning the Sultanate, interlocutors debated whether the contractual agreements' low pricing of gas should raise concern, and whether it was a good idea to commit for such a long period.⁷³ As Yousuf Al-Ojaili, former CEO of Oman Gas Company (OGC) and a supporter of the contracts, explained his rationale:

I think people are confused and do not understand the gas industry. The gas industry is different from the oil industry. [...] Developing the field costs the government billions. So, what does one do with these large volumes of gas? The best way was to sell it as LNG. How do you guarantee you will get that income coming back to you, and repay the money for

⁶⁸ Subtitle taken from Clark (2015).

⁶⁹ The first gas plant came on stream at Saih Rawl in 1978 with only a hundred-standard cubic meter, growing to one-million standard cubic meter in 1997, and later to twenty-billion cubic meters in 2003. Al-Yousef (2015), p. 60.

⁷⁰ An oil and gas specialist explained the Sultan's decision as follows: 'There was an unethical Dutch man that was overlooking the India project. The government of Oman invested in technical feasibility in India but there was lack of commitment from buyers.' Interview # 9 with Anonymous Oil and Gas Specialist working in the sector for over thirty years. 6 January 2015, Muscat.

⁷¹ This plant has two has two pipelines, one to al-Ghubrah power station and another pipeline to Sohar. It is the largest gas processing and export facility in the country and is 100% owned by the government.

⁷² Clark (2015), p. 47.

⁷³ Oman (2016).

the banks that was needed to develop the project, the banks want to see a long-term contract signed? Expensive gas projects, they really need a long-term LNG scheme.⁷⁴

Al-Ojaili raises several points. First, the issue of confusion that comes from the 'people'—that is the unprofessional, unskilled, inexperienced, and unknowledgeable individual. Therefore, he implies; the fault in understanding gas prices lies on the ignorance of people and not on the government that failed to make such information transparent to its citizens. Secondly, in economic terms, any long-term gas contract signed during the 1990s can be re-negotiated since gas prices quadrupled in the year 2000 onwards—this is important since Oman continued selling gas below the global price because of its contractual agreements.⁷⁵ Finally, the fact that financing the LNG plant requires oil exports indicates that the government does not plan to move away from a hydrocarbon-reliant economy.

Like in the 1970s, a link between finance and energy re-entered the energy discourse. This link, for example, is illustrated in the Finance and Energy Resource Council (FAERC),⁷⁶ where the council meets periodically to discuss issues relating to the available revenues from oil and gas, the general available reserves, and the price of oil. The FAERC is mostly concerned with financial issues and has only dedicated 20% of its meetings on energy issues. As Mohammed Al-Rumhy, Minister of Oil and Gas,⁷⁷ explains:

Of that 20%, 50% focuses on projects like refinery, petrochemicals, etc. and the other 50% goes to gas allocation for oil production. When we talk of oil, we talk about finance [...]. The council has not taken energy per se as an energy challenge to resolve.⁷⁸

Al-Rumhy observes the emergence of a direct link between oil and finance, a link which, through the rise of the gas industry, has now been transferred to LNG. In this respect, the gas sector really *has* contributed significantly to the economy and thus Oman has 'diversified' in a way, even if still hydrocarbon reliant.

The Sultanate established its first LNG plant, Oman LNG, in 1994 under the management of Shell international. The plant provided a new source of income, created new skills for the labour market, and brought in new technologies. According to Clark, as a newcomer to an emerging field, Oman faced international scrutiny: 'Oman was entering a new era of gas, so they were the object of close attention and had to make every effort in the national interest'.⁷⁹ To promote the country's

⁷⁴ Interview # 10 with Yousuf Al-Ojaili, former CEO of Oman Gas Company and current BP Oman President. 26 April 2016, Muscat.

⁷⁵ From my personal knowledge working in the government, one reason Oman did not renegotiate the contract is due to the political and diplomatic implications that would follow. It is not favourable to re-negotiate contracts as it would create mistrust bilaterally and long-term damage to a country's reputation as a reliable partner for foreign investors.

⁷⁶ In 2001, there was a re-formation of FAERC structure and membership. The Minister of National Economy and supervisor of the Ministry of Finance was appointed Vice President of the Council.

⁷⁷ The Ministry of Oil and Gas was changed to the Ministry of Energy and Minerals (more on this is discussed in Chap. 7).

⁷⁸ Interview # 11 with Mohammed Al-Rumhy, Minister of Oil and Gas. 18 February 2015, Muscat.

⁷⁹ Clark (2015), p. 67.

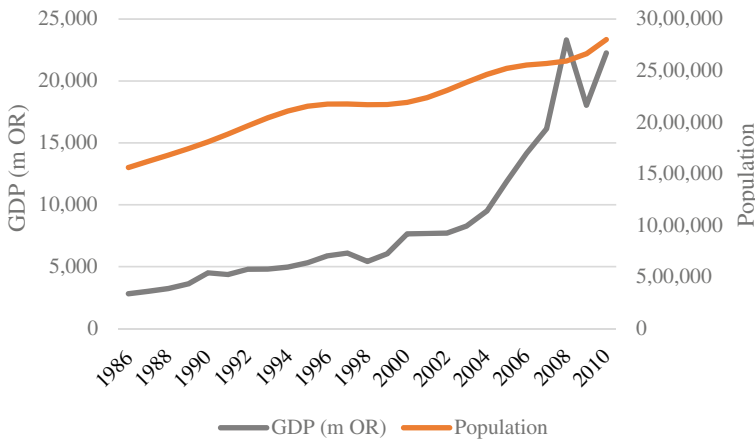


Fig. 5.4 Growth in population and GDP in Oman (1986–2010)

national interest (i.e. to utilise gas for domestic needs and export gas for revenue), PDO took it upon itself to assess the fields and to calculate the costs and scope for developing wells, pipelines, and an LNG terminal. Based on their analysis, PDO concluded that by 2005 a shortage of gas would render the sector economically unviable; nevertheless, Oman proceeded.⁸⁰

Seventeen years later, in 2000, the commissioning of a second LNG-export plant proved PDO's forecast incorrect. The discourse surrounding energy had changed from one concerned with limited resources to one confident in abundance. In the same year, the Omani government signed a twenty-seven-year concession agreement with Oman Gas Company (OGC), giving OGC the rights to operate the gas export facilities and build further networks.⁸¹ Qaboos inaugurated the second plant, Qalhat LNG,⁸² situated in the eastern region, Sur.⁸³ By 2004, the plant operated three liquefaction trains. With an increase in demand, however, due to demographic explosion and the increase of energy-intensive industries, the supply of gas was insufficient to meet both export and domestic needs.

Figure 5.4⁸⁴ shows the reality of the increasing domestic energy demands in Oman.

Given the plummeting oil prices since 2014 and the high expense of maintaining three LNG trains, Al-Ojaili explains that, in his opinion, if the Omani government.

⁸⁰ During the 1980s and 1990s gas was mostly used domestically for power and water desalination. Clark (2015), p. 37.

⁸¹ Royal Decree No. 78/2004. 'Law Regulating and Privatising Electricity and Water Related Sector' issued on 20 July 2004.

⁸² The name of the plant was given by Qaboos to reflect the ancient glory of its location, which is the city of Qalhat known as an important trading centre in the fourteenth century.

⁸³ The first LNG export was made on April 7, 2000. Clark (2015), p. 47.

⁸⁴ The World Bank Group (2017).

knew that the economic condition will be as it is today [i.e., 2016], maybe they would not have built the third train that was added later in the year 2004. Maybe they would have used the gas to build other industries, so more industries in industrial development instead of building a third LNG train. Having said that, let's not forget that the three LNG trains really provided a lot of good income for Oman, which allowed and assisted Oman to build all its infrastructure.⁸⁵

Al-Ojaili illustrates that the lack of long-term planning and the hasty decisions made in the interest of creating easy wealth created an environment of insecurity and uncertainty. We thus turn to the role of Shell in managing the hydrocarbons and its effects on long-term economic security.

5.2.1 *Shell Scandal*

In 2004, Davis Polk and Wardwell law firm produced a report for Shell's audit committee presenting evidence that Shell greatly exaggerated its oil and natural gas reserves, a practice inconsistent with United States Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) requirements. When Walter van de Vijver succeeded Sir Philip Watts (active in 1997 and 2001) as Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of Exploration and Production unit (E&P), an internal feud ensued concerning how to handle the company's reserve-overbooking practices and lax internal standards.⁸⁶ The internal investigation questioned the extremely high profits the E&P unit made during the tenure of Sir Philip Watts. As Walter van de Vijver's 'strictly confidential' personal note in September 2002 reveals:

During the last one and a half years, the technical competence and overall integrity of the E&P business within Shell has been questioned both internally and externally, most prominently through lowering of the production growth target in August/September 2001 and due to a deteriorating proved reserves replacement ratio. Providing credible explanations for these issues proved near impossible given the disconnects between external promises/expectations and the reality of the state of the business.⁸⁷

The Davis Polk and Wardwell report had provided insights into the conflicting information shared with the public and Shell management on the available reserves. In its summary, the SEC concluded that both reserves-replacement and production growth had been inflated, giving the impression of a higher growth rate. Abdullah Al-Lamki, former Deputy Managing Director of PDO responsible for studying the reserves, described Shell's practice before 2003 as a 'bullish methodology' of over-estimating reserves.⁸⁸ It was impossible, he said, to develop four billion barrels of oil,⁸⁹ and he called for a 20% reduction of the estimate:

⁸⁵ Interview # 10. 26 April 2016, Muscat.

⁸⁶ United States Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) (2004).

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ Interview # 12 with Abdullah Al-Lamki. 2 February 2015, Muscat.

⁸⁹ Ibid.

Shell was approached to further look into this and we [PDO] paid them [Shell] \$2 million to study this, and five months later they said, 'We have to agree with Abdullah'. I asked for one billion to be reduced [from the estimated reserves cost] and they said '\$964 million'. My estimation was very close.⁹⁰

On the one hand, if PDO had considered Al-Lamki's analysis of the reserves, as well as his judgement that they were over-estimated, the government would have saved \$2 million dollars. As it was, however, the fraudulent claims greatly benefited both Shell and the Omani Government. As explained by Abdullah Al-Yahya'e, Country President of Mubadala Petroleum, if a company's account has more cash, they have a better reputation, which consequently gives them more access to banks and loans.⁹¹ In over-estimating their reserves, Shell claimed more cash value from the government; at the same time, the Sultanate, which holds 60% share of PDO, benefited indirectly by having greater access to bank loans. By over-estimating the reserves, the international oil company and the government worked in tandem to maximise each other's interest.

This case illustrates the way in which the global economy can dominate processes of governance. It also shows how Shell, a global actor, has been able to violate local norms and international standards of conduct. The consequences of Shell's misconduct, however, began to manifest in 2008, when Oman imported gas from Qatar through the Dolphin Project pipeline to meet local energy demands.⁹² Based on Shell's numbers, Oman had committed to a long-term contract with South Korea and, to this end, recommended the installation of a third LNG unit at Qalhat. Shell, nonetheless, advised the government against it. 'Since they were planning to use Shell's technology', explained a senior PDO employee, 'Shell was involved. The issue was that there was not enough gas, and it was a bad contract'.⁹³

Regardless of Shell's miscalculation of numbers, the Omani government renewed its contracts with Shell, which elicited discontent from the Omani public. In *Sablat Oman*, interlocutors questioned why Shell owned 40% of the Sultanate's oil production.⁹⁴ Of the over sixty responses, the dominant voices noted the following: 'We have qualified Omanis that can replace expatriates, but who will listen to us, just leave the issue to God'; 'Let's see Omanis extract the oil! The international companies have served us and will continue to serve us'; 'we can nationalise our oil, but the elite class has another view to maintain its interests. Oman is for the Westerners and not for Omanis'; 'Oman has not tried to buy foreign shares since it continues to encourage foreign investors'; 'Why doesn't the government own 100% of PDO? Why under this new era we do not rely on ourselves so that Omanis benefit from its wealth before a foreigner does?'.⁹⁵

⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁹¹ Interview # 13 with Abdullah Al-Yahya'e, Country President of Mubadala Petroleum and former Director-General in the Ministry of Oil and Gas. 9 February 2015, Muscat.

⁹² Interview # 43 with Anonymous Senior employee working in PDO. 24 December 2014, Muscat.

⁹³ Interview # 9. 6 January 2015, Muscat.

⁹⁴ Oman (2005).

⁹⁵ Ibid. (Quotes translated from Arabic to English by the author of this study).

The public outcry against the Shell scandal directly links energy discourses to issues of nationalisation, ownership, and expatriate labour. But perhaps more profoundly, it raises another issue, one perhaps more deeply entrenched and wide-reaching: the issue of transparency and data availability. As Nasser Al-Jashmi, Undersecretary of Finance, remarks:

A small group of people are not aware, and they assume that foreign partners are taking 40% of the revenue, which is not true. With taxes, etc., you end up with 6.5% which is what they get. We tried to explain to them [the public] but they make assumptions.⁹⁶

According to Al-Jashmi, the public response to the scandals highlights serious discrepancies in the possession of information. His position echoes Al-Ojaili's concerning the public's ignorance in relation to the energy sector. But what is to account for this discrepancy? Should it be attributed to the public, or to those who distribute information? According to Ong's perspective, data in this situation can be considered a 'good', and here, by default if not intention, it is reserved to the 'experts'.⁹⁷ The causes of the problem, however, are subtle and complex: they derive not from straightforward policy, law, structure, or intention, but rather the compilation of all of these. In effect, the 'experts' have relegated 'information' to a unique territorial space not properly available to the public, which consequently conduces ignorance and wrong 'assumptions'.

John Malcolm, Managing Director of PDO in 2002, in contrast, believed that the problem with the reserves was one of 'definitions', as cited in Clark,⁹⁸ and that the miscalculation happened during a critical period in the history of gas in Oman. This miscalculation consequently made the technocrats optimistic in their outlook of the available reserves. In this respect, the optimism of available reserves led the Sultanate to establish two more LNG plants. The timing, however, for the third LNG exporting plant was not favourable since.

Oman has no security of supply as it didn't have enough gas. This is an issue. The economic dependence on oil and gas and putting all eggs on this when the price drops is not only an energy security issue; it *is* security generally. You get relaxed especially in the mentality of 'where is my share' [entitlement]—that's a serious problem combined with no change in attitude.⁹⁹

The so-called 'rentier mentality' that Oman Vision 2020 was trying to move away from in the mid-1990s continued with the progress of exporting gas. However, as explained in Chap. 3, 'rentier state theory' fails to address the political and social implications of Oman's diversification policies as its analysis is economic-centred.

⁹⁶ Interview # 15 with Nasser Al-Jashmi, Undersecretary of the Ministry of Finance and former Undersecretary of the Ministry of Oil and Gas. 17 February 2015, Muscat.

⁹⁷ Ong, 2007, p. 5.

⁹⁸ Although Malcolm notes that the issue was one of definition, he was talking about difference in methodology rather than definition. According to Malcom, there are three ways for measuring reserves: (1) proved reserves: two standards, SEC and SPE (the society of petroleum engineering) standards; (2) expectation: based on 50/50 probability; and (3) scope: discovered or commercial scope. For measurement details see Clark (2015), p. 87.

⁹⁹ Interview # 9. 6 January 2015, Muscat.

Returning to discussions on the role of international consultants, unlike ‘rentier state theory’, it is essential to point out that these actors played a critical part in driving social, economic, and political developments in Oman. Their positions as ‘experts’ allowed some attempts to diversify the economic sectors where they served their personal interest; this took shape in the sixth five-year plan (2001–2005).

5.2.2 *Port and Free-Zone Development*

Following the expansion of gas networks post-Oman Vision 2020, the government turned its attention to downstream industries, establishing, in 2002, the Sohar Industrial Port Company (SIPC).¹⁰⁰ The SIPC granted exclusive right to develop, manage, and operate downstream industries, while performing, facilitating, and coordinating various port-related functions.¹⁰¹ The Sohar port became a large industrial hub, diversifying the local industries starting from ORPIC (Oman Oil Refineries and Petroleum Industries), to include methanol, fertiliser, and steel plants, and an aluminium smelter company. As a high-ranking representative of Sohar Port and Free-Zone noted, all of these industries are based on commodities to export for production in conjunction with ‘cheap power and gas’, which ‘helps to attract investors’.¹⁰² As an added incentive, Oman also created ‘tariffs for leasing land to industrial estates’, claimed the high-ranking representative from Sohar Port, and ‘the location is attractive’.¹⁰³ Albeit mentioned in passing, the Oman Vision 2020 vision did not emphasise the importance of Oman’s strategic location, especially given that, in economic terms, it is considered the market driver. While cheap gas undoubtedly attracts investors, since it is subsidised by the government, it does not provide a sustainable marketing strategy.

The lack of an alternative was but one indicator that Oman had neither a plan for long-term management of its oil resources, nor one to govern domestic energy consumption, or at least that it lacked executive will. However, as Salim Al-Ismaili, Chairman of the Public Authority for Investment Promotion and Export Development (*Ithraa*),¹⁰⁴ explains:

Reality forced upon us to shift our thinking. Initially, we did not have a strategic plan on how to use oil as a source for energy except for Sohar. There were clusters of activities ranging from iron, steel, and aluminium for investments. These were the demand drivers for the basic industry developed in Sohar. Oil and gas were used for other insular industries

¹⁰⁰ SIPC is a 50:50 joint venture between the Port of Rotterdam and the Sultanate. The free zone was added to the port later in 2010.

¹⁰¹ Royal Decree No. 80/2002. ‘Issuing Concession for the Development, Management and Operation of the Sohar Industrial Port’ issued on 27 August 2002.

¹⁰² Interview # 46 with a High-ranking representative of Sohar Port and Free-Zone. 25 January 2015, Muscat.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁴ *Ithraa* is an Arabic word meaning to enrich.

like rolling mills, utensils, and aluminium foil. This attracted large industries like Vale [...], which consequently means *we need more energy to sustain these industries*.¹⁰⁵

In an effort to meet these demands, companies like ORPIC developed various industries ranging from finished petroleum products like crude oil, unfinished oils, natural gas liquids, other hydrocarbons, and alcohol, to name a few. However, without a long-term strategy, the economy remained unstable. In addition, while downstream industries in Sohar facilitated the involvement of the private sector through, for example, joint ventures, management of contracts, privatisation of assets, and the creation of jobs for Omanis, economic diversification nevertheless remained limited. As a result, the government began working to promote and attract investments and export non-oil products.

A high-ranking employee working in *Ithraa* describes the steps taken to this end during the 1990s:

We brought in reputed consultants, who informed us what to focus on. We invested in products that had a potential to export, focusing on standard, quality, and quantity. We identified target markets and produced ready-made garments. Back then, there was a quota system where certain number of garments were exported to the US with no custom duty. India and Pakistan utilised this quota. A lot of exports to the US, like Gap, CAN, and others, were made in Oman. The quota system phased out in 2005.¹⁰⁶

In 2000, Oman became a member of the World Trade Organisation (WTO), which, at the time, was pressuring the Sultanate to eliminate export subsidies and speed efforts towards privatisation.¹⁰⁷ Despite the fact that the first Trade Policy Review, issued in 2008, praised the Sultanate's trade policies for improving its investment climate, WTO delegates urged Oman 'to remove the remaining prohibitions on foreign ownership [and] encouraged Oman to amend its government procurement regime to remove the price preferences for domestic and regional products'.¹⁰⁸ Furthermore, the WTO requested that the Sultanate reduce state-ownership and provide information on its development plans for oil, natural gas and manufacturing.¹⁰⁹

The WTO's basic task was to encourage trade; however, its neoliberal policies and methods (beyond removing subsidies) in effect did the opposite. An economic expert, who worked for fifteen years in the government, claims that the WTO policies were incommensurate with an economy in which the number of goods and services were limited, and not competitive with the global market or the markets

¹⁰⁵ Interview # 17 with Salim Nasir Al-Ismaili, Chairman of the Public Authority for Investment Promotion and Export Development. 1 January 2015, Muscat (added emphasis). It should be noted that Salim no longer holds this position since 2019 when *Ithraa* was merged with the Ministry of Commerce and Industry. Most on the government restructuring is covered in Chap. 7).

¹⁰⁶ Interview # 18 with High-ranking employee working in *Ithraa*. 10 February 2015, Muscat.

¹⁰⁷ World Trade Organisation 'Concluding remarks by the Chairperson' press release issued on 27–28 June 2008, last accessed 11 April 2017: https://www.wto.org/english/tratop_e/tpr_e/tp301_crc_e.htm.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*

of ‘developed’ countries.¹¹⁰ According to the official in *Ithraa*, the WTO measures ‘caused a lot of harm; many industries closed and were relocated’.¹¹¹ Hence, the official continues, the urge ‘for the Ministry of Commerce and Industry [MoCI] for a free-trade-agreement [FTA] to help revive an industry gain’.¹¹² As a consequence, in 2009, Oman signed a FTA with the US. Intended to increase trade between the two countries, the lifting of trade barriers in effect took a toll on Oman’s economy. The flow of low-cost goods into Oman’s domestic market squeezed out local businesses and products. The only comparative advantage retained by the local industry was the low-cost shipping of natural gas.¹¹³

5.2.3 *Privatising Electricity*

This subsection will trace the moves, made under external influence, towards privatisation. With advice from WTO and IMF, Oman established the first power project (Manah) in the Middle East region. The Development Council, under the Ministry of Development (which later became the MoNE) proposed privatising the electricity sector. In a further move towards privatisation, Oman restructured and transformed the Ministry of Electricity in 2005 into initial public offerings (IPOs).¹¹⁴ Through consultation with outside experts, the electricity sector was divided into the Authority for Electricity Regulation (AER), the Public Authority for Electricity and Water (PAEW), and Oman Power and Water Procurement (OPWP).¹¹⁵ The AER’s role is to regulate electricity and water companies, whereby the PAEW, a government entity, sets policies for electricity and water.¹¹⁶

The reorganisation of Oman’s electricity sector has been considered a significant step in the process of privatising and reducing government’s operational involvement.

¹¹⁰ Interview # 19 with Government Employee that worked on economics for over fifteen years. 19 January 2015, Muscat.

¹¹¹ Interview # 18. 10 February 2015, Muscat.

¹¹² *Ibid.*

¹¹³ Interview # 6. 10 March 2015, Muscat.

¹¹⁴ An initial public offering (IPO) is the first sale of stock by a company to the public. A company can raise money by issuing either debt or equity. If a company has never issued equity to the public, it becomes an IPO.

¹¹⁵ The ‘sector law’ stipulates the process of privatisation and regulation for electricity and water-related sectors in, Royal Decree No. 78/2004. ‘Law regulating and privatising electricity and water related sector’ issued on 20 July 2004.

¹¹⁶ In 2015 Moody’s (a global agency that provides credit ratings for integrated financial markets) assigned A3 credit ratings to four Omani electricity distribution and supply companies and reported that the ratings reflect: AER’s record of transparency and independence; its cost-recovery mechanisms of the regulatory framework; as well as the low business risk profile of the electricity distribution and supply activities, and the companies’ regional monopoly positions in Oman. Moody (2015).

Praise, however, would be misleading since the sector is not fully privatised.¹¹⁷ As a former official (who worked in both the private and public sectors) cautions:

There are only a number of private companies (for example, Manah, Al-Kamil, Barka, and Simcort) that generate electricity and sell this to the power-generation companies. These generation companies are government-owned and are responsible for buying it (transmitting it from town to town) and distributing it (from house to house). They are all subsidised and even the gas-generating electricity is subsidised. The reason these companies are not privatised is because with transmission there is no money to make, and this is because the operating model is wrong.¹¹⁸

As long as this operating model persists, the official claims, private companies will invest only if the government continues to lend support and guarantee zero risk. A lack of incentive is not the only problem associated with reorganisation. These changes brought new challenges, which included the lack of available skilled Omanis, intergenerational equity, and the inclusion of regional municipalities and other ministries. Moreover, government interference in the electricity sector, and lack of transparency, made it difficult to maintain the security of energy supply.¹¹⁹ This difficulty, Qais Al-Zakwani, Executive Director for AER, explains is because the electricity authority,

has a duty to meet all reasonable demand, it doesn't say 'subject to availability'. The Ministry of Oil and Gas [MOG] claim that they don't have gas, and, so, they can't reach their Omani-isation or ICV [In-Country Value] target. Any entity that needs 20MW, the company writes to AER then MOG. However, the industrial sector is not growing because we are not supplying electricity to them. We don't have infinite gas. The MoCI and the MOG agree on allocation of gas industries. Instead of having a committee with a criterion to distribute gas, they randomly provide gas to companies. There should be more efficient.¹²⁰

Though Oman Vision 2020 proclaims the objectives of diversifying industries and attracting foreign investments, these goals have been found to be incommensurate with—and unhelpful to—the reality of Oman's economic situation. While it is true that over-dependency on a single source of highly subsidised energy has created an environment of insecurity on both the micro and macro-levels, neoliberal policies have not been able to generate a sustainable solution. On the one hand, if Oman prioritises foreign export markets, the AER finds itself in an insecure position, unable to meet both its mandate targets and domestic energy needs. On the other, if Oman prioritises domestic energy needs, then it cuts a major source of income. The greatest problem, however, appears to be an incoherence of vision. The government has called

¹¹⁷ There are three divisions within the electricity sector: transmission, distribution and supply, and generator. Only the generator division is 100% privatised, while the other two are government owned.

¹¹⁸ Interview # 21 with Anonymous Former High-ranking official that worked in both the private and government sector. 7 May 2016, Muscat.

¹¹⁹ Interview # 22 with Ahmed Saleh Al-Jahdhami, Chairman for Oman Power and Water Procurement. 22 January 2015, Muscat.

¹²⁰ Interview # 23 with Qais Al-Zakwani, Executive Director for the Authority for Electricity Regulatory. 25 January 2015, Muscat.

international investors to meet Omanisation targets, while also encouraging them to attract and supply high energy-intensive industries.

Adding to the complications, Ahmed Al-Jahdhami, Chairman of OPWP, explains how government involvement manipulates the pricing of electricity:

The price is distorted at the government level. OPWP evaluates the cost according to gas and the economic viability. When the electricity is initially distributed, it is sold through international electricity prices and then they are subsidised and charged by tariff price. The prices since the 1980s have been determined by the Council of Ministers.¹²¹

While OPWP, AER, and PAEW are considered independent of one another, the Council of Ministers must approve the implementation of their policies. It is however significant to point out that while there is a ‘Ministry of Water’ to speak for water issues in the Council of Ministers, there is no ‘Ministry of Electricity’ to speak for the electricity sector, which makes execution of several agendas related to electricity (and energy) an added challenge.

According to John Cunneen, former Executive Director of AER, Oman’s continuing energy challenges might be attributed to three factors: (1) the electricity sector lacks direct ministerial representation at the highest levels; (2) Oman has a fragmented energy strategy in which sectors are viewed in isolation; and (3) no unified strategy applies among the various energy sectors—different approaches are used for issues across sectors, for example, the valuations of marginal gas.¹²² As an antidote, Cunneen suggests that the government consult and operate on energy issues through a unified body.

Ultimately, the case of Oman’s attempts to implement Oman Vision 2020 highlights the problematic features of combining centrally driven government agendas with those of international trade organisations and the global market. As we have seen, the victims of such attempts have been the local industries. Through the dynamics of this case study, ‘energy security’ has expanded its domain to include contentions between the concept of neoliberalism and more nuanced domestic politics. Keeping within the context of neoliberal agendas, the next subsection will track the discursive shift towards alternative forms of energy.

5.2.4 To Diversify, or Not

In 1995, UNESCO established a World Solar Commission as an initiative to provide high-level leadership aimed at encouraging the wider use of all forms of renewable energy, reduce carbon emissions, and promote sustainable development. The following year, in Harare, Zimbabwe, the solar commission launched the ‘World Solar Programme 1996–2005’. Aiming to raise awareness among governments, inter-governmental organisations, and non-governmental organisations, the commission

¹²¹ Interview # 22. 22 January 2015, Muscat.

¹²² John Cunneen. Former Executive Director of Authority for Electricity Regulation, Oman. ‘Oman Power and Water Summit 2013’ presentation delivered by 5 May 2013, Muscat.

extended invitations to all countries, eliciting mixed responses. At a pre-conference meeting hosted by the Sultanate, in 1995, at Sultan Qaboos University (SQU), Zahir Al-Suleimani, Chairman of Oman Water Society (OWS),¹²³ looking back, observed: Saudi Arabia's head-of-research strongly opposed the initiative; Jordan stated that they had no oil and were therefore in need for solar; the United States boycotted the conference altogether.

At this point, oil prices were very low.¹²⁴ This was the beginning of disagreement and lack of consensus on the issue of diversifying the energy pool. Due to the low oil prices, Oman took the stance that, at least at present, investment in renewables was inessential. After five years, when the oil boom brought an inflow of wealth in 2000, the government carried out various projects and continued to rely on hydrocarbons and neglect the development of alternative forms of energy.

Based on a study conducted in 2008 that examined the viability of renewable energy in the country, the AER launched a few small-scale renewable projects focused on harnessing the Sultanate's plentiful supplies of sun and wind.¹²⁵ Their aim was to demonstrate technical and economic performance of solar technologies under local conditions, and to facilitate the transfer of know-how to relevant energy institutions in the country.¹²⁶ To these ends, the Sultanate drew up plans for a 200-megawatts solar plant,¹²⁷ a 50-megawatt wind project,¹²⁸ and a large-scale wind-farm to be constructed in Dhofar, the first in the GCC region. These initiatives, however, have struggled to gain momentum and were not implemented; a coherent policy to unite these piecemeal efforts has remained absent. Lacking a unified vision, Oman remained unable to develop local operations capabilities, manufacturing industries, and training opportunities for Omani nationals.¹²⁹

¹²³ OWS is a non-profitable and non-governmental organisation founded by professionals, working in the private and government sectors, involved in water management, water supply and water projects.

¹²⁴ Interview # 24 with Zahir Khalid Al-Suleimani, Chairman of Oman Water Society. 28 January 2015, Muscat.

¹²⁵ The report provided three main recommendations: (1) launch small renewable energy projects and further feasibility studies, (2) develop policies to support large-scale projects and encourage renewable investments, and (3) conduct further research. See Authority for Energy Regulations. 'Study on Renewable Energy Resources, Oman Final Report' Issued in May 2008, last accessed 25 October 2016: <http://www.aer-oman.org/pdfs/StudyonRenewableEnergyResources,Oman.pdf>.

¹²⁶ Al-Gaithi (2009).

¹²⁷ While the 200 MW solar project was shelved in 2011. Currently, Miraah (which means mirror in Arab) is being constructed and will be one of the largest solar plants in history, producing 1GW of peak thermal energy. The company Glass Point is building the project in partnership with PDO.

¹²⁸ Masdar was established in 2007 by Mubadala, a development company owned by Abu Dhabi, to advance a clean-energy industry locally and globally, while acting as a catalyst for UAE's economic diversification efforts.

¹²⁹ Interview # 22. 22 January 2015, Muscat.

Further complicating the development of renewables has been a turn towards coal.¹³⁰ The issue has been contentious. Some argue that renewable energy technology is expensive and that coal would be the cheapest way to meet domestic energy demands.¹³¹ Others claim that globally the cost of solar energy is decreasing steadily, allowing for a competitive and affordable solar market.¹³²

In 2008, the MoCI assessed the quantities of coal in Oman and found a substantial amount in the eastern province of Jaalan. Globally, coal is conceived of as a supplementary resource and the excavation began during the planning for Duqm Port development.¹³³ The excavation discontinued, however, which prompted, in 2010, MoCI (headed by Maqbool) and MoNE (headed by Minister Ahmed Al-Macki) to organise a forum advocating for the use of coal. Preparing for the conference, an Omani delegation had visited South Korea to examine their technologically high-end, lower-carbon emission coal stations. Irrespective of the reductions, the Ministry of Environment and Climate Affairs (MECA),¹³⁴ which had formed part of this delegation, retained reservations concerning the high carbon dioxide emissions. The Undersecretary for MECA, Najeeb Al-Rawas, explains how MECA's priorities differed from those working in the energy sector:

We think of air pollution and carbon missions. Though in our capacity we advise on technical issues, the ultimate decision is political. [...] Coal decreases the value of human resources and if we have no other option, we may consider it. [...] The energy, environment and economics are all interconnected in a triangle.¹³⁵

As Al-Rawas demonstrates, with debates over renewables and coal, new aspects enter the energy discourse, including the value of human resources, and concern for the protection of the environment. Significantly, Al-Rawas's mention that 'the ultimate decision is political'.¹³⁶ The decision, therefore, to move towards coal was accepted by MECA given the political push towards it. When the Environmental

¹³⁰ The Masdar wind-farm project is expected to reach commercial operation in 2017. While the coal project has been shelved for future consideration by the Council of Ministers.

¹³¹ Interview # 25 with Senior Employee working in the Public Authority for Electricity and Water. 18 January 2015, Muscat.

¹³² Germany has the biggest solar market, which is subsidised by its government, and was aimed to generate jobs domestically. In Japan, the government invested in nuclear and solar technology. While in California, Home Depot created the technology for placing solar panels underneath ceiling tiles.

¹³³ Duqm port is part of the Special Economic Zone (SEZAD), which was established in 2011 with an aim to diversify sources for the national economy.

¹³⁴ It is worth drawing attention to the top-bottom role of Oman in building climate and environmental awareness to its nationals since the 1980s. This awareness began in 1984 as a political and economic issue. MECA was first structured as the Supreme Council for Environment, the first in the Middle East region, and was chaired by Qaboos.

¹³⁵ Interview # 26 with Najeeb Ali Al-Rawas, Undersecretary for Environment and Climate Affairs. 29 January 2015, Muscat. Given the restructuring that took place in 2019, the Ministry of Environment and Climate Affairs was restructured to an Environment Authority and the climate change portfolio was relegated to the Civil Aviation Authority. More on this will be delineated in Chap. 7 of this book. Najeeb also no longer holds an official capacity after the restructuring.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*

Society of Oman, (ESO)¹³⁷—which, as a grassroots initiative, plays no official or political role¹³⁸—learnt of the government's intention to opt for coal as an alternative energy source, it responded with an outcry:

*We made our voices heard. Coal is a source of energy proven to be environmentally unfriendly. It is a dirty source of energy from excavating to storing to burning it to transporting it. Countries poorer than Oman opted to phase it out. [...] Even when it was known that coal was no longer going to go through, they did not change their exercise. No one spoke about an oil crisis and dwindling resources or diversifying of revenue. Not even the extent of environmental degradation.*¹³⁹

In an attempt to offer a constructive alternative, the ESO collaborated with *majlis al-shura* and SQU to assess the best way to generate electricity through renewable energy in the future. At a forum co-convened by MoCI and MoNE, government representatives in attendance pushed for coal adoption, while *majlis al-shura*, on the contrary, 'represented the people and they did what the government did not do—they collaborated with all stakeholders'.¹⁴⁰ Meanwhile, Qaboos, upon receiving the study¹⁴¹ conducted by ESO, gave instructions to halt the coal project; at the end of the forum, Maqbool announced that the government had decided to supplant coal with natural gas as the source for generating electricity to meet domestic demands. To ESO's contentment, in 2010, the coal strategy was officially shelved. This U-turn of events was made possible because of the role of civil society and, at the same time, the Chairman of ESO (who is a member of the Omani royal family) having access to the Sultan.

In the wake of this unprecedented reversal, when considering coal as an option for Oman's domestic energy needs, environmental concerns, advancement in the renewable sphere, and Oman's reputation domestically and internationally, now come to bear upon the issue. In the opinion of one consultant working in the electricity sector, coal remains unnecessary as Oman still has plenty of gas. Supply shortages are not problems of resource scarcity, he says, but the fact that gas is wasted through mismanagement and exportation below international market cost.¹⁴²

¹³⁷ The ESO is the first non-governmental environmental organisation in Oman. Its purpose is to raise awareness on environmental issues, educate (by sending materials to schools), country outreach (going to areas beyond the capital) and research on the conservation biology, which is species focus (like the Egyptian vulture).

¹³⁸ Interview # 27 with Saada Al-Harhi, Programme Director for the ESO. 19 February 2015, Muscat.

¹³⁹ Interview # 28 with Anonymous Omani Scientist and Researcher for over thirty years. 19 February 2015, Muscat (added emphasis).

¹⁴⁰ Ibid.

¹⁴¹ This was also noted in the report produced by the committee in SQU, which delineated how, by advocating for the use of coal, the government is indirectly nullifying any moves towards clean energy. In requesting a copy of the actual report from its anonymous authors, ESO's response was: 'I am sorry, but I have not been able to get the approval from the authors of the document to share it, so unfortunately will be unable to share it with you – it was somewhat sensitive, given that it was shared with HM Sultan Qaboos.'

¹⁴² Interview # 20. 8 January 2015, Muscat.

The Sultanate has also adopted a reverse directionality of how environmental concerns permeate the country. While MECA's predominant role is to oversee external environmental issues, it also plays a minor domestic role. For instance, MECA was given 2–3 years to promote a plastic-free awareness campaign in Oman; however, the Minister of MECA, Mohammed Al-Tobi claims that 'it was not possible, as it takes years *to transform the mind-set of the culture*'.¹⁴³ By contrast with the Western world, wherein non-governmental associations tend to take the lead in lobbying and building awareness for the environment, in Oman, the government generally plays this role. MECA works through a top-down approach to '*transform the mind-set of the culture*'. The Sultanate currently celebrates 'Oman's Environment Day' and the 'Global Environment Day' and utilises the media to educate and build awareness of environmental affairs. In Oman, therefore, the attempt to introduce liberal economic policies has come at the initiative of the state, whereas in many Western societies, such initiatives generally fall to civil society. The inverted directionality by which environmental concerns are introduced into Omani society (top-down, versus bottom-up) only serves to highlight a certain variance in two different models of state–society relations. What we see next, however, are imminent threats leading decision-makers, particularly the security forces, to care less about renewables, the environment, and diversification.

5.2.5 *Celebrating the Security Forces*

Power struggles exist between security forces and neoliberal policymakers. In January 2005, while the Sultanate was preoccupied with developing downstream industries in the Sohar industrial zone, several alleged 'Islamists' were arrested and sentenced to twenty years in prison for plotting another coup (as in 1994, all those convicted were later pardoned by the Sultan.). According to the Sultanate's state prosecutors, the plot aimed 'to overthrow the government of Sultan Qaboos and to establish an Islamic state',¹⁴⁴ which is to say, a restoration of the traditional Imamate system¹⁴⁵ abolished in 1959. The alleged Islamists were also said to be plotting a series of attacks during the Muscat Cultural Festival.

In comparison with its 1994 forbear, which had pushed the country towards neoliberal policies, the 2005 plot increased Oman's military expenditure, thereby limiting the reforms outlined in Oman Vision 2020. In reaction to the threat, the country's defence expenditure increased from OR 974 million (2004) to OR 1148

¹⁴³ Interview # 29 with Mohammed Salim Al-Tobi, Minister for Environment and Climate Affairs and formerly an elected Member of the *Al-shura* (Consultative) Council. 11 January 2015, Muscat (added emphasis).

¹⁴⁴ BBC News (2005).

¹⁴⁵ This system comes from the Ibadhi sect (an Islamic sect practiced predominately in Oman and south of Libya and Algeria) and is a democratic system that combines political and religious ideology, whereby the people elects its leader. After the Imamate revolt (elaborated in Chap. 3), this tradition was abolished.

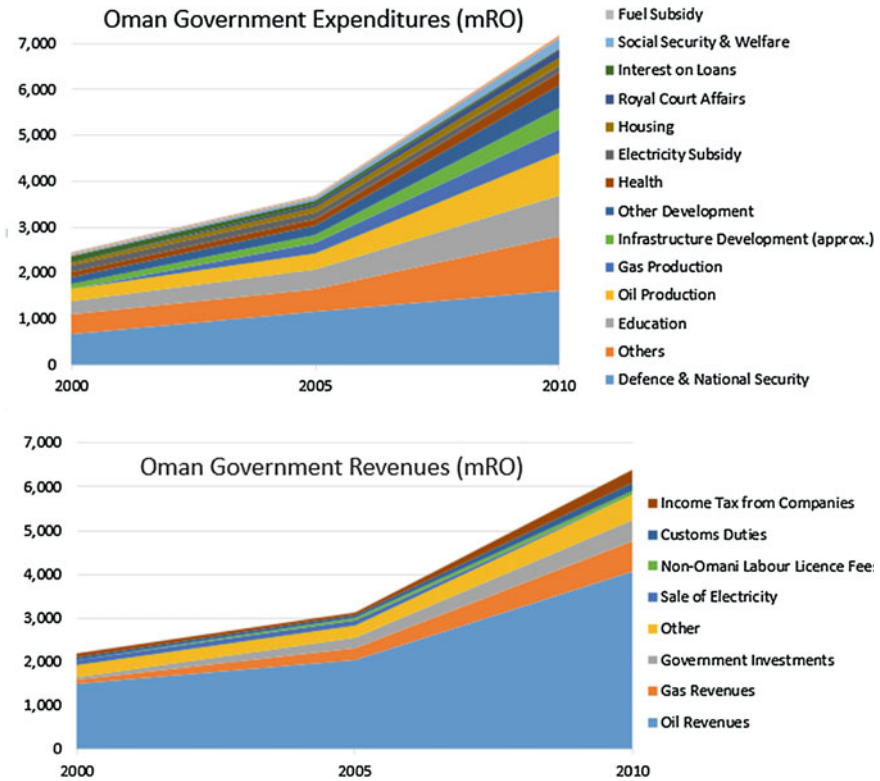


Fig. 5.5 Annual budget of Oman for the years 2000–2010 in mOR¹⁴⁸

million (2005) to OR 1245 million (2006).¹⁴⁶ Figure 5.5 shows how the security and defence expenditure continued to increase from 2005. The data further illustrate that regardless of the few diversification efforts coming from small base industries since income tax from companies increased markedly between 2005 and 2010, dependence on oil revenues increased. The increase in oil prices impeded diversification because, as Al-Rumhy explains, the decision-makers were unconcerned with Oman’s aim to move beyond oil, and their successes made them complacent.¹⁴⁷

¹⁴⁶ Royal Decree No. 1/2004. ‘The Ratification of the State Budget for the Year 2004’ issued on 1 January 2004; Royal Decree No. 1/2005. ‘The Ratification of the State Budget for the Year 2005’ issued on 1 January 2005; Royal Decree No. 1/2006. ‘The Ratification of the State Budget for the Year 2006’ issued on 1 January 2006.

¹⁴⁷ Interview # 11. 18 February 2015, Muscat.

¹⁴⁸ Royal Decree No. 1/2000. ‘The Ratification of the State Budget for the Year 2000’ issued on 1 January 2000; Royal Decree No. 1/2005; Royal Decree No. 1/2010. ‘The Ratification of the State Budget for the Year 2010’ issued on 1 January 2010.

Moreover, the lack of economic diversification increased the unemployment rate in the country, thus increasing issues of corruption and nepotism (i.e. giving preference to family members given the decreasing opportunities), which in turn elicited calls for political reform, liberalisation of the economy, and greater efforts to attract international investment. While the Omani government officials stated that the plotted events of 1994 and 2005 were linked to a desire to bring back a religious regime, Marc Valeri notes that the events ‘were a first overt sign that growing sectors of the society were reluctant to guarantee the perpetuation of a system excluding them from political and economic decisions’.¹⁴⁹ In 1996, the Sultan had responded to the agitation by issuing, by Royal Decree, the Basic Statute of State (also known as the Basic Law), as a kind of constitution establishing a clear standard for governance.¹⁵⁰ The Basic Law successfully guaranteed justice and equal opportunities for all Omanis; its code for national security, however, remained vague, which in one way provided flexibility, but in another way, left an opening for the country’s security forces to justify the use of their power to their benefit.¹⁵¹

The power and influence of the security forces was further proclaimed on 1 October 2005, at the opening of the annual session of the Council of Oman. The Sultan gave a speech to the council members thanking them for their role in developing the natural resources of the country. He also accorded thanks to the private sector’s initiative in developing the human resources sector, while emphasising the importance of Omani youth employment. Qaboos asserted as well that the principle of non-interference in the internal affairs of other states safeguards the interests of all nations and eradicates violence and instability. Alluding to the incident in January of that year, he ended his speech by thanking the security services:

To conclude, we would like to salute and extend our greetings and appreciation to our gallant armed forces and alert security services for their efforts and dedication in carrying out their assigned duties, affirming that we will continue to extend our care and attention to them.¹⁵²

The influence of Oman’s security personnel is not to be underestimated. For instance, noting their close relationship to the Sultan, a former Minister who served during the 1990s attributes the failure of Oman Vision 2020 in large part to the strong influence of security personnel, in conjunction with, of course, and over against, that of ‘the experts’. According to the Minister’s view and experience, among those who influenced the Sultan on development: ‘There was conflict’, he says, ‘between economic planners and security people. The government executed *talabat el-sharee*’ [the request of the streets, i.e. the mass]. The government runs its people’s desire to match the security of country’.¹⁵³ An article from *The Economist* reiterates the Minister’s perspective. Noting that the Sultan would have liked to see the Basic

¹⁴⁹ Valeri (2011).

¹⁵⁰ Royal Decree No. 101/96. ‘Issuing the Basic Statute of the State’ issued on 6 November 1996.

¹⁵¹ The concept of law in Oman is not salient; and, therefore, may embody sets of values and assumptions that could change in the future and vary accordingly.

¹⁵² Ministry of Information (2010).

¹⁵³ Interview # 8. 15 February 2016, Muscat.

Law fully implemented by 2000, 'his ministers', the writer opines, 'fight among themselves, and strive to prevent the Sultan from knowing what is going on, the chances are that the millennium target will not be met'.¹⁵⁴ The lack of consensus among the Sultanate's decision-makers has remained problematic. As we have seen through the history of efforts towards economic and energy diversification, implementation is often confounded due to clashes between neoliberal agendas and more traditional priorities. If the Minister is right, competition pitting security personnel against economic 'experts' could help to explain the history of contradictions in government policy.

Ultimately, what we find in the 1990s and 2000s is the inclusion of alternative forms of energy into the discourses and practices of 'energy security'. The section revealed the way in which global actors, like Shell, worked in tandem with the government to influence its company's interests at the expense of the country's interests. Shell's role within the semi-national oil company of PDO, therefore, allowed it to accumulate influence in Oman. What we find through the *network of experts* is that 'energy security' was absorbed into discourses and practices derived from neoliberal attempts to construct an export port and privatise the electricity sectors. At the root of these efforts was the neoliberal goal of creating a society conducive to understanding why privatisation is important, regardless of whether it in effect concentrated wealth in a few hands. The implied assumption of such goals and policies is, of course, that the Omani society is ignorant and naïve, which is a perspective present in the 'rentier state theory' and not in neoliberal discourse.

Moreover, the enduring power of the security personnel and their rivalry with the economic experts suggests that the absorption of neoliberal policies in Oman is not the antidote to its social and economic issues. By exploring the network of global and local actors in the country, we have seen how the push for neoliberal reforms enabled the formation of new discourses and practices of 'energy security' in Oman, but never succeeded in securing stable energy, economic, or development policies.

Conclusion

The Sultanate's core initiative for its fifth five-year development plan included diversification and liberalisation. Unlike the 1970s, when energy related most directly to security and the rivalry of foreign powers, after the Cold War, principles of neoliberalism and the affirmation of free markets came to centre stage. The Cold War thaw, which opened economies to one another, allowed neoliberal logics and practices to migrate beyond the West. Different categories of experts—from economic 'experts' to security personnel—asserted their political powers to push their respective agendas into the Sultanate's long-term economic strategy. These actors shaped the way neoliberal logics infiltrated Oman's political processes, often benefiting those already in power, while also re-formulating social, economic, and political structures. Oman Vision 2020, and other economic plans, became vectors for capitalist development and transformation. Through analysis of the Sultanate's process of liberalisation, the

¹⁵⁴ The Economist (1997).

chapter demonstrated how neoliberalising energy has impacted and been impacted by social development, military expenditure, and efforts towards privatisation.

Additionally, the multiple policies, international organisations and companies, and *networks of experts*, showed how the process to neoliberalise energy brought internal and external actors into the same arena. While the Sultanate has formulated a discourse on the need to diversify, it has failed to do so, largely on account of contradictory practices caused by competing interests. In particular, this chapter reflected on the way in which the security establishment has pushed for agendas in tension with Oman's neoliberal manifesto. Such competition has in turn facilitated the surfacing of social dissent, thereby broadening 'energy security' to include issues of social development and equality (further discussed in the next chapter). To maintain the status quo, the government continues to contradict its national objectives in order to preclude social dissent. However, it is conversely creating a future with no intergenerational equity, which may breed insecurity if alternatives to hydrocarbons are not found. In this respect, the next chapter reveals how the realm of 'energy security' expands to include issues of social development, employment, and equality.

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Chapter 6

Energy and Social Development

Post-Bouazizi to 2015



Introduction

The earlier chapters aimed to illuminate how, throughout Oman's modern history, varied discourses and practices have shaped how 'energy security' is conceptualised today. As should be evident from its consistent presence in Chaps. 3 and 4, Petroleum Development of Oman (PDO) played a dominant role in this process. Post-Bouazizi, PDO as well as BP Oman (BP) led on new initiatives of social investment by reframing their corporate social responsibility (CSR) framework. This chapter argues that *materiality* can help us understand these discourses of social practices. Drawing on Timothy Mitchell's work on the relation between the *materiality* of energy and democratic practices, it focuses on the interlink between *materiality*, energy industry, and labour organisation. It will analyse how the limited capacity of oil and gas companies to create jobs in Oman allowed them to assist the government through social and cultural initiatives.

By exploring the socio-political concerns arising during the 2011 protests, the first section will trace the new aspects that this distinctive event contributed to energy discourses and practices. Looking first at social development concerns, Sect. 6.1 will illustrate the impact of energy companies upon the rise of small and medium size enterprise (SME), as well as other social-entrepreneurship initiatives.¹ While obscure during Oman's process of liberalisation, these SME strategies became prominent in the post-Bouazizi era, prompting energy companies to revisit their CSR strategies and to address gaps in employment and social needs.

¹ Many of these enterprises have been sponsored by large corporations throughout the Sultanate, such as Zubair Corporation and WJ Towell (discussed in Chap. 4). The former is a group of companies established by the Economic Advisor of the Sultan, Mohammed Al-Zubair, and the latter is a British company that is now owned by the family of the former Minister of Trade and Commerce, Maqbool Sultan.

Section 6.2, in turn, will address how these energy companies reframed their CSR strategies and created social investment programmes (SIPs) and cultural projects,² to try and address Oman's employment concern.³ As we shall see, the post-Bouazizi context enabled PDO and BP to aid and intervene in social re-production, giving them a licence to influence the social fabric of the country. The second section will also pay special attention to the way in which these companies have extended their influence through partnerships with local organisations (whether government or non-government), often in the name of CSR and SIPs. Homing in on these joint initiatives, it will consider how energy companies through their CSR programs evoked new neoliberal patterns of social discourses and practices.

6.1 The 'Omani Spring'⁴

By providing a detailed analysis of the accounts that took place post-Bouazizi, this section aims to show how social development in Oman has entwined with 'energy' conceived as a limiting material substance in terms of its industry providing jobs. Section 6.1 will attend particularly to issues of corruption, inequality, and unemployment. Section 6.2 will then consider how energy companies and government personnel have been enlisted to address these concerns, deepening their influence upon energy issues.

6.1.1 *Before the Escalation*

Even before social discontent escalated in 2011, the authorities of Oman uncovered a network of spies allegedly working for the United Arab Emirates (UAE). While the UAE government denied knowledge of such a network, several Omani nationals working in the military sector were arrested for collaborating with the UAE to spy on the regime's military and government apparatus.⁵ According to Abdullah Al-Yahya'e the incident betrayed grave problems: 'Look at the spy cells that were found within a security department. Security was easily breached. High rank spying on people. One spy is usual, but a group of spies is a risk. Something is wrong with the system'.⁶

² Grants are given in the form of exhibitions, museums, libraries—all are related to cultural issues.

³ For a detailed discussion on the concept *materiality*, refer to Chap. 2 of this book.

⁴ The title of this section was taken from Said Al-Hashemi (ed.). 2013. *Al-Rabi' Al-Omani: Qiraa fi Al-Siyaqat wa Al-Dalalat* [The Omani Spring: A Contextual and Suggestive Reading].

⁵ Katzman (2014).

⁶ Interview # 1 with Abdullah Al-Yahya'e, Country President of Mubadala Petroleum and former Director General in the Ministry of Oil and Gas, where he negotiated the BP deal. 9 February 2015, Muscat.

For some, at this point in history, spying for the UAE and breaking allegiance to the Sultan’s Armed Forces was expected. The Sultanate was facing a ‘high unemployment rate, corruption by ministers, inequality [...] in land distribution, overall unfair wealth distribution, and failed promises to improve standard of living’,⁷ creating an environment—according to some—ripe for subversion. Two weeks later, hundreds of Omani citizens mobilised, calling for tangible political and economic reforms to address corruption, inequality, and unemployment.

The 2011 mobilisation for *islah*⁸ (reform) came four decades into Qaboos rule, but it did not occur entirely out of the blue. According to Said Sultan Al-Hashemi, Former Director of Information and Research in the State Council (who was accused of ‘mobilising’ during the 2011 protests, and later imprisoned for four months), a year before the protests, discontent was visible in internet forums and other social media outlets, such as Facebook. Omanis were calling for higher standards of education, employment opportunities, and greater political participation.⁹ On 3 July 2010, a combination of fifty workers in both the private and public sectors, members of civil society, academics and journalists sent a letter to the Sultan petitioning for the establishment of a National Council Committee, which would formulate a constitution for the country to ensure free and fair elections, the separation of powers, full independence of the judiciary, and private and public freedoms.¹⁰ Between 17 and 18 February 2011, this same group convened two peaceful rallies (*al-masira al-khadhraa*, ‘The Green Rally’), calling for an increase in civil and political rights. Proposed amendments called for increased participation in *majlis al-shura* decision-making processes, accountability monitoring within the Council of Ministers, and the appointment of an independent Prime Minister¹¹ to preside over the Council of Ministers.¹²

What started out in the capital spread throughout the Sultanate. Demands for civil and political reform were taken up in the south of Oman, Dhofar. Calling it *nidaa al-khair* (call for goodness, blessings), protestors appealed directly to the Sultan for the removal of corrupt ministers, the termination of inequality, and an end to conflicts of interest.¹³ The protests spread north to Sohar, where northerners insisted upon an

⁷ Interview # 2 with Senior employee in Occidental Petroleum Oman. 16 February 2015, Muscat.

⁸ The word *islah* is not used favourably by officials in Oman, especially so, after the protests of 2011 when the demonstrators were calling for reform as it is assumed to imply a change of regime.

⁹ Al-Hashemi (2015). Since Al-Hashemi wrote the book, it is said to include controversial content due to its call for government reform and critiques of Oman’s judicial system. However, it can be bought in Oman every year in the Muscat Book Fair, which is hosted by the government.

¹⁰ Al-Hashemi (2015), p. 187.

¹¹ Every time the Council of Ministers is restructured, the same decree that appoints its new council ministers includes in its first line that the Sultan is the Prime Minister. Royal Decree No. 31/2011. ‘Restructuring the Council of Ministers’ issued on 7 March 2011.

¹² There were other demands that included better education facilities, increase of teachers’ salaries, better disability facilities, increase of the public’s salaries for a better standard of living. See [Appendix E] for a picture of the protests. For more details, refer to: Al-Azri (2012).

¹³ It is interesting to note that in 1974, the Sultan issued a decree to avoid conflict of interests between government officials and the government (See Royal Decree No. 43/74. ‘Avoid Conflict of

end to government corruption, an end to *wasta*¹⁴ (cronyism) in both government and private sectors, an increase in the availability of jobs for people in need, and salary increases for the poor, widows and divorced women. Marc Valeri suggests that the recurring demands were products of the ‘limited results of the Omanisation policies and the slowness of the process of diversifying sources of revenue,’ as ‘illustrated by dramatic social inequalities, endemic unemployment, and poverty resulting from deregulation and privatisation policies’.¹⁵ A number of changes had been made to privatise and deregulate (the decision-making process), as Chap. 5 observed, but with underwhelming and counter-productive effects.

Up until 26 February 2011, the protests, which consisted mainly of demonstrations in the streets, or workshops pertaining to social reforms, were by and large peaceful. On that day, however, a group of unemployed Omanis reviewed their employment status with the office of manpower in Sohar.¹⁶ According to Al-Hashemi, rather than responding to them in a professional manner, the administrators treated them dismissively, calling on security officials to ‘deal’ with them.¹⁷ When the incident was reported via social media (particularly WhatsApp), unprecedented shockwaves of discontent flooded the country, leaving residents in a state of worry and insecurity.¹⁸

The next day, over two thousand people throughout the country poured out into the streets, calling for *islah* oriented towards human development, and spanning ‘all rights—policy, civil, economic, social, cultural, and cognitive—necessary to live in civilised life,’ including ‘job creation’.¹⁹ In Muscat, workers and unemployed Omanis nicknamed the area in front of *majlis al-shura, sahat al-sha’ab* (The People’s Square); in Sur, (east of Muscat) protestors called their field *sahat al-huriya* (Freedom

Interests between Government Officials in the Government’ issued on 25 November 1974). It stated that the government officials are not allowed to use their positions to create business opportunities for their sole interest (with an exception of officials that have businesses prior to the issuance of the law). The law did not mention anything regarding the relatives of those in power and how this power is transferred to them allowing them an upper hand in business opportunities. In this regard, another decree regarding the protection of the public’s money, which stipulated, among other things, that a government official is not allowed to benefit from his position; provide preferential treatment to certain individuals; or allow his/her relative to benefit from his position (See Royal Decree No. 39/82. ‘To Protect Public Money and Avoid Conflict of Interest’ issued on 22 May 1982). Both laws were repealed post-Bouazizi and replaced with Royal Decree No. 112/2011. ‘To Protect Public Money and Avoid Conflicts of Interest’ issued on 24 October 2011, which added punishments for government officials that do not avoid conflict of interests.

¹⁴ In Cunningham and Yasin (1993) they discuss the implications of *wasta* on societal processes. *Wasta* in the Middle East context is where the distinction between mediation and intercession is blurred. The authors claim that *wasta* ameliorates the rigidities of bureaucracy on the one hand, and ripples through the economy creating negative effects, on the other.

¹⁵ Valeri (2012), p. 1.

¹⁶ Al-Hashemi (2015), p. 13.

¹⁷ Al-Hashemi (2015), p. 24.

¹⁸ Al-Azri (2012, pp. xv–vi).

¹⁹ Sadiq Jawad Suleiman Al-Lawati. 2013. ‘Al-Rabi’ Al-Omani—‘Itisamat ‘am 2011: Taharur Al-Hiwar Al-Watani wa Tatawurih [The Omani Spring—2011 Protests: Liberating and Developing National Dialogue]’. In Said Al-Hashemi (editor), *Al-Rabi’ Al-Omani: Qiraa fi Al-Siyaaqat wa Al-Dalalat* [The Omani Spring: A Contextual and Suggestive Reading], p. 23.

Square); in Sohar, those gathered in the Globe Roundabout dubbed it *midan al-islah* (The Reform Field). The protests also spread to Ibri, Bidiya, and Jaalan bani bu Ali calling for a change in regime.²⁰ The government deployed the army to disperse the protestors with batons and tear gas. On February 27, the armed forces shot Abdullah Al-Ghamlasi,²¹ who died instantly.

In reaction, the following day, their discontent aggravated further, with demonstrators blocking the entrance to Sohar Port, the country's main industrial area.²² This was a politically charged move, as, since its conception, the port had been a source of contention. As a high-ranking official in Sohar Free Zone and Port explains, 'The government was building a sophisticated zone and its employees were given high salaries with big housing buildings', but 'we didn't pay attention to the Omanis that were educated and wanted to work in the zone'.²³ Adding to the fact that, in the opinion of this official, Sohar's rural community was unfairly treated, the community of Sohar did not benefit from the port. Because many of the jobs created by the project consisted of types of construction work in which most Omanis were not skilled, most locals felt that the port only served external profits. Bolstering this opinion was the fact that, when Omanis living close to the industrial zone complained about pollution emanating from it, the government failed to take any action.²⁴ The exclusion of local communities fostered the perception of unequal access to jobs, wealth, and income.

6.1.2 *The Bouazizi Effect*

When Bouazizi set himself on fire Tunisia, he became a universal symbol across the Arab world, as a repressed entrepreneur calling for social justice, freedom, and equal opportunities.²⁵ While in most Gulf countries the level of unrest did not reach that of Tunisia, Egypt, or Syria,²⁶ the entire Gulf region felt the effects of this incident. Like Bouazizi, humiliated by officials in Tunisia, the unemployed Omani youths mistreated by the authorities experienced humiliation and disrespect.²⁷ The killing of Al-Ghamlasi fuelled complaint. As Toby Matthiesen points out, 'Unlike his Bahraini and Saudi counterparts,' Qaboos 'reacted to some of these demands'.²⁸ Without naming a reason but presumably to demonstrate his commitment to reform

²⁰ Valeri (2012).

²¹ Al-Ghamlasi was a thirty-six year-old successful property developer who decided to go to the venue of the protests in Sohar just to see what was going on. For further details refer to Collin (2011).

²² Port of Sohar and Free Zone Sohar. 2013. *Port of Sohar and Free Zone Magazine*, Issue 6.

²³ Interview # 3 with High-ranking official in Sohar Free Zone and Port. 25 January 2015, Muscat.

²⁴ World Bulletin/News Desk (2013).

²⁵ Matthiesen (2013).

²⁶ In terms of number of people demonstrating and level of repression from the state.

²⁷ Al-Hashemi (2015), p. 191.

²⁸ Matthiesen (2013), p. 112.

and to appease protestors, Qaboos fired twelve ministers and oversaw a series of speedy reforms.²⁹ Still, protesters pushed for more, demanding that the ministers be tried for corruption, calling for an end to graft, and demanding for greater political participation.³⁰

On the morning of 9 March 2011, two hundred PDO employees staged strikes outside Mina Al-Fahal in Muscat. The Managing Director of PDO, Raoul Restucci, claims that motivations for the strikes arose from ‘not enough engagement’. Within hours, however, PDO responded: ‘We worked with the ROP [Royal Oman Police] and the Sultan secret services guards. There were only seven cases of corruption, which is likely in an institution of seven-thousand plus’.³¹ The protest ended two hours after demonstrators met with PDO’s Managing Director, who appeased demands for higher salaries and reduced shifts. Other protests, however, continued in places such as the Athaiba district of Muscat where Omani employees working for W.J. Towell went on strike demanding better wages and working conditions. In Sohar, workers with similar demands blocked the Globe Roundabout. In Salalah, students from Dhofar University requested greater student participation in university decision-making.³² In the southern port of Salalah, protesters camped outside the provincial governor’s office; when demonstrators refused to disperse, security forces fired shots in the air to expel them. When still the demonstrators would not move, security personnel arrested dozens; no one was seriously injured.³³

In response, the Sultanate took security measures to overturn the unrest throughout the country. Security forces deployed armoured vehicles and troops to break up roadblocks, destroy protest camps, and arrest hundreds.³⁴ On April 1, Khalifa Al-Alawi, a twenty-two year-old protestor in Sohar, was shot dead.³⁵ Measured by the scale of military deployment, in comparison with other contentious episodes during Qaboos’ reign, such as the 1994 and 2005 protests (discussed in Chap. 5), the degree of repressive measures enacted by the government reached an unprecedented climax.

One of the most famous slogans during the ‘Omani Spring’, as in the case of the so-called Arab Spring, was ‘*al-huriyah, wa al-‘adala al-ijtima’eyah* [freedom and social justice]’. But what, exactly, were the protesters seeking in the names of freedom and justice? The main complaints condemned and called for correctives to corruption, lack of employment opportunities, and unequal wealth distribution. ‘There is a lot of *corruption* and mismanagement’, states economist Hatim Al-Shanfari. But Oman, he adds, has failed to develop a better system of governance. Instead, it maintains

²⁹ See Chap. 1 of this book for details on reforms taken by the Sultanate to appease the 2011 protestors.

³⁰ Valeri (2012).

³¹ Interview # 4 with Raoul Restucci, Managing Director of Petroleum Development of Oman. 19 February 2015, Muscat.

³² Direct observation, 23–27 February 2011, Dhofar University, Salalah.

³³ Worrall (2012).

³⁴ Al-Hashemi (2015), p. 204.

³⁵ Ibid.

the status quo; thus, these problems, he believes, as do many others, are systemic: 'The system', he insists, 'cannot be corrected by the change of people'.³⁶

According to James Worrall, an expert on Anglo-Omani relations: 'Corruption had gradually become part of the way things were done in Oman, seen by some as helping to cement the country's unity by often being used to buy off opposition figures'.³⁷ The view is shared by Nick Pattison, former employee of Shell Oman, who points out that: 'People like Dr Mohammed Ali said, 'I thought everyone was doing it''.³⁸ Based on his analysis of the situation, Al-Shanfari calls for neoliberal reforms focused on issues of management. Viewing the solution slightly differently, Worrall notes that, from a series of interviews with officials and non-officials in Oman emerged the common opinion 'that corrupt merchants and senior ministers had clearly pulled the wool over the sultan's eyes and were taking advantage of him for their own personal aims'.³⁹ Moreover, the attitude of those in charge appears nonchalant since, as Al-Shanfari claims, the system of governance is mismanaged and therefore decision-makers' actions are not checked. This is further voiced by Al-Hashemi's first-hand account of the events where he notes that: 'In any society, ignoring or belittling the people's problems by the regime can only lead to an explosion in the end. This is exactly what happened in Oman with the dawn of the Arab Spring'.⁴⁰ Rather than simply condemning corruption, the protestors recommended certain constructive actions. They requested, for example, that government institutions adopt strict guidelines and form 'an anti-corruption national council to exert efforts related to reform and development of state institutions'.⁴¹ This request led to an anti-corruption drive targeted at high officials that were allegedly involved in corruption.⁴² As Pattison observes, in the wake of Bouazizi, new trends in awareness appeared. It became important, says Pattison 'to try people for corruption and humiliate them', in order to make them aware that corruption 'is not a victimless crime'.⁴³

Another issue highlighted during the protests was the question of unemployment and the Sultanate's attempt to address it. Given the current economic situation, an anonymous high-ranking government official indicated, Omanis should 'ship out' or the government should make 'changes to certain policies, like labour policies'.⁴⁴

³⁶ Interview # 5 with Hatim Al-Shanfari, member of board of governors in Central Bank of Oman. 1 January 2015, Muscat (added emphasis).

³⁷ Worrall (2012), p. 111.

³⁸ Interview # 6 with Nick Pattison, former employee in Shell Oman (joined in 1998) and consultant for over thirty five years in oil sector. 25 January 2015, Muscat. Mohamed Ali, a non-Omani from Kerala, India, is the co-founder of Galfar Engineering and Contracting, the largest construction company in Oman. On 11 January 2014, he was one of three men convicted on bribery charges for a deal that extended Ali's Galfar contract with Petroleum Development of Oman. For further details, see Reuters (2014).

³⁹ Worrall (2012), p. 99.

⁴⁰ Al-Hashemi (2011).

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² The Economist (2014).

⁴³ Interview # 6. 25 January 2015, Muscat.

⁴⁴ Interview # 7 with Anonymous High-ranking government official. 8 January 2015, Muscat.

This thinking is extended by another high-ranking official who points out that the government employed fifty thousand Omanis in the public sector because ‘Omanis don’t want to enter the private sector because the incentives in the public sector are better. Even those employed in the government are not working, *it is a disaster for this generation and the next*’.⁴⁵ The Sultanate’s reactive policy to employ fifty-thousand Omanis (mostly in the military sector) became an economic burden for the country the following year in 2012. Julia Craig Romano and Lee Seeger, researchers on Oman’s employment strategies, examine this burden and the systemic causes of youth unemployment in Oman. In investigating Oman’s employment policies (i.e. the increase of minimum wage and increasing employment in the public sector—specifically in the military sector), Romano and Seeger suggest that it caused a negative impact: ‘The short-term labour and economic policies directly countered Oman’s long-term goals of Omanisation in the private sector and lessening the dependence on public sector employment’.⁴⁶ Nonetheless, unlike in Bahrain where the protests continued,⁴⁷ the Sultanate took immediate actions that were needed to suppress local discontent.

6.1.3 Efforts Towards Social Development

A few months after the protests, the Sultanate made amendments to some provisions of the Basic Law of the State providing the Council of Oman with legislative and regulatory power.⁴⁸ Other Royal Decrees provided the judiciary with complete independence and total separation of responsibilities from the executive branch (i.e., the Ministry of Justice), allowing different powers to operate independently of each other for maximum efficiency.⁴⁹

In 2012, Qaboos abolished the Ministry of National Economy (MoNE), a target of corruption allegations, and established in its place the Supreme Council for Planning (SCP).⁵⁰ As prescribed by Oman Vision 2020, SCP focused on reducing economic dependence on the public sector and bolstering the private sector play a more effective role in the economy. The SCP’s effort centred on creating and developing sectors like tourism, fisheries, logistics, mining, and manufacturing, in order to create employment opportunities and become self-sustained. As with many bureaucratic mechanisms, however, the SCP was slow to bring reforms to fruition. According to a

⁴⁵ Interview # 8 with High-ranking official from The Research Council. 14 January 2015, Muscat (added emphasis).

⁴⁶ Romano and Seeger (2014).

⁴⁷ For a full first-hand account of what happened in Bahrain refer to Matthiesen (2013).

⁴⁸ Amendments were made to Articles 6, 42, 44, 56 and 58. See, Royal Decree No. 99/2011. ‘Amendment to Basic Statute of Oman’ issued on 19 October 2011.

⁴⁹ Royal Decree No. 9/2012. ‘On the Supreme Judicial Council’ issued on 29 February 2012; Royal Decree No. 10/2012. ‘On the Organisation of the Justice Administration’ issued on 29 February 2012.

⁵⁰ Royal Decree No. 30/2012. ‘Establishing the Supreme Council for Planning and Promulgation of its Bylaws’ issued on 16 May 2012.

government employee, the process was laboured because the entities involved were not independent of executive ministerial branches: ‘It is too bureaucratic. SCP sends a proposal to the Council of Oman,⁵¹ who sends it to the royal office, then back to the Council of Ministers, and back to SCP for amendments. The process is repeated again, and again’.⁵² For comprehensive review of a proposal, most analyses required—and continue to require—consultation among internal ‘experts’, external ‘expertise’ (such as the IMF and World Bank), and the Sultan’s current policy; that is, all aspects of social sensitivity (elaborated on subsequently).⁵³ However, the government employee asserts that in order to have a comprehensive and representative proposal, Oman ‘needs to consider the private, public sector and civil society. The issue is, there is no delegation’.⁵⁴ Here, the employee advocates for comprehensive consideration.

In 2013, the Sultan strongly shifted the Sultanate’s economic plans towards social development, instructing the government to focus.

on *social development*, particularly its aspects related to the daily lives of citizens. This should be achieved by the creation of renewable employment opportunities and training programmes for citizens and promoting production capacity, as well as scientific, cultural, and intellectual development.⁵⁵

Social development, therefore, became the core of Oman’s next five-year development plans, which aimed to balance societal considerations with the overall strategy of the country. Of great significance, are the actions/practices of the energy companies—as will be revealed in Sect. 6.2 of this chapter—following the mere utterance of the Sultan’s words: *social development*. In accordance with Qaboos’ instructions, SCP was expected to draft development plans focused on social policies to create new jobs, training centres and quality education.⁵⁶ With the inflow of oil revenues, the government was able to focus on social policies at the expense of long-term economic considerations.

Social policies, as the SCP report revealed, were supposed to guide the eighth five-year plan (2011–2015) and, subsequently, to prepare the grounds for the ninth five-year plan (2016–2020).⁵⁷ In light of the 2011 protests, Samir Radwan, Economic Advisor in SCP, opines that the Sultan’s decisions were driven by a desire to ‘establish

⁵¹ Council of Oman includes *majlis al-dawla* (State Council) and *majlis al-shura* (Consultative Council).

⁵² Interview # 9 with Anonymous government employee worked on economics for over fifteen years. 19 January 2015, Muscat.

⁵³ Interview # 10 with High-ranking official in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. 21 December 2014, Muscat.

⁵⁴ Interview # 9. 19 January 2015, Muscat.

⁵⁵ Ministry of Information ‘Speech of His Majesty on the Fifth Session of *Majlis* Oman [Council of Oman]’ delivered on 12 November 2012.

⁵⁶ Interview # 11 with Talal Al-Rahbi, Deputy-Secretary General of Supreme Council of Planning. 8 February 2015, Muscat. In 2016, SCP created a study entitled *Social Policies in the Context of Economic Take-off* that was aimed towards a balance between economic and social policies. See Supreme Council of Planning ‘Al-Siyasat Al-Ijtima’ayah fi Itar Al-Intilaq Al-Iqtisadi [Social Policies in the Context of Economic Take-off]’ issued in 2014.

⁵⁷ Supreme Council of Planning... Ibid.

social peace and stability', by assuaging demands for employment opportunities and higher salaries.⁵⁸ These priorities, undertaken in the name of 'Omanisation', were not, however, free of collateral effects. Increased salaries, for example, made it cheaper for the private sector to employ an expat than an Omani. Still, Radwan contends, the reforms have brought overall advantage; while challenges remain, Oman has 'a good opportunity to reconsider the model of development that has been in place. And, it has to involve people in the decision-making process'.⁵⁹

As part of the country's social development model, SCP experts and advisors believe that to ensure economic sustainability, the employment policies should consider the growing number of Omani *bahitheen* 'an *'amal* (jobseekers),⁶⁰ and understand the dynamics of the labour market. Currently—as discussed in Chap. 5—the government has allocated about five trillion cubic feet of gas to various industries for intermediate products, with the possibility to convert further to downstream to create more job opportunities.⁶¹ Many of the downstream industries, however, are gas-based, energy-intensive industries that provide few direct labour opportunities for Omanis, going against the national social policies. As a result, in 2012, many of the economic measures were taken just to appease the population in the short-term,⁶² while other long-term investments in the security sector were considered to suppress any dissidents.⁶³ The following year, the government's job-creation strategy during 2011–2013, as the IMF reported, increased Oman's financial expenditures by 70%, reducing the financial policy gap necessary to respond to shocks.⁶⁴ Ultimately, the IMF recommended for Oman to contain its current expenditures by, among other efforts, reducing salaries within the public sector, decreasing the number of government jobs, reducing unnecessary administrative expenditures, and diversifying the energy portfolio towards non-hydrocarbons.⁶⁵

To reduce the government's financial employment burden and given the material limits of the oil and gas industry in terms of providing jobs, the Sultanate shifted its focus to the development of SMEs. In the beginning of 2013, from January 21–23, Qaboos held a 3-day SME Symposium in Saih al-Shamikhath, in the interior province of Bahla.⁶⁶ The Symposium focused on how to address challenges facing

⁵⁸ Interview # 12 with Samir Radwan, Economic Advisor to the Supreme Council for Planning and former Minister of Finance for Egypt. 8 February 2015, Muscat.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

⁶⁰ It is interesting to note that the government of Oman does not like to use the word unemployment.

⁶¹ Interview # 42 with Anonymous interviewee worked in the public sector for twenty years. Muscat, 15 February 2015.

⁶² Matthiesen (2013), p. 114.

⁶³ Valeri (2015), p. 1.

⁶⁴ IMF 'Oman—Article IV Consultation Concluding Statement of the IMF Mission' issued on 14 May 2013.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶⁶ A historic city in Oman, known for its deep cultural and Islamic history, and is also an incubator for traditional crafts and goods.

entrepreneurs trying to set up SMEs, and how to increase private sector contribution in the country's development process.⁶⁷ Following the Sultan's directives, the Symposium highlighted the importance of assisting SMEs to (1) achieve sustainable economic growth, (2) enhance their capabilities, (3) create job opportunities for job seekers, and (4) encourage youths to establish their own business and become employers, not employees.⁶⁸ The Symposium ended with an announcement that the government would allocate 10% of its tenders to local SMEs.⁶⁹

A few days after the Symposium, during the Sultan's 'Meet-the-People-Tour',⁷⁰ Qaboos praised the SME Symposium as a model convention that produced tasks for immediate execution.⁷¹ 'The national economy of a country', the Sultan stated, 'is in fact based on small and medium industries. These are the fundamentals, and the foundations of all national economies'. However, he added, 'it is essential that the government and all segments of society should carry out their duties', and, to ensure a sustainable economy, 'put an end to hidden 'proxy' trade (*al-tijara al-mustatira*) [...as] it decreases the available suitable job opportunities for our sons and daughters'.⁷² Qaboos somewhat alluded that no reform will be successful unless observed and carried out in the right ways, for the right intentions, by those the policies are meant to serve. Following the Sultan's directives and the Symposium's outcomes, Oman established the Al-Rafd⁷³ Fund to assist the country's plan to support SMEs.⁷⁴ The private sector, the multinational oil companies, and state-owned enterprises came together to help establish SMEs, placing them within a corporate structure.⁷⁵

Entrepreneurship was not entirely unprecedented. 'The SMEs, and gaps in the ecosystems, are not new', says Shabib Al-Maamari, former CEO of Injaz Oman.⁷⁶ Before

⁶⁷ Direct observation, SME Symposium, 23–27 February 2011, Saih al-Shamikhat, Bahla.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ This is an annual tour that the Sultan undertook since 1970. The purpose of his visit to several cities outside of Muscat is for Omanis to identify their needs and requirements in terms of services directly to Qaboos. For further details on the tour see Marc Valeri. 2009. *Oman: Politics and Society in the Qaboos State*.

⁷¹ Oman TV. 'Khitab Sahib al-Jalalah al-Sultan Qaboos al-Mua'tham fi Saih al-Shamikhat [Speech of His Majesty Sultan Qaboos in Saih al-Shamikhat]' delivered on 27 January 2013.

⁷² Ibid. Furthermore, to assist the SME initiative, the Ajyal Craft College will offer fourteen majors that include pottery, copper industries, and manufacturing of tools.

⁷³ Al-Rafd, named by Qaboos, comes from the Arabic words *rafada* or *turfid*, that is, provides and supplements. It started with an initial capital set at OR 70 million (\$182 million), with an annual increase of OR 7 million/year.

⁷⁴ Royal Decree No. 6/2013. 'To Create Al-Rafd Fund and Issue its Rules' issued on 28 January 2013.

⁷⁵ Injaz was first supported by Occidental Oil Company (Oxy) in 2006, and the Board Chairman in Injaz was Isam Al-Zadjali, former Managing Director for Oxy.

⁷⁶ Injaz International is a not-for-profit global organisation that began in 1990 in the US. The organisation was launched in Oman in 2006. It provides mentoring programmes for leadership and entrepreneurship and aims at enhancing the skills of youth and increasing their participation in the economy. See Start-Up-Oman. *Injaz Oman*, last accessed 5 October 2016: <http://www.startupoman.om/resources/injaz-oman>.

the 2011 protests, government interest in pushing Omanis towards entrepreneurial initiatives existed. Still, Al-Maamari adds, the spirit of entrepreneurship reached unprecedented levels:

What happened after 2011 is that it took the entire process to the next level, which became very fast and very important. This is because the government couldn't employ these individuals, they had to do something about it.⁷⁷

The Sultan's high-level speech had unintended consequences, too. In effect, it justified the intervention of energy companies in the social structure of Oman.

Khalid Al-Huraibi, former BP Oman CSR Manager and former Managing Director of the think tank Tawasul,⁷⁸ describes the rise of a sense of urgency among the government, post-Bouazizi, to push energy companies to invest in social programmes.⁷⁹ To continue the regeneration of a nation and assure its rise—'*al'umran al-bashari*, [the rise of nations]'⁸⁰—he says, it became common opinion that energy companies 'must invest their excess wealth and invest in the people'.⁸¹ Al-Huraibi explains the role played by civil society in ensuring that public and private sectors work in tandem to guarantee that any form of excess (power, resources, money) is distributed in a way that allows the society to function sustainably.⁸²

The think tank Tawasul built a large network of role models for CSR projects and developed a framework on how to attain sustainable projects with participation from energy companies.⁸³ As in the case of entrepreneurship, trends towards social sustainability were not entirely new. Prior to the 2011 protests, seeking to encourage social responsibility in the private sector, Tawasul had established an award for the best social investment programme; at the time, however, it had elicited mixed reviews.⁸⁴ During the 2011 protests, however, Al-Huraibi claims that a 'chance' meeting with an unofficial advisor of the Sultan prompted a shift in mentality:

His Majesty [HM] became very interested in the issue of sustainability in 2011 because I met the former Chairman of Shell, who negotiated the contracts with the government in 1970s, Sir Mark Moody-Stuart,⁸⁵ in Dubai and mentioned the importance of social sustainability

⁷⁷ Interview # 14 with Shabib Al-Maamari, Corporate Communication and External Affairs Manager for BP Oman, and former executive director of Injaz. 5 October 2016, Muscat.

⁷⁸ Tawasul is the first local non-profit think tank aimed to 'to empower the civil society institutions through training and knowledge'. For further information, check out their website: Tawasul (2008).

⁷⁹ Interview # 45 with Khalid Al-Huraibi, former Deputy Director of Riyada, and former Managing Director of Tawasul, former Corporate Communication and External Affairs Manager BP Oman. 13 October 2016, Muscat.

⁸⁰ In many ways, his description of *al'umran al-bashari*, the rise of nations, evokes Ibn Khaldun's mapping of human development and the rise and fall of its tribal and sedentary civilisations. See Abdulrahman bin Muhammed ibn Khaldun. 1958. *Al-Muqaddimah* [The Introduction].

⁸¹ Interview # 45. 13 October 2016, Muscat.

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ In Oman, Al-Huraibi notes, there was a firm belief that social development is not the business of non-state actors, this is the business of the government, and those whom the government sanctions.

⁸⁵ Sir Mark Moody-Stuart ties to Oman goes back to the 1960s, where he was working for Shell as a geologist. He is also the former Chairman of Shell International (retired in 2005). Through two

to him. He then discussed it to His Majesty, and we were approached by the Ministry of Commerce and Industry [MoCI], where HE Maqbool told us that Sir Moody spoke with HM, and HM said to speak to us to understand how we can enter social responsibility into the marketplace.⁸⁶

As a result of this meeting, the MoCI assigned the Capital Market Authority (CMA) with the responsibility to ensure that oil and gas companies allocate part of their CSR initiatives to SIPs in 2011.⁸⁷ It appeared that joint initiatives towards social sustainability were gaining traction. As the momentum of protests increased, however, many of the energy companies came under critique, and the MoCI was forced to shelve its decision.⁸⁸ Nevertheless, the energy companies retained a foothold in the system; as active partners working with the state to further social development, they offered aid to local organisations such as Tawasul and Injaz. Focusing on this new sort of relationship that emerged with CSRs and SIPs, the next section will investigate certain social and cultural impacts of PDO and BP Oman.

6.2 The *Materiality* of Energy

Discussions in this section aim to show how energy companies integrated themselves within the Sultanate's socio-economic landscape through SIP and CSR initiatives. It also seeks to illustrate how recent social and cultural projects, sponsored by energy companies, reference certain material qualities of the oil and gas industry. Finally, it will highlight the positions of BP and PDO in trying to create employment through their CSR initiatives.

6.2.1 *Pushing Technological Boundaries*

The 'Launching Ceremony' for BP's first gas-produced from the Khazzan gas field (located in al-Dhahira region of Oman) coincided with former British Prime Minister David Cameron's visit to Oman in February 2011.⁸⁹ In public addresses, Cameron praised the work of BP during the previous four years,⁹⁰ affirming that the 'two-way partnership' between Oman and Britain, especially in areas such as technology,

anonymous sources, I was informed that he was/is in the 'Business Advisory Council', which is a council unknown to the public, and is directly related to the Sultan. I did try to get in touch with Moody-Stuart; however, received no response.

⁸⁶ Interview # 45. 13 October 2016, Muscat.

⁸⁷ The CMA regulates Muscat Security Markets, which is the only stock exchange in Oman established by Royal Decree No. 53/88. 'Establishment of Muscat Security Markets' issued on 21 June 1988.

⁸⁸ After the 2011 protests, Maqbool Sultan was removed from his position as Minister of MoCI.

⁸⁹ Clark (2015), p. 124.

⁹⁰ BP arrived in Oman in 2007.

security and trade, could be attributed to ‘the extraordinary achievements of British technology in Oman’.⁹¹ According to Cameron, British firm’s technological investments could positively impact Oman through, among other things, its Omani Parliament, the Omani Royal Opera House and the National Museum of Oman.⁹² As BP deepened its collaboration with the Omani state, it became heavily involved in the political, economic, and social concerns of the country. As it will be shown, not only was Britain, through BP, helping the country to develop culturally, but it also aimed to address the country’s domestic energy demands, along with its need to obtain revenue through hydrocarbon exports.⁹³

On March 17 2013, BP encountered difficulties negotiating the Khazzan gas concession agreement with the Omani government, which led to Prince Charles visiting Oman to assist with negotiations.⁹⁴ The negotiations attempted to resolve the problems of the high cost of extracting tight gas reserves and yielding profits from high gas prices. As Abdulrahman Al-Maskari, Process Engineer in BP Oman, explains, the Minister of Oil and Gas, ‘forced BP to lower the price of the overall project. HE Al-Rumhy [representing the Omani government] negotiated from \$21 billion to \$16 billion for the CAPEX [capital expenditure].’⁹⁵

These negotiations happened at the same time when the IEA, in 2013, reported that the continued shortage of supply from domestic gas production in Oman would harbour ‘a host of issues, from price regulation to security.’⁹⁶ In practice, the report, according to the government’s interpretation of it, called for the reduction of Oman’s exports to meet domestic demands. To address this demand, the IEA advised Oman to change its pricing policy by, directly, ‘ending the subsidies to industrial gas users and raising the cap price it pays producers to \$3/mmbtu’.⁹⁷ Not insignificantly, the report specified further:

*The main driver for such a change is the development of BP’s Khazzan Makarem tight gas field, although the company is rather hoping for prices around \$4/mmbtu to \$6/mmbtu to develop and bring 10bcm to the market by 2017. By terminating gas subsidies, Oman is ahead of other countries in the region which face gas shortages and need to import expensive LNG [Liquified Natural Gas].*⁹⁸

With the ensuing change in policy, a matter that was formerly not an option on the table, energy, entered a new relationship with the economic and finance factions of the country.

⁹¹ Foreign & Commonwealth Office and The Rt Hon David Cameron MP, ‘Prime Minister Praises Two-Way Partnership with Oman’ published 24 February 2011, last accessed 12 October 2016: <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/prime-minister-praises-two-way-partnership-with-oman>.

⁹² Ibid.

⁹³ Dargin (2008), pp. 1–61.

⁹⁴ Al-Balad (2013).

⁹⁵ Interview # 16 with Abdulrahman Al-Maskari, Process Engineer in BP. 2 January 2016, Muscat.

⁹⁶ International Energy Agency (IEA). ‘The Medium-Term Gas Market Report 2013’ issued in 2013, p. 3.

⁹⁷ IEA ‘The Medium-Term Gas Market Report 2013’ issued in 2013, p. 102.

⁹⁸ Ibid. (added emphasis).

Following the visit of Prince Charles, Oman and Britain reached an agreement to move forward with the Khazzan/Makarem project. On December 2013, BP sanctioned a declaration of commerciality.⁹⁹ Meanwhile, further committing to its long-term partnership with Britain,¹⁰⁰ Oman signed a \$16 billion agreement (estimated cost over fifteen years) with BP to develop the technically challenging natural gas field in Saih Rawl.¹⁰¹

The 2800 km² unconventional tight gas reserve, which covers a third of the country's 3bcf units, is divided into Khazzan (south) and Makkan (north). Similar to oil in terms of its material properties, the gas is transported through pipelines, which are then monitored by digital readings from computerised machines. In this respect, the labour demand for the gas industry is generally low. In discussing the material properties of oil and gas in terms of labour, the Undersecretary of Oil and Gas, Salim Al-Aufi, contends that, while the introduction of gas created new industries with some job opportunities (discussed in Chapter five), Oman was unable to supply the industries with cheap gas thus rendering the industries commercially unviable. Voicing further concerns for future employment, Al-Aufi notes that, by 2025, many of the LNG gas plants will be shut down—due to the unavailability of gas to meet domestic energy needs—leaving '800 Omanis unemployed. What are we going to do to them? It is a major industry in the *sharqiya* [eastern] region'.¹⁰² He went on to say that gas 'is available today, but it has a finite life', and, 'while producing gas is cheaper than oil, gas is less labour intensive'.¹⁰³ Here, the material quality of gas—that is, its 'finite' depleting quality—creates challenges for the future of the country.

Although the details of the agreement were confidential,¹⁰⁴ Al-Maskari revealed certain unrestricted elements. During phase one, for example, it was expected of BP:

to produce one billion cubic feet of gas per day starting from 2018 (for the next ten years). After 2028, production rate varies for the next thirty years. In addition, twenty-five thousand barrels of condensate [which is part of the oil market and two to three times more valuable

⁹⁹ In the energy industry, the use of the term 'sanctioned' shows a point of no return, where the project is declared economically viable and 'big spending' begins.

¹⁰⁰ In February the following year, Qaboos ratified the agreement through Royal Decree No. 11/2014, and the exploration and production arm of the state-owned-enterprise, OOC, took a 40% stake in the project to reduce BP's costs and risk. For further details see: Royal Decree No. 11/2014 'Approving the Amended Oil Agreement Between the Government of the Sultanate of Oman and BP Exploration (Epsilon) Limited for Block (61)' issued on 13 February 2014.

¹⁰¹ In 2007 BP signed an EPSA (exploration and production sharing agreement) with the government of Oman. This agreement was for the appraisal and testing of Block 61 reservoir. Interview # 16. 2 January 2016, Muscat.

¹⁰² Interview # 25 with Salim Al-Aufi, Undersecretary of the Ministry of Oil and Gas. 17 August 2017, Muscat.

¹⁰³ Ibid.

¹⁰⁴ Given that the gas market is competitive, every gas agreement negotiates and agrees upon a price behind closed doors. If other parties know of previous agreed prices, it would be difficult to negotiate.

than gas] is to be produced. Gas is to be sold to the government for a pre-defined price—and this will be changed per year.¹⁰⁵

As this quote indicates, BP is extending the country's gas supply which could help to ensure future domestic energy needs and revenue. The first phase¹⁰⁶ for BP operating in Oman can be expanded to the next sixty years. Michael Townshend, BP President—Middle East, suggests that, the concession's potential is 'so big, the amount can last for a hundred years [...] In economic terms, anything that will last for twenty years is *forever*'.¹⁰⁷ This claim is refuted by Undersecretary Al-Aufi, who notes that Oman can only supply gas for another fifteen years to meet its domestic energy demand.¹⁰⁸ This brings us to the following subsection that provides the material base of oil and gas during the years 2010–2016.

6.2.2 Dwindling Oil, Rising Gas

The heterogeneous articulation of 'energy security' in Oman is highlighted in this subsection through its production/consumption and export/import. However, it is important to point out that the following is not the only consideration for conceptualising 'energy security'. At times, discourses and practices point towards a different direction. In order to obtain a materially contextualised understanding of 'energy security' in Oman, Fig. 6.1 takes into consideration the material base of crude oil production/consumption, as well as export, during the years 2010–2016, which maintained an almost linear level:

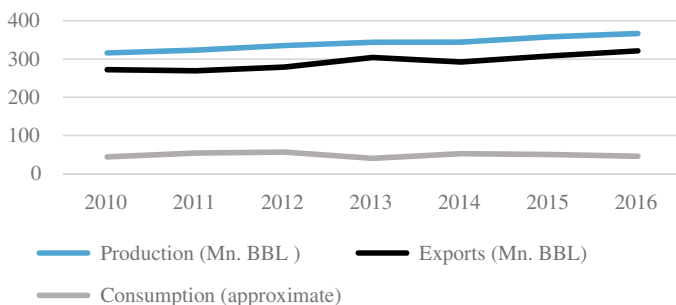


Fig. 6.1 Crude oil production, exports and consumption (2010–2016)

¹⁰⁵ Interview # 16. 2 January 2016, Muscat.

¹⁰⁶ Phase II of the contract is still in the planning stage, and is said to be more of the same, with the possibility of exports, unlike phase one which is allocated for domestic usage.

¹⁰⁷ Interview # 17 with Michael Townshend, BP President—Middle East. 15 January 2015, Muscat (original emphasis).

¹⁰⁸ Interview # 25. 17 August 2017, Muscat.

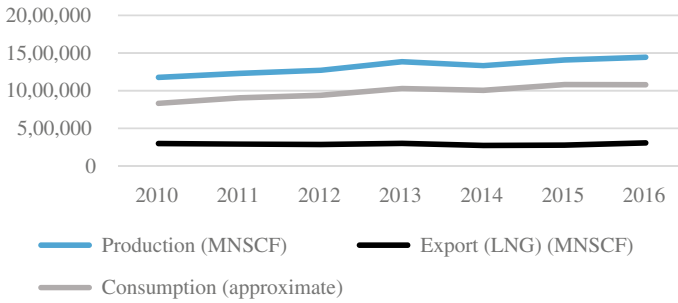


Fig. 6.2 Natural gas production, export and consumption (2010–2016)

The same pattern is demonstrated with the production, export, and consumption of gas in Oman in Fig. 6.2.¹⁰⁹ The gradual increase of oil and gas consumption supports the neoliberal discourse of the need to move beyond the reliance of hydrocarbons to ensure intergenerational equity, create downstream industries and diversify and privatise the economy. However, these macro-analyses of production and consumption do not help us understand how unexpected social and political events reframe the meanings of ‘energy security’.

Analyses of materiality also need to be more fine-grained and detailed, drawing on the materiality of gas in terms of labour, as well as its properties as a depleting source of energy. What counts for the articulation of ‘energy security’ during and after the so-called ‘Omani Spring’ are not just overall patterns of import/export and production/consumption, but the role of private companies, extractive technologies, and the material properties of gas in terms of, it being less labour intensive, a finite source of energy, and given the tight gas fields in Oman it is difficult-to-extract gas.

Given the nature of tight gas, extraction will likely prove challenging. Because the energy industry in Oman is old (see Chap. 3), hydrocarbons are found at least four km underground. Nevertheless, Dave Campbell, Chief Operation Officer of BP Oman, remains optimistic. ‘We get our technology from North America’, he says, ‘and we have a multi-decade of supply (almost 70tcf). Not all is retrievable now, but it is sixty to eighty years in the making’.¹¹⁰ Campbell guarantees that BP will be able to: (1) provide the expertise and know-how, (2) create Omani innovations, ‘incremental innovations’, and (3) build internal capability.¹¹¹

With sixty percent of the country’s gas lying in the tight rock underground, its extraction will require advanced technology. The advances in technology will make possible extraction (such as fracking), which will require highly specialised polymers, making the gas expensive. As Townshend states, ‘Gas forty years ago was valueless; only now has it become valuable with LNG pipelines and exports. Gas has

¹⁰⁹ National Centre for Statistics and Information. ‘Oman Statistical Yearbook’ issued in 2017, last accessed 23 December 2017, <https://data.gov.om/>.

¹¹⁰ Interview # 18 with Dave Campbell, Vice President for Operations and Chief Operation Officer, BP Oman. 5 February 2015, Muscat.

¹¹¹ Ibid.

now become more like oil'. In order for gas to be extracted, however, investments in technology will be needed. So, Townshend adds: 'Oman will secure energy, but it needs more technology'.¹¹² What is implied here is technological innovation comes with 'expertise' transferred from the West and bearing cultural implications.

In many ways, as Douglas Rogers argues, the material qualities of energy remain central to international energy corporations specialising 'not only beyond the domains of production, exchange, and consumption but also beyond the point at which recognition of the harm these materials do prompts public or professional political critique'.¹¹³ One of the reasons BP took six years (from 2007 to 2013) to sign a concession agreement was because it needed to develop a degree of confidence in the project by the Omani government. The delay was augmented by a lack of transparency and limited shared information, which had elicited speculation and public criticism of both, BPs operations and contracting partners. As an anonymous BP employee stated that:

There was an incident where H₂S leaked, and the Omani public were unhappy with BP. There was also a controversy with Veolia—a company operating in Israel. The Omani public voiced this in Sablat Oman.¹¹⁴

Regardless of BP's license to operate in Khazzan/Makarem fields until 2034, public opinion remained negative towards the energy company. According to Al-Huraibi, a 'sense of urgency for BP to evade criticism' drove BP to carry out SIPs and In-Country Value (ICV)¹¹⁵ initiatives as 'a guarantee against public anger. It was therefore learning from its past incidents'.¹¹⁶ Because of the gas industry's limited ability to create jobs, its material limitations yield the industry to transfer focus on its CSR programmes thus deepening BP's foothold in Oman. The next subsection sets out how BP presents its CSR initiatives in an attempt to influence Oman's entrepreneur culture.

6.2.3 *BP's Social Responsibility*

In 2013, BP conducted a 'gap analysis' study to identify the country's key social needs.¹¹⁷ The 'gap analysis', which translated into the 2014 SIP strategy, aimed to implement a social investment strategy that would produce long-lasting and

¹¹² Interview # 17. 15 January 2015, Muscat.

¹¹³ Rogers (2012).

¹¹⁴ Generally, gas is more difficult to extract in the north because of the H₂S (hydrogen sulphide) found, which is a corrosive and dangerous chemical where 0.1% concentration of H₂S can kill someone. Interview # 19 with Anonymous BP engineer. 3 January 2016, Muscat.

¹¹⁵ ICV is the total revenue spent in-country, which includes products made and services provided in country.

¹¹⁶ Interview # 45. 13 October 2016, Muscat.

¹¹⁷ When requesting the 'gap analysis study', BP did not share it due to their internal restrictions.

sustainable results.¹¹⁸ Linking BP to the country's needs for the next hundred years, BP identified three themes for its SIPs: Education, Enterprise Development, and Energy Sustainability.¹¹⁹ The '3Es' aimed to create viable SIPs through local implementing partners, Tawasul and Injaz. Endowed with increased responsibility for the country's development, Al-Huraibi describes the landmark as 'exciting'; 'Imagine', he says, 'being given such a mandate to me—what really mattered was [...that] this global company gave me its *trust*'.¹²⁰ From this *trust* emerged new forms of dependency where local non-governmental organisations (NGOs) developed towards BP. Responding to Oman's need for SME guidance, the company's SIPs provided training and financial support for existing local SMEs and NGOs.¹²¹

In 2014, BP signed a million-dollar investment agreement with Injaz, making BP the first multi-national corporation in the country to outsource part of its SIPs to a local NGO. Al-Maamari, who was then Executive Director of Injaz, explains the process to develop new partnerships:

They [BP] told Injaz that they identified several organisations under the theme of education. They wanted to hire Injaz as a Project Manager to run the SIPs and represent BP. BP saw a lot of potential in Injaz and wanted to upgrade the level of our organisation to their level. So, by 2017, Injaz would be sustainable even if BP stops supporting it. BP also wanted to link us to a global supply chain so we can become an international organisation. And that was the mini vision that BP had when they started off. It's interesting from the receiving end, to be trusted with 1 million, and to tell you that 'we trust you, we want to work together, if you deliver, we will renew this membership in the next three years.' Once other corporates see that BP *trusts* your organisation—as it is assumed that BP are not going to throw their money, they have done their due diligence, they have done their research—they are 100% sure this is a success story in the making.¹²²

To establish a working relationship between BP and the local company, the transfer of *trust* and accountability from BP to the local NGO features as a recurring theme in the process. To a great degree, BP has earned the trust of local NGOs, which indicates the depth of integration of the energy company, since trust is not easy to obtain. In this scenario, the CSR managers of BP turn into cultural managers, producing a new generation of Omanis trained to think as entrepreneurs and run sustainable projects. With BP's support, Injaz became the leading champions of educational programmes focused on social entrepreneurship across the Sultanate. The support of and partnership with BP led them to win the 'Best Education Programme in Oman' from the Riyada¹²³ Awards, the biggest government award for entrepreneurship. In

¹¹⁸ BP Oman, 'Empowering the Future: BP Oman's Social Investment Programme' issued on April 2014.

¹¹⁹ Ibid.

¹²⁰ Interview # 45. 13 October 2016, Muscat (added emphasis).

¹²¹ Ibid.

¹²² Interview # 45. 13 October 2016, Muscat (added emphasis).

¹²³ Riyada is the Public Authority for Small and Medium Enterprises Development, which is the government's arm for the development of SMEs. Their contribution to the local economy includes a wide range of business advisory services and training programmes. Riyada oversees all technical assistance except for finance, which is facilitated through Al-Rafd Fund. Riyada (2013).

this respect, the Sultanate highlighted and identified Injaz's achievements linking it together with that of BP's.

Supporting ICV initiatives and SMEs has become the core of BP's CSR discourses and practices. Since the initial partnership with Injaz, other local organisations have partnered with multinational corporations on huge projects. Under the banner of ICV local NGOs have entirely changed the way they operate. As evident in the mixed reception of Tawasul, by and large Omanis believed that social development was the business of the government or those sanctioned by them, but not of non-state actors.¹²⁴ By 2014, however, NGOs were increasingly appearing on the scene, adopting talk of 'social return of investments (SROI)'¹²⁵ as introduced by BP.¹²⁶

SIPs have come to characterise the way international corporations do business in Oman. In December 2014, Campbell confirmed BP's commitment to ICV by suggesting that:

As part of BP Oman's ICV strategy, we regard building local capabilities as a priority. We aim to do so through empowering local initiatives with necessary resources to grow, and subsequently thrive. The social investment programme aims to maximise economic opportunities by delivering the energy required for long-term sustainability in Oman's development.¹²⁷

Campbell presented BP's first SIPs to the community of Ibri in the al-Dhahira governorate.¹²⁸ Seeking partnerships with local organisation has become BP's core SIPs mandate. As of today, BP has partnered with the Oman Road Safety Association, Outward Bound Oman, and Oman Sail, all of which provide training to facilitate the financing of entrepreneurs and develop business skills.¹²⁹ Most of the programmes are offered in educational settings within the concession area¹³⁰ and prioritise drawing 'a minimum of 40% of the beneficiaries of every single programme' from that area, respectively.¹³¹ Other efforts are made to create a forum for coherence among all

¹²⁴ WikiLeaks. 'Oman Civil Society Awards Herald Shifting Winds' diplomatic cable released on 10 January 2010, last accessed 13 October 2016: https://wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/10MUSCAT27_a.html.

¹²⁵ Interview # 14. 5 October 2016, Muscat.

¹²⁶ Social return on investment is a technique for summarising a company's social benefits in terms of its monetary and corporate value. For more on standardising methods on SROI refer to Alison Lingane and Sara Olsen. 2004. 'Guidelines for Social Return on Investment'. *California Management Review*.

¹²⁷ Quote extrapolated from the Times of Oman. 'BP Oman Shares its Social Investment Strategy in Ibri'. *Times of Oman*, Business section, issued 10 December 2014.

¹²⁸ The al-Dhahira and al-Dhakhiliya regions are considered the concession areas for BP's operations.

¹²⁹ BP Oman, 'Empowering the Future: BP Oman's Social Investment Programme' issued on April 2014.

¹³⁰ Because the population within the actual concession is small (a total of thirty people), BP targets the concession area, which includes al-Dhakhiliya and al-Dhahira region. In a visit on 17 May 2016 to the BP Khazzan site, the driver that took me around explained how there are only three tribes left, the Duru', Haifi and Janaba (see Chapter three). According to the driver, 90% of the tribes have been given Emirati passports: 'they have no allegiance to Oman, they care more about money. Shaikh Zayed built them houses'.

¹³¹ Interview # 14. 5 October 2016, Muscat.

governorates by recruiting Omanis from various provinces. For a programme in Muscat, for example, BP has sought to incorporate those from further afield, such as al-Dhakhiliya or al-Dhahira. The focus on national unity and the development of infrastructure in the concession area has helped to reduce negative critiques of energy organisations.¹³²

To be welcomed into the social arena, it has become common practice among large corporations and firms to integrate the concept of ‘value core creation’ (VCC)—a term, according to large firms, implies integrity and commitment to excellence—into their social responsibility schemes.¹³³ Prior to the migration of the neoliberal terminology, ‘VCC’, most of BP’s CSR programmes relied on two bases: philanthropy and ‘social license to operate’. Given BP’s superior economic position, the first was used to aid those ‘less fortunate’.¹³⁴ ‘Social license to operate’, by contrast, was more metaphorical—that is, evoking the idea of community acceptance—indicating that ‘companies cannot operate sustainably without the support of society’. As Dev Sanyal, BP Executive Vice President and Group Chief of Staff, notes of social license: ‘That licence depends on trust. That is what makes people buy our products, apply for our vacancies, invest in our shares, or accept our presence in their communities’.¹³⁵ Therefore, the ‘social license to operate’ implies moral responsibility, whereby the Sultanates give BP a contract on the condition that it ensures social security and contentment among the Omanis. As Al-Huraibi explains, through social license, ‘instead of acting in just a charitable way’, a company enters into an ‘interdependent relationship’ in which ownership is shared between the company and its local implementing partner. The partnership is symbiotic; in giving up 100% control, the company must undertake a risk. To focus on VCC was therefore:

quite revolutionary for BP, and there was resistance within the company, because this meant that we are giving away the leadership of our programme to people outside. The details were established under the mandate of EBDA (Establish, Build, Design and Assess). We are in a relationship with our implementing partners. If you want the relationship to last, what do you do? You share the ownership.¹³⁶

BP acquired VCC, however, to secure its place within the social context. Through the partnership enabled by VCC, international BP consultants and staff embedded their ‘expertise’, transferable knowledge, and skills into the entrepreneur culture in Oman. This was all acceptable to the Omani government given the symbiotic relationship created through VCC. In this context, a commitment is informally expected

¹³² Field work to BP Khazzan site in Saih Rawl, the al-Dhahira region, on 17 May 2016.

¹³³ In the context of Spain, the integration of CSR into firm processes creates resources (assets) and capabilities (routines) that leads to VCC, which is common practice in large firms. Bryan Husted and David Allen. 2007. ‘Strategic Corporate Social Responsibility and Value Creation among Large Firms’. *Elsevier, Long Range Planning*.

¹³⁴ Interview # 45. 13 October 2016, Muscat.

¹³⁵ Dev Sanyal, Executive Vice President and Group Chief of Staff. ‘Obtaining a Social Licence to Operate—A Challenge for the Industry’ speech delivered on 22 November 2012, PETEX Conference, London.

¹³⁶ Interview # 45. 13 October 2016, Muscat.

from both sides (BP and the Omanis), and loyalty must be ensured from the local organisation. The local organisation is expected to carry out part of the responsibility initially mandated for BP, making it difficult to trace the by-product of the company's influence. To establish VCC and guarantee implementation, BP's '3Es' were formed: Education with Injaz Oman, Enterprise Development with Sharakah,¹³⁷ and Energy Sustainability with Sultan Qaboos University.¹³⁸

To further integrate itself into the country's formal institutions, BP necessitated the inclusion of all local stakeholders to act as an interlocutor with society.¹³⁹ BP also shared its 'wealth of knowledge', Al-Maamari explains, to fill the many 'gaps'¹⁴⁰ within the business eco-system of the Sultanate:

The result is upgrading the wellbeing of the country through existing organisations. [...] BP took a different direction and decided to start local. Then add them to the supplier network of BP global and maybe one of them can go global. This is very important when you think of multi-national corporations coming into the country and adding value.¹⁴¹

The passage can also be read as infiltration through the use of expertise, which enables BP to develop and nurture partnerships and aid local organisations towards 'global standards'. The so-called 'interdependent relationship' between the local and global organisations arises from global expertise. These experts, while outsourcing BP's mandate to the local partner, are still in effect the source 'adding value'.¹⁴² The transfer of expertise and knowledge can be conceived as a vertical line extending from the international oil company to the social arena, by which new structures, new rules, and new technologies, enter the social milieu.

Through the framework of SIPs, the energy industry enters Oman's social sphere, and, through the advancement of technology, justifies the involvement of international companies and experts as they transfer their knowledge to local organisations. This mode of operation does not appear to be going anywhere soon. Today, BP's Khazzan/Makarem concession is considered the most important project in the country, Al-Huraibi views the arrangement with optimism. 'The most important thing that we need is hope,' he says, 'and hope is unquantifiable'.¹⁴³ To have BP as a trusted partner, he explains, 'sends a message to investors around the world that Oman is

¹³⁷ Sharakah was established by Royal Decree to offer financial support and guidance to SME's, help build local entrepreneurial capability, advocate policies related to the SME sector and spread more awareness about entrepreneurship. See Royal Decree No. 76/98. 'Approve the Establishment of a Development Fund for Youth Projects (SAOC) and Benefits Granted to the Fund' issued on 8 November 1998.

¹³⁸ BP Oman, 'Empowering the Future: BP Oman's Social Investment Programme' issued on April 2014.

¹³⁹ Stakeholders were represented by Ministry of Education, Ministry of Higher Education, Ministry of Social Development, Ministry of Manpower, the public authorities, colleges, administrations, parents of students, government, walis and sheikhs.

¹⁴⁰ The 'gaps' include the lack of or inadequate skills, support and human capital, access to finance.

¹⁴¹ Interview # 14. 5 October 2016, Muscat (added emphasis).

¹⁴² *Al-qima al-mudhafa* (value-added) is a neoliberal term that was commonly used by my interviewees.

¹⁴³ Interview # 45. 13 October 2016, Muscat.

a place where it is willing to commit to an international company. This, in itself, attracts others to invest in Oman'.¹⁴⁴ From Al-Huraibi's perspective, through VCC, the Sultanate provides the energy company with hope and trust, guaranteeing a path towards development and, in doing so, extending its influence in the development process.

6.2.4 *PDO's Social Depth*

Like BP, PDO and Shell have also become embedded in the fabric of Omani life. PDO currently oversees more than 70% of the country's crude oil production and most of Oman's current natural gas supply.¹⁴⁵ Conducive to embedding foreign influence more deeply in Oman, its share breakdown is 60% government-owned, 34% Shell, 4% Total, and 2% Partex.¹⁴⁶ In discussing the unique association of Shell in Oman's history, and how does it differ from typical models, Chris Breeze, Country Chairman of Shell Oman, explains this curious relationship:

It's kind of a weird relationship between us; people in PDO are confused, people in the government are confused, so it is strange. Part of that is because of the real closeness in history. So much so, when people say Shell, they meant PDO, and vice-versa. But that all changed in the last fifteen years really. PDO is more like the national oil company now than it was twenty years ago, and that makes the relationship slightly different.¹⁴⁷

According to Breeze, PDO is considered a 'truly great company' because of Shell's involvement in it—an association made by many Orientalists when justifying intervention in other contexts.¹⁴⁸ 'If you compare Kuwait's oil company with Oman's PDO', he asserts, 'there is no comparison'.¹⁴⁹ PDO, he implies, has an advantage as a semi-national energy company because of its dependence on Shell. Another oil and gas specialist nuances Breeze's high praise of Shell noting that because of the transfer of technology, Shell managed to leverage its expertise to ensure PDO became something. These two opinions (from Breeze and the specialist) launch competition to the fore, where the specialist contends that, in some ways, 'PDO is even better than Shell because it manages to keep costs down'.¹⁵⁰

¹⁴⁴ Ibid.

¹⁴⁵ Petroleum Development of Oman (PDO). 2015. 'About PDO'. *PDO Website*, last accessed 30 March 2015: <http://www.pdo.co.om/Pages/AboutUs.aspx>.

¹⁴⁶ See Chap. 3 for a detailed history of PDO.

¹⁴⁷ Interview # 20 with Chris Breeze, Country Chairman at Shell Development Oman. 17 October 2016, Muscat.

¹⁴⁸ After the Dhofar rebellion, BP and Exxon dropped out, leaving behind Shell, Partex and Total. Only in 1976 did Qaboos obtain oil revenue to buy 60% of PDO.

¹⁴⁹ Interview # 20. 17 October 2016, Muscat.

¹⁵⁰ Interview # 21 with Oil and Gas Specialist for over twenty years in the industry. 6 January 2015, Muscat.

In this symbiotic scenario, Shell lies internally (within PDO) and externally (within Shell international) from the viewpoint of the Omani society. Shell's influence, attained via its role as an external expert in historical connectivity within PDO, exemplifies the complexity of distinguishing the roles of actors in energy domains. Its multi-level authority allows it to circumvent the division between state and corporation, a division which, Mitchell argues, is 'not a simple border between free-standing objects' but rather a 'complex distinction *internal* to the [...] realms of practice'.¹⁵¹

In addition to Shell, the influence of PDO has also been enhanced, such as when, on 12 May 2013, Qaboos visited its headquarters.¹⁵² A year later, as the company celebrated the one-year anniversary of Qaboos' visit, the vitality injected by the Sultan's visit was evident in its tangible effects. In partnership with PDO and other oil and gas industries, Oman's Ministry of Oil and Gas (MOG) launched an ICV Development Programme (PDO's new corporate vision).¹⁵³ This move, which followed from the Sultan's visit, was from PDO's Managing Director Restucci's perspective, 'about transforming Omani lives by creating sustainable employment opportunities, training programmes and commercial opportunities for citizens and enterprises in line with His Majesty's wishes.'¹⁵⁴

Reflecting further on the occasion, Mohammed Al-Ghareebi, ICV Development Manager, highlights the sense of pride derived from the Sultan's visit of PDO:

I think every PDO staff that day was six-inches taller. The pride that we think that we have of that visit is memorable. It will not be forgotten for history. It was a privilege and honour to have His Majesty's visit PDO. It was such a motivational factor that boosted us like adrenalin pushed into our blood to do more for Oman.¹⁵⁵

Al-Ghareebi explains that PDO took pride of place within the nation, as the only public visit of Qaboos post-Bouazizi. The Sultan expressed his satisfaction with the company's performance and achievements in a hand-written message that, following his visit, remained framed inside PDO's headquarters:

In the name of Allah, the most Compassionate, the most Merciful. On the occasion of our visit to this company which has and continues to play a major distinguished role in supporting the 'Omani' economy, we are pleased to express our appreciation to its entire staff for their tremendous efforts to overcome a number of challenges. This has helped several mega

¹⁵¹ Mitchell (1991), p. 90.

¹⁵² During the inspection visit, PDO briefed Qaboos on the projects that are expected to contribute to the Sultanate's future production of oil and gas.

¹⁵³ The aim was to develop human resources, increase local sourcing for goods and services, and encourage private-public-partnership (PPP), enhance the business environment and attract foreign direct investments. See Ministry of Oil and Gas. 2015. 'About-ICV', last accessed 25 May 2015: <http://www.incountryvalueoman.net/INCONV13/>.

¹⁵⁴ Oman Economic Review. 2014. 'Commemorating a Historic Visit'. *Oman Economic Review Online*, last accessed 18 October 2016: <http://oeronline.com/industries/commemorating-a-historic-visit.html>.

¹⁵⁵ Interview # 22 with Mohammed Al-Ghareebi, In-Country Value Development Manager in PDO. 13 October 2016, Muscat.

projects become feasible and contributed to the enrichment of the national economy. We ask Allah for success and goodwill for all.¹⁵⁶

At first glance, the quotation mark used for ‘Omani’ stands out. According to my reading, it indicates that Qaboos uses ‘Omani’ in a qualified sense, as if questioning whether there *is* anything that can properly be called the Omani economy. The implication may be that PDO contributes to the private sector, and in that sense, directly to individual lives, rather than to the state as a whole. In this respect, Qaboos is directly offering praise and appreciation to the energy company for contributing and developing the country. Indirectly, the Sultan praises Shell, as well.

It is evident that the roles of PDO (a local company) and Shell (a global company) have been blurred throughout history. In line with Country Chairman Breeze, a former Shell employee in fact attributes *all* PDO’s success to Shell. ‘No company,’ he says, ‘was there in the 50 s, except Shell. PDO played a duty as well as benefitted commercially.’¹⁵⁷ Here, PDO and Shell are also used synonymously by a Shell employee who began speaking about Shell and then shifted to PDO. The interconnectedness of the two companies prevents a clear distinction between the ‘internal’ and ‘external’, with the effect of, as Didier Bigo argues, creating ambiguity when observing the vortex of Oman’s oil complex.¹⁵⁸

Additionally, the personal relationship existing among the Sultan, Shell and PDO adds a layer of confusion. Robert Alston, former British Ambassador to Oman, attributes PDO’s economic primacy to the forty-five-year relationship Qaboos has enjoyed with the company. According to Alston, Qaboos’ visit to PDO:

seems to suggest that he still regards PDO as having a very crucial role in the picture. Even though you’ve got BP and other companies now working in other areas producing oil and gas, of those forty-five years, [PDO] was the only highly efficient multinational company functioning.¹⁵⁹

Alston bestows praise on Shell for being a training-oriented company, distinguishing it from BP. He claims that when the Sultanate was looking for Omani nationals who acquired leadership potential, those ‘nationals with high levels of training skills and experience came from PDO.’¹⁶⁰

Moreover, many of PDO’s employees, after working for a few years with the company, were appointed to high-ranking positions in the public sector,¹⁶¹ which in Alston’s opinion, underlined the company’s excellence in human resource development or, as this study argues, a circulation of ‘experts’. PDO is, therefore, distinguished through its involvement in economic functions, social interactions, and political processes. To document its role in developing Oman’s national economy,

¹⁵⁶ See Appendix E for an image of the original message in Arabic.

¹⁵⁷ Interview # 6. 25 January 2015, Muscat.

¹⁵⁸ Bigo. 2002, p. 77.

¹⁵⁹ Interview # 23 with Robert Alston, former British Ambassador to Iran and then Oman in 1986, and currently the Chairman of the Anglo-Omani Society. 17 March 2016, London.

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁶¹ Interview # 4. 19 February 2015, Muscat.

PDO published *The Excellence Academy* listing the leadership positions in which its employees were placed after leaving PDO.¹⁶² Restucci asserts that PDO's track record sets the company apart; it is known for 'fostering talented people who have then gone on to scale the heights in various sectors of Oman's social, economic and political life'.¹⁶³ The 'talented people' acquired knowledge and power through PDO's training-record, which, turning to Mitchell, was not generated from the entirety of society, 'but at the level of detail'.¹⁶⁴ This detail reflects how minute social processes produce power from within certain institutions.

The visit of Qaboos ultimately translated to the deep connection that the Sultanate shares with PDO. The company's position within the social fabric goes beyond economic benefit. As expressed by Al-Shanfari, PDO has 'an important and strategic partnership with Oman that can be traced historically. It has developed local capacity, acted as a spin-off for other sectors, its human resource is amazing, and it is a sustainable asset'.¹⁶⁵ Restucci agrees:

PDO is renowned and respected for *its value to people and excellence*. The key terms are people, value, and excellence. This is because *many people that came from PDO are leaders* and have become known professionals today. There is a lot of emphasis on people. [...] Value: license to operate, *a social license*. [...] adding value by delivering oil and gas and *making a difference in the society*. A simple example is *employment*.¹⁶⁶

In the words of the Managing Director, PDO's primary objective will be to preserve its renowned and respected status achieved by maintaining excellence for all Omanis and PDO's stakeholders. In line with its core values of honesty, integrity, and respect, the company seeks high-level performance to benefit its shareholders, employees, and society long-term.¹⁶⁷

PDO emphasises *making a difference in the society*, a role usually adopted by governments, but in this case, managed by Shell. Restucci's quote above implies that the company is not only confined to a historical relationship with Oman but has recently also spread its authority through cultural projects and CSR initiatives—all of which, of course, presuppose a 'social licence'¹⁶⁸ to operate and all that it entails, namely, acceptance by Omani society. Having made this observation, it is worth considering PDO's specific role in social development and employment.

¹⁶² The book includes a short biography of several ex-PDO staff that moved to work for the private and public sectors becoming ministers, state council members, undersecretaries, and chief executives.

¹⁶³ Petroleum Development of Oman. 2015. *The Excellence Academy*, p. 8.

¹⁶⁴ Mitchell (1991), p. 93.

¹⁶⁵ Interview # 5. 1 January 2015, Muscat.

¹⁶⁶ Interview # 4. 19 February 2015, Muscat (added emphasis).

¹⁶⁷ Ibid.

¹⁶⁸ A social license not only requires government permission to operate but it also requires social permission to conduct its operations. The usage of this new term in businesses and companies stems from the notion of CSR.

6.2.5 Energy and Social Concerns Post-Bouazizi

In recent years, participation of oil and gas companies in SME developments in their technical areas of operation increased. Following the 2011 protests, when demonstrators voiced their dissatisfaction for rising unemployment, PDO responded:

In September 2011, we created 1000 jobs. *The Arab Spring was due to a lot of unemployment.* This was not a challenge with neighbours as their indigenous population is quite small. In 2012, we created 1000 jobs for school leavers. Three years hence we have 7296 employees, a bulk of which are school leavers working as technicians, electricians—all secured employment. The way we operate is different; we do not mandate Omanisation. *We work to support employment with Oman's needs.*¹⁶⁹

In the wake of the post-Bouazizi protests, says Restucci, energy companies recognised the importance of adopting policies aimed to develop a skilled and productive workforce and safeguard a sense of social security. The companies were aware, however, that the mere pretence of security would not be enough to sustain the growing demands of Oman and its rising population. Many oil and gas companies, therefore, participated in reshaping the social and economic structures, targeting concrete results, and dramatically streamlining its methods. As Al-Ghareebi states: 'For decades PDO has been doing ICV programmes. In the past, it was kind of ad hoc and fragmented; while now, it is structured, has governance, and an organisation to follow it through'.¹⁷⁰ Such structuring was added largely by Shell International's foremost expert on ICV, Chris MacDonald, who, in September 2011, was seconded to PDO to transfer his knowledge to the company and the Omani government.¹⁷¹ As a result, PDO has created more than 5700 jobs and training opportunities, awarded contracts worth more than US\$3.1 to local NGOs, and spearheaded the oil and gas sector ICV¹⁷² strategic blueprint with the MOG.¹⁷³

The 2011 protests caused an increase in 'socially-responsible' initiatives and ways of doing business. Hand in hand with PDO, Shell too, stepped up its social programmes focusing on the '3E's and 'RS' for their programmes: Employment (and development), Enterprise (promoting SMEs, business assistance and Growth fund), Environmental schemes (to protect and maintain the environment) and Road Safety Programme (reducing accidents and providing awareness).¹⁷⁴ Among Shell's SIPs are Outward Bound Oman, which engages the youth in a series of challenging

¹⁶⁹ Interview # 4. 19 February 2015, Muscat (added emphasis).

¹⁷⁰ Interview # 22. 13 October 2016, Muscat.

¹⁷¹ Interview # 20. 17 October 2016, Muscat.

¹⁷² The ICV programme in PDO comprises of four main pillars: (1) Goods and services, all of which are made in Oman, (2) Omanisation and Training, (3) Local business development that includes SMEs and local community contractors, and (4) PDOs social investment programmes.

¹⁷³ Petroleum Development of Oman 'Annual Report 2013' issued 1 January 2014, pp. 26–27.

¹⁷⁴ Shell Development Oman 'Oman Social Investment Report for 2012' issued 1 January 2013, pp. 14–15.

outdoor adventures, and 'FutBol Net Oman, which aims to inculcate in Omani children between the ages of eight to sixteen years key behaviours such as responsibility, teamwork, selflessness, and respect other people on the side-lines. These PDO programmes assisted the Sultanate by providing employment and training opportunities.

In 2013, Shell launched its fifth 'Gift to the Nation'¹⁷⁵—'Intilaaqah Entrepreneurial Development Programme', which trains Omanis to establish SMEs, connect them with potential business opportunities, and provide them with access to strategic business partners. Built upon its predecessor, launched in 1995,¹⁷⁶ the programme centred on the core vision of Oman Vision 2020,¹⁷⁷ namely, to diversify and grow the private sector.¹⁷⁸

Noteworthy is the active administration of the not-for-profit organisation OPAL (Oman Society for Petroleum Services) that brings together all the energy companies to carry out SIPs in Oman. OPAL is the first registered society in Oman's petroleum industry since 2001 and falls under the governing regulations of societies of the Ministry of Social Development.¹⁷⁹ According to one of OPAL's Board members, especially since 2011, 'the organisation acts as a facilitator between the oil companies and the society'.¹⁸⁰ OPAL serves to link international energy companies with societal needs (i.e., civil society) by, for example, providing financial support to NGOs.

While PDO has been nurturing SMEs for decades, after the Sultan's 2013 directives its training efforts increased exponentially. Like BP, whose SIP budget increased from US\$ 50 thousand in 2009 to US\$ 10 million in 2014,¹⁸¹ between 2009 and 2014 PDO increased its grants for SMEs by allocating 10% of PDO contracts to them.¹⁸² These grants have been used by PDO, for example, for constructing infrastructure for water, transportation, water wells, and medical clinics; installing *majalises* (spaces for social gatherings); supporting traditional customs such as camel races; and building human capacity through women's tailoring and handcrafting programmes. PDOs' contribution in crafts, educational and awareness centres, and general support

¹⁷⁵ Every few years, Shell gives Oman grants, and calls them 'Gifts to the Nation'. The gifts were the 'Intilaaqah programme' (1995), 'Shell Chair in Petroleum Geosciences' (2000), the 'Intilaaqah Investment Fund' (2005) allocating US\$10million, and later adding US\$7 million (2010), and finally the Road Safety (2010), where it allocated US\$3 million to establish and support the Oman Road Safety Association.

¹⁷⁶ This is an adaptation of Shell's 'Live WIRE' global programme (launched in 1982) that aimed to encourage young people to establish their own businesses.

¹⁷⁷ Ministry of National Economy. 1996. 'Long-term Development Strategy (1996–2020). Vision for Oman's Economy—2020' published by the Sultanate of Oman.

¹⁷⁸ Interview # 20. 17 October 2016, Muscat.

¹⁷⁹ Oman Society for Petroleum Services (OPAL) (2001).

¹⁸⁰ Interview # 24 with Anonymous Board of Director in Oman Society for Petroleum Services. 19 October 2016, Muscat.

¹⁸¹ Interview # 45. 13 October 2016, Muscat.

¹⁸² Prior to 2013, PDO also allocated 10% of its contracts to Local Community Contractors (LCC), many of which were SMEs. However, the contracts were limited to PDOs concession areas. Currently, PDO maintain 10% for both LLC (within concession area) and 10% for SMEs (everyone in Oman). Interview # 22. 13 October 2016, Muscat.

for the local community, is notable throughout Oman's history; for example, its role in training three-hundred Omani women jobseekers to work in the Omani clothing industry.¹⁸³ The increase of socially oriented grants has not only revived traditional culture in a variety of ways but it has also formed 'new' kinds of Omanis. As part of PDO's CSR strategy, efforts are made to teach Omanis to be innovative, independent, business- and entrepreneurially minded.

Additionally, to celebrate Oman's National Day, PDO, like Shell, prides itself on providing 'Gifts to the Nation' every five years.¹⁸⁴ What distinguishes PDO's influence from the other energy companies in the country, however, is its flagship training programme, the National Objective Programme. In 2011, PDO initiated the programme in coordination with the Ministry of Manpower to train young Omanis in the oil and gas sector.¹⁸⁵ In 2017, the company is expanding its programmes beyond the hydrocarbon sector, recently signing a Memorandum of Understanding with Oman Air, Salalah Fashion Apparels, and Automotive Training Institute, creating fifty-thousand jobs, which was implemented immediately after the signing ceremony. The instant launch of this endeavour, says Al-Ghareebi, proves that 'what we have successfully done in the oil and gas sector, is also applicable and actually doable in others'.¹⁸⁶ The undertakings of PDO demonstrate the dynamic and complex relationship the Omani state has with its resources, experts, and mechanisms, as it carries out social initiatives with the support of an 'internationally renowned board'.¹⁸⁷

When comparing PDO to BP, Al-Huraibi asserts that PDO is a source in Oman that 'never vanishes'.¹⁸⁸ Through its all-encompassing reach, he implies, it provides the best training for Omanis and serves as a dependable institution that the government can rely on.¹⁸⁹ At this point, the *materiality* of the energy industry (in terms of labour) has shaped the limits and possibilities for the 'arrangements of people, finance, expertise [... that] were assembled in relationship to the distribution and control of energy'.¹⁹⁰ While this point has been acknowledged by certain scholars, perhaps less recognised are the ways in which companies like PDO and BP assume traditional roles of the state.

In this context, however, the drive towards neoliberal practices entails new forms of governance beyond privatisation. The state, corporations and energy companies are working simultaneously to reshape the social and economic fabric of Oman.

¹⁸³ Interview # 22... Ibid.

¹⁸⁴ PDO's gifts to Oman are: 'Public Knowledge Library' (1990); 'Oil and Gas Exhibition Centre' (1995); Oman's first-ever 'Planetarium' to teach people about astronomy (2000); 'Traffic Safety Institute' (2005); 'EcOman Centre' (2010); and Oman's first 'Aquarium' with a 'Marine Fish Aquarium and Educational Centre' (2015). For more details refer to: Petroleum Development of Oman (PDO). 2015. 'PDO Attractions'. *PDO Website*, last accessed 20 October 2016: <http://www.pdo.co.om/Pages/PDOAttractions.aspx>.

¹⁸⁵ Interview # 24 with Anonymous Senior employee working in PDO. 24 December 2014, Muscat.

¹⁸⁶ Interview # 22. 13 October 2016, Muscat.

¹⁸⁷ Interview # 24. 24 December 2014, Muscat.

¹⁸⁸ Interview # 14. 5 October 2016, Muscat.

¹⁸⁹ Ibid.

¹⁹⁰ Mitchell (2011).

However, the tensions between the *materiality* of energy, particularly in relation to the capacities of industry for job creation, and its attempts to reshape social and cultural life in Oman have remained unheeded.

Conclusion

The discourses and practices emerging post-Bouazizi show a gap between the claims for job creation through the energy industry and the social development initiatives in Oman. By using the concept of *materiality*, this chapter showed how questions of labour as well as depth and difficulty of extraction are connected to the material qualities of the energy industry. It further argued that the connection of energy to social development was made possible by the historical links of PDO to the Sultanate's formation, along with the transfer of technology and know-how that came through BP. After the 2011 protests, the wide spread of SIPs, ranging from the concession areas of al-Dhahira and al-Dhakhiliya, all the way to Muscat, indicates the expanding role of energy companies' indivisible relationship with the state.

Additionally, the chapter demonstrated how energy practices and discourses in the post-Bouazizi era created a complex web of interactions entangling energy within economic, political, and social issues. The rise of social investment projects points to the securitising role of actors—in this case, Qaboos and his directives, followed by BP, PDO and Shell—who, in their efforts to attain security, produce cultural projects, SIPs and 'Gifts to the Nation'. These SIPs, which constitute a new arena for cultural reproduction and distinction, have, to a degree, integrated energy companies within the state. While many were piloted elsewhere, they were brought to Oman and placed in an effective structure post-Bouazizi, thus blurring the boundaries of the internal and the external during the process of social re-production.

Interestingly, at the centre of these new socio-economic constructs are the state-funded SIPs—such as Riyada, Sharakah, Al-Rafd—created to direct the country towards creativity, transformation, and entrepreneurship, and away from the state itself. Much of the effort to train Omanis towards an entrepreneurial mind-set has been taken up jointly by energy industries and state agencies working symbiotically. By the year 2014, energy companies such as BP also assisted in funding social projects through their CSR mandates, while outsourcing its design and management to local organisations. The role they played throughout Oman's history, especially post-Bouazizi, has become apparent in the establishment of libraries, awareness institutes for road safety and the environment. As evident in the extent of these initiatives, achieved through the reach of BP and PDO, and by virtue of their aligned interests with Oman Vision 2020, neoliberal practices have effectively taken root in the country and prompted shifts in social patterns.

The unique position enjoyed by PDO, Shell and BP in the Sultanate reveals that, in modern-day Oman, the energy industry—through networks of actors, discourses and practices—stands as the core in fostering new patterns of political, social, and economic thought and practice. Prior to the 2011 protests, PDO and Shell shared a symbiotic relationship that allowed them to assert their influence in several state projects; when BP joined the dynamic, following its 2014 concession agreement,

it too was deeply and swiftly integrated in the interior districts of the country. The company set out to challenge existing patterns of state cultural production in cities like Ibri and Nizwa, where entrepreneurship was perceived as a new concept for students who did not live in the capital city of Muscat. By establishing collaboration at levels local and regional, regional, and global, these energy companies—PDO, Shell and BP—changed the social organisation of the country, while prioritising local ownership and agency of mechanisms for sustainability. The multi-layered roles of actors, experts, the international, the state, and society contribute to the complexity of ‘energy security’. Oman’s oil history—a history threaded by interference, conflict, and unrest—comprises the textured background within which conceptions of energy emerged in relation to multivariant discourses and practices. Perhaps the most concise, accurate, and consistent assessment of ‘energy security’ in Oman is one that understands it in relation to the *securitisation* of the social, economic, and political spheres.

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Chapter 7

Climate Change and Financial Stability, 2015 to 2020



‘Our addiction to fossil fuels is pushing humanity to the brink. We face a stark choice: Either we stop it—or it stops us. It’s time to say: enough’
~UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres, COP26, Glasgow, 2 Nov 2021

Introduction

As we move towards 2020, particularly after the 2015 Paris Agreement on climate change, many of the energy-producing countries have been pressured to decarbonise their existing energy systems and reduce their reliance on hydrocarbons. The global climate change debates and discussions have brought new considerations and priorities to the centre of discourses on ‘energy security’ in Oman. To demonstrate how such climate change debates have influenced Oman’s approach to energy security in the post-Bouazizi era,¹ this chapter draws on the work of Didier Bigo, particularly his concept of the *security continuum*, which merges internal and external security issues and actors, to illustrate how global energy discourses circumscribe Oman’s local agenda for development. Global discourses and practices heightened awareness of the threats of climate change and pushed the Sultanate to explore new financial and economic avenues while also reinforcing existing agendas for investment promotion, leading to what has now been called the new renaissance of Oman. Moreover, through Bigo, this chapter will demonstrate how the political agenda has been tied to financial security and are being operationalised as a securitised matter in the Sultanate.

Moving chronologically through a reading of Oman Vision 2040, the Sultanate’s long-term vision for the years 2020–2040, the first section will attempt to determine the degree to which the Sultanate has successfully achieved its objectives, particularly with respect to implementing fiscal balancing, including the way the Tenth Five-Year

¹ This era refers to the events that took place post-Bouazizi and the terminology for post-Bouazizi is explained further in Chap. 1 as well as the previous chapter.

Development Plan has been envisioned. The second section will in turn focus on how, since 2018, understandings of ‘energy security’ have been impacted both by the drop in oil prices and by the global agenda of climate change, before summarising the steps taken by the Sultanate to address it. Finally, the second section of the chapter will consider how the rise of environmental concerns has created new concepts of ‘energy security’ that reach beyond the views presented in the previous chapters.

7.1 Oman’s New Renaissance

By tracing energy-related discourses and practices of the accounts that took place after the decline in oil prices in 2015, this section will attend particularly to the context prior to and following Sultan Haitham’s succession. An analysis of Oman Vision 2040 and the Tenth Five-Year Development Plan follows this. I finally cover the government’s restructuring efforts in the year 2000.

7.1.1 *Economic ‘Bleeding’*

As discussed in the previous chapter, Oman continued to rely on hydrocarbon revenues for development post-Bouazizi. Under the leadership of Sultan Qaboos, the country dedicated its efforts to providing the infrastructure and human capital investments needed to drive growth and maintain stability during a decade of high oil prices. Since 2014, however, a surplus of oil supply has lowered oil prices and, as a consequence, weighed financially on the country’s budget. In addition, given the fluctuations in oil price, there was a global challenge in terms of market stability while the Sultanate, according to Hamed Al Nuamaani, Oman LNG CEO, was ‘gradually moving along the peaks and troughs. This was along with a number of energy policies in certain parts of the world that amplified the market volatility’.² This amplification was seen in Europe, for example, where decisions to decommission a number of power plants counter-balanced the market.

Given that this was not the first time the Sultanate had traversed a period of plummeting oil prices, most in Oman were only mildly concerned. According to a senior official in Tawazun, ‘There was an expectation that this was a short-term thing’, and as a balancing act, ‘Oman’s immediate plan for the next two years was to take out loans and rely on revenues from the sovereign wealth fund to support the government financially’.³ In 2016, the government operated under the assumption that ‘the economy would stabilise; however, they slowly realised that oil prices would remain low’.⁴ The Sultanate adopted certain measures in an effort to balance its fiscal debt; lifting fuel subsidies, increasing cost-reflective tariffs for large consumers, and

² Interview # 30 with Hamed Al Nuamaani, Oman LNG CEO. 18 December 2021, Muscat.

³ Interview # 31 with Senior Official, working in Tawazun (the medium fiscal plan of Oman). 4 January 2022, Muscat.

⁴ Interview # 31 with Senior Official. 4 January 2022, Muscat.

increasing corporate income tax from twelve to fifteen percent. While these moves were aimed to help sustain the country fiscally, the senior official conceded that

they were not enough. The things they did, helped; but they needed something drastic to boost fifty percent of the revenues. The negative impact was also seen in the private sector. The largest customer in Oman is the government, so when the largest customer is not paying its contractors, the economy overall goes down—which *kills the economy*. They didn't realise that and kept delaying payment. When the economy goes down and tax revenue goes down, unemployment issues begin to arise. It became a high-risk issue in the country.⁵

The downward trend continued until Oman reached a debt to GDP ratio of fifty percent, and then, despite the alert programmatically issued by the Financial Affairs and Energy Resource Council (FAERC) upon reaching that ceiling, it continued to climb to sixty percent. By the end of 2019, the state budget faced a cumulative deficit of 20 billion OR (~51.4 billion USD).⁶ The financial issues plaguing economic stability, interlinked with rising energy issues and a drop in oil prices, amounted to a complex security threat, broadly construed.

Faced with the dire projections, FAERC commissioned several recommendations for how to diversify the economy. The resulting plans, however, as stated by an economic expert, were never followed,

and the political situation for five years was still grim: no decision was made; there was fear that any decision would hurt the society and have socio-economic impacts and given our reliance on an oil-based economy it required a whole transformation so as to not collapse. Therefore, the recommendations never got approved at the top level to sustain the socio-economic balance.⁷

The lack of decision-making is exemplified in the words of a long-standing former minister. He stated that 'the government previously was more forceful in pushing for changes and restructuring', and 'maybe the increase of oil price made us complacent. Now every day we are losing \$55 million'.⁸ In response to the financial losses, the Sultanate initiated the Tawazun programme in September 2019 to maintain a healthy fiscal balance for the country.

The Tawazun programme aimed to support the country's business environment as well as stimulate foreign investments. The main objectives of the programme were the stabilisation of the debt. The unprecedented sense of urgency is captured by a senior official working in Tawazun:

The government was required to stop the bleeding and stop taking incurring further debt. This was the only way to maintain a sustainable and manageable deficit level. In 2020, when Covid-19 hit and the oil prices crashed again, our debt to GDP reached eighty percent, which made a lot of entities in the world not to invest in Oman given the risk of our country's inability to service its debt. This meant that our economy is in danger and, consequently, the

⁵ Interview # 31 with Senior Official. 4 January 2022, Muscat (added emphasis).

⁶ Ministry of Finance (2020), p. 10.

⁷ Interview # 32 with Economic Expert, with over 15 years' experience in Oman. 7 January 2022, Muscat.

⁸ Interview # 33 with Former Minister, who worked on development plans for Oman. 1 February 2015, Muscat.

society is also in danger. We needed emergency actions as the debt was going up and we needed to stop the bleeding and get the debt to GDP trend go down.⁹

The call for ‘emergency actions’ created a situation in which the government could impose measures to ensure socio-economic prosperity and ‘stop the bleeding’. With this given authority, the senior official in Tawazun stated that the government ‘was in an emergency state fiscally; and, therefore, the country’s financial policy outweighed calls from the society just to remove us from the state of emergency’.¹⁰

With this added context, the following subsection delves into the structural changes that took place starting with Oman Vision 2040, the new transformational programme of the Sultanate to diversify the economy away from oil-based growth.

7.1.2 Oman Vision 2040

Prior to the inauguration of Oman Vision 2040, the Late Sultan Qaboos bin Said gave royal directives to ensure that in preparation for finalising Oman Vision 2040, the government needed to adopt an inclusive approach to enhance social dialogue around themes critical for the country. Following the Sultan’s orders, Oman Vision 2040 began with fourteen working groups (advisory committees) and steering committees (populated by the heads of the Vision’s main committees) and a central team comprised of about thirty researchers, male and female, drawn from the government, Shura council, and private sectors, and who included citizen, experts, students, and specialists. To ensure that all relevant voices were considered, in the spirit of Sultan Qaboos’s directive that ‘the participation of all segments of society’ was essential, youth, women, practitioners, and officials all participated in the discussions.¹¹

Oman’s new Vision laid the foundations for an empowered knowledge-based society whose members were creative, proud of their identity and culture, and were committed to their civic duties and values of living in dignity and sustained well-being. On this basis, the Vision outlined its national priorities to promote Oman’s position in the different fields over the next two decades.¹² Likewise, the Vision outlined the country’s strategic directions, goals, and key policies aimed to translate ambition into action by identifying clear benchmarks and timelines involving both local and international criteria for measurement and evaluation. The resulting plan laid out four main axes ramifying fourteen national priorities (see Table 7.1 for details), eighty-eight strategic goals, and sixty eight performance indicators.¹³ For each national priority, the country’s strategy explicitly addressed the direct and

⁹ Interview # 31 with Senior Official, 4 January 2022, Muscat.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ministry of Economy (2020a), p. 7.

¹² The fields are covered in the next paragraph.

¹³ Ministry of Economy (2020a), pp. 17–19.

Table 7.1 Oman's national priorities

4 Key themes	14 National priorities
A society of creative individuals	1. Education, learning, scientific research, and national capabilities 2. Health 3. Citizenship, identity, national culture, and heritage 4. Well-being and social protection 5. Development of youth sector
A competitive economy	6. Leadership and economic management 7. Economic diversification and fiscal sustainability 8. Labour market and employment 9. The private sector, investment, and international cooperation 10. Development of governorates and sustainable cities 11. ICT
An environment with sustainable components	12. Environment and natural resources
Responsible state agencies	13. Legislative, judicial, and oversight system 14. Governance of State's Administrative bodies, resources, and projects

indirect correlation of each national objective to the UN sustainable development goals (SDGs).¹⁴

With these national priorities, the drafters of Oman Vision 2040 brought in more neoliberally minded people into the country to advise in the short term about the national economic plan. Moreover, key sectors were identified for the Ninth FYDP in order for Oman to diversify its economy away from the hydrocarbon sector. Table 7.2 shows the targets established by the plan and the values actually achieved during the period 2016–2020.

Prioritisation of the sectors named above continued into the Tenth FYDP, spanning the years 2021–2025. This plan, too, aimed to focus on specific sectors that

Table 7.2 Achievement of diversification targets during the 9th FYDP (2016–2020) period (% of GDP)¹⁵

Sector	Targeted by end of the plan (%)	Actual—realised up to 2019 (%)
Mining	0.5	0.43
Manufacturing	10	10.8
Fisheries	0.6	1.3
Logistics	6.8	6.4
Tourism	3.3	2.5

¹⁴ Appendix G shows the national priorities and the corresponding strategy directions.

¹⁵ Ministry of Economy (2020b), p. 10.

would support and supplement the main sectors. The plan contributed to achieving sustainable development, raising efficiency in the use of available resources, reducing production costs, and preserving environmental and natural resources. To highlight the disorganised approach with implementation, according to an Omani economic expert, the Tenth FYDP was, however:

not based on any economic fundamentals; we say we want growth, but the 10th FYDP does not stipulate how we are going to achieve this growth. We want a certain percentage of FDI; however, we have not studied whether this FDI will indeed achieve economic growth. We have no idea—there is a disconnection. We ticked all the boxes and areas—however there is no modelling, in-depth analysis, critical thinking to connect the dots.¹⁶

The Tenth FYDP sought to enhance engagement and cooperation with experienced people and thought leaders, set up committees and workshops, and promote work in teams to achieve the objectives enumerated. Expert knowledge was essential in producing certain discourses; in the opinion of one national economist, the practices were superficial and unable to capture the essence of what the society wants.¹⁷ Moreover, the economist continued, the workshops were managed as if ‘only great for public relations and the plans were just compiled in a booklet with no numbers or deep analysis. It did not create actual monetary value or savings or revenues. It was not effective’.¹⁸ The incoherence in implementing strategic plans, as demonstrated, became the norm in the country.

According to a former minister, the plan aimed to achieve sustainable growth centred on ‘more than three hundred programs that are currently not a priority for the country, and every initiative requires investment’. The minister wondered: ‘Where are we going to get this? We need to be more efficient to achieve Vision 2040’.¹⁹ The lack of optimism in achieving Oman’s long-term vision thus created a more general environment of ambivalence and uncertainty.

In the final pages of the Tenth FYDP, the government called for the redefinition of ‘developmental roles internally and for gearing up towards a well-planned openness towards the world’, in order to face the challenges at hand and ‘take advantage of ensuing opportunities’.²⁰ The latter call by the government demonstrated how the perpetual discourses on ‘energy security’ of the twentieth century and its attachment to traditional elements of state security is sustained to this day. A very peculiar event, however, in early January 2020 pushed the socio-political climate in the country into a new era.

¹⁶ Interview # 32 with Economic Expert. 7 January 2022, Muscat.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Interview # 33 with Former Minister. 1 February 2015, Muscat.

²⁰ Ministry of Economy (2020b), p. 66.

7.1.3 *Perhaps a New Course for Oman*

On the morning of 11 January 2020, The Diwan of the Royal Court issued the following obituary:

To the people of the beloved homeland in all its districts, to the Arab and Islamic nations and to the world at large. It is with hearts filled with faith in Allah and his Providence, and with great sorrow and deep sadness—yet with complete satisfaction and absolute submission to the will of Almighty Allah, that the Diwan of the Royal Court mourns His Majesty Sultan Qaboos Bin Said, who passed away on Friday, the 14th of Jumada Al-Ula, the 10th of January 2020.²¹

With the passing of Sultan Qaboos, the longest serving leader in the Arab Gulf, the government declared a three-day mourning period for the people of Oman, and condolences poured in from all over the world paying tribute to the Sultan for his role in promoting peace among nations. On the same day, Haitham bin Tarik,²² a cousin of Qaboos, was named as his successor in a smooth transition of power. While the succession was seamless, the transition from one Sultan to the next was beset by regional tension, as Oman remained occupied within a fractured Gulf Cooperation Council, complicated by its own fiscal and economic challenges, and the rise of the Covid-19 pandemic.

In 2020, the IMF forecasted that Oman would experience its worst recession in over two decades as a result of the expectation that the oil prices would remain low over the coming years and that the pandemic would prolong the recession.²³ This more challenging environment forced Oman to adapt its long-term economic strategy to avoid a resurgence of the large-scale protests that occurred in 2011 and, to a lesser extent, in 2018. After decades of government-led economic diversification initiatives, the oil and gas sector still accounted for more than seventy percent of government revenue. To this end, the new Sultan would have to balance the country's domestic and regional politics with its economic policy (i.e. efficient spending, quality investments, and high-impact reforms).

In an effort to create this much-needed economic and financial balance, Sultan Haitham laid out a balanced framework for Oman's governance and development in the coming decades. In his speech on the 20 February 2020, stated that his strategy for Oman would focus on the youth of the nation, who represented its present force and future possibilities. He stressed the importance of entrepreneurship, underscoring initiatives by small and medium enterprises (SMEs) and start-ups addressing, among other priorities, innovation, artificial intelligence, and other advanced technologies. He called for training the youth and employing them in these sectors, in order to build

²¹ Official statement from the Diwan of Royal Court, 11 January 2020, Muscat.

²² Haitham bin Tarik held many significant positions prior to becoming Sultan. This included his role as secretary general of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, minister of Heritage and Culture for nearly two decades, as well as chairman of the Oman 2040 Future Vision Main Committee.

²³ Castlereagh Associates (2020).

the core components of a smart economy system as well as build a knowledge-based economy.²⁴

The lingering sense of urgency inherited by Sultan Haitham is captured by the economic expert's description of the climate at the time: 'While the Sultan was moving in the right direction, he inherited a bleeding economy that required social capital to make any changes'.²⁵ The economist went on to attribute blame to the lack of an educated population, resulting in the lack of enough 'understanding to support the necessary changes and moves'.²⁶ 'What is not helping him', continued the expert, referring to the new Sultan, 'is the weakness of the government he inherited; in terms of human capital, processes, and procedures, it requires a lot of support'.²⁷ Ultimately, a healthy economy can only stop the 'bleeding' if society stands behind the Sultan and follows due process. To address these problems, the government outlined a host of structural changes, as will be detailed in the next sub-section.

7.1.4 Restructuring Through Articulation

Facing the problems of the sinking economy, the Covid-19 pandemic, and the increased uncertainty of the country's future, Sultan Haitham gradually began restructuring the administrative apparatus. The changes were intended to render the government more effective, professional, and streamlined while maintaining flexibility and accommodating innovation. For the first time in five decades, on the 18 August 2020, a major government reorganisation occurred as the Sultan issued twenty-eight royal decrees, announcing the removal of several governmental councils, the merging of certain ministries, and the removal of many authorities in a further effort at decentralisation.²⁸ Through this restructuring came the redistribution of control and power, the demarcation of governance roles, and a structural reformation which was 'a much needed shake-up in government as decisions had been stalled for a few years'.²⁹ Moreover, and most significantly, the royal decrees translated the goals of Oman Vision 2040 into concrete actions for ministerial and government personnel to implement.

The restructuring expanded to various governorates in the Sultanate. Previously, each governorate had a separate authority: Muscat Municipality, alongside Dhofar and Musandam Governorates, had all fallen under the authority of the Diwan, whereas the Ministry of Regional Municipalities and Water Resources had governed the

²⁴ Ministry of Economy (2020a), p. 20.

²⁵ Interview # 32 with Economic Expert. 7 January 2022, Muscat.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ See Appendix H for the list of new cabinet members and the ministerial changes.

²⁹ Interview # 31 with Senior Official. 4 January 2022, Muscat.

other municipalities.³⁰ The requirement to empower all governorates by giving them accountability over their jurisdiction was identified as part of the implementation of Oman Vision 2040 to ensure the effective and efficient management of the public sector as well as to achieve a fair distribution of development gains among the governorates.³¹

As part of the restructuring process, the royal decrees called for the merging of the Ministry of Manpower, the Ministry of Civil Service, the Civil Service Council, the National Training Fund, and the National Centre for Employment, into the new Ministry of Labour (MoL). The goal of the MoL was to propose policies and plans related to employment in the private and public sectors. The development and strengthening of labour market policies by government policymakers was a central to Oman Vision 2040, as noted above. One of the fourteen national priorities laid down in the Vision (enumerated in Table 7.1) involved the creation of a dynamic labour market that would attract talent and respond to demographic, economic, knowledge-based, and technical changes. To attain the Sultanate's labour-market targets, the Vision outlined four key mechanisms³²:

- (1) laws and legislation to regulate the labour market following professional standards and stimulate a responsive work environment,
- (2) a system of employment qualification assessment, promotion and incentives that embraces efficiency and productivity, and rewards initiative and innovation,
- (3) a labour market that attracts talent and skilled labour through clear and standardised recruitment policies, and
- (4) a labour market with a skilled and productive workforce and positive work culture.

To achieve the objectives of Oman Vision 2040, a holistic governing structure between the educational system and the labour market systems was deemed critical by Omani economic planners. The change in structure actively facilitated the regulation of the flow of international talents and the migration of neoliberal thoughts within the *security continuum*.

While the restructuring has eased the implementation process, reservations lingered. Khalid Al-Huraibi, CEO of the start-up company Impact Integrated, asked: 'At some point, what is our role as citizens? We have five more taxes to pay as a citizen than we did in 2019'.³³ With the government's introduction of value added tax, Al-Huraibi scrutinises the governance system and questions whether: 'this is the price we citizens are paying for this peak in decision-making. Moreover, if I am not

³⁰ Royal Decree No. 101/2020. 'Promulgating the Governorates and Municipal Affairs System' issued on 18 August 2020.

³¹ Ministry of Economy (2020a), pp. 8–9.

³² Ministry of Economy (2020a), p. 32.

³³ Interview # 34 with Khalid Al-Huraibi, CEO of Impact Integrated. 13 January 2022, Muscat.

picked by the Sultan to represent the government, will I have a voice in the government's decisions, which I now find unclear?'³⁴ He went on to say that understanding one's governance system is essential for risk mitigation.

While many efforts were made to realise Oman Vision 2020, the labour market continued to be an area where the least progress was made, weighing down on the country's budget with an increasingly unsustainable burden on public finances due to growth of the public sector in recent years. This fact has been observed by Nick Pattison, former employee of Shell Oman, who contends that there is a direct link between the Sultanate's energy challenges and the 'employment challenge' for Omanis which could be addressed if the government 'reforms the construction industry as eighty-five percent of the employees are from South Asia, and ten percent of Oman's GDP is remitted'³⁵ Based on the Economist Intelligence Unit analysis of the situation, Omanis comprise about eighty five percent of the total civilian public-sector workforce, even if they account for only fifteen percent of the total labour force.³⁶ To tackle the low representation of Omanis in the labour force, in April 2021, the finance ministry gave public sector companies until July 2021 to draw up timetables to replace foreign staff with Omanis.³⁷

Increasing the proportion of Omanis working in the private sector amounted to a core plank of Oman Vision 2040. The plan created, for the first time in history, was an explicit direction for reducing the strong dependence of the private sector on non-Omani workers and for increasing Omani workers in the private sector to forty two percent by 2040. According to the Economist, however, it was indicated that despite a strong commitment to Omanisation, the Sultanate was likely to remain heavily dependent on non-Omani labourers even after the plan.³⁸ The country's dependent on oil is nuanced by an oil and gas specialist, who noted, 'There is wage pressure in Oman. Unless Omanis work for less, they will not be competitive. In the oil field services you have to employ two Omanis for one South Asian because Omanis are entitled to two weeks on and two weeks off'.³⁹ He continued to explain how the Sultanate's 'Omanisation laws are effectively making them uncompetitive' and may make foreign investments in Oman less attractive.⁴⁰ The economic recession due to the drop in oil prices and the Covid-19 pandemic only worsened this effect.

One of the greatest challenges for Oman was to provide job opportunities for more than thirty- to fifty thousand young Omanis who will be entering the job market every year during the implementation of the 2040 Vision.⁴¹ As the public sector was

³⁴ Interview # 34 with Khalid Al-Huraibi. 13 January 2022, Muscat.

³⁵ Interview # 6 with Nick Pattison, former employee in Shell Oman (joined in 1998) and consultant for over thirty-five years in oil sector. 25 January 2015, Muscat.

³⁶ The Economist Intelligence Unit (2019).

³⁷ Castlereaugh Associates (2020).

³⁸ The Economist Intelligence Unit (2019).

³⁹ Interview # 21 with Oil and Gas Specialist, for over twenty years in the industry. 6 January 2015, Muscat.

⁴⁰ Interview # 21 with Oil and Gas Specialist. 6 January 2015, Muscat.

⁴¹ The Economist Intelligence Unit (2019).

unlikely to provide sufficient employment opportunities for the workforce inflow, and because there was a clear direction to reduce the wage bill,⁴² the government was relying on the capacity of the private sector to absorb the labour supply of the youth. This path was, of course, not without obstacles. In Oman, the majority of the workforce preferred jobs in the public sector. This bias, Ahmed Al Jahdhami, former CEO of Oman Power and Water Procurement, explained, stemmed from the government's 'knee-jerk reaction' in the post-Bouazizi period, which then created 'policies with no economic evaluations'.⁴³ For example, he explained, the government 'created fifty thousand jobs in the public sector, then thirty thousand Omanis dropped their work in the private sector, and the country ended up with eighty thousand employees in the public sector, thus increasing the government wage bill'.⁴⁴ The regulation and legislation of job conditions in the private sector played a crucial role in reverting this attitude and enhancing the interest of youth to work in the private sector.⁴⁵ This, as a consequence, increased the fiscal burden of Oman in 2020 and tied 'energy security' to expanding social and financial issues.

To alleviate the financial concerns and long-term economic impacts that pose a threat to the future generation, the government strengthened its social protection policy.⁴⁶ Social protection was core to the Sultanate's response to Covid-19 as fifty eight percent of respondents to the National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI) survey who were affected economically by the pandemic expected the government to step in with social protection measures.⁴⁷ As a part of Sultan Haitham's broader reform programme, the social protection system, too, came under scrutiny. First, a value-added tax was introduced; in April 2021, the Sultan established a Social Protection Fund and a Pension Fund for Military and Security Units⁴⁸; shortly thereafter, he accelerated the establishment of a social security system for low-income families affected by the government's drive to reduce debt and cut spending.⁴⁹

To mitigate the negative effects of the economic slowdown while diversifying the Omani economy away from oil, Haitham bin Tarik approved, in March 2021, a new

⁴² Interview # 31 with Senior Official. 4 January 2022, Muscat.

⁴³ Interview # 22 with Ahmed Saleh Al-Jahdhami, Chairman for Oman Power and Water Procurement. 22 January 2015, Muscat.

⁴⁴ Interview # 22 with Ahmed Saleh Al-Jahdhami. 22 January 2015, Muscat.

⁴⁵ Al-Bahrani (2020).

⁴⁶ Social protection in this context covers the range of policies and programmes needed to reduce the lifelong consequences of poverty and exclusion.

⁴⁷ National Centre for Statistics and information. Oman Covid-19 Opinion Poll. Survey realised in May 2020.

⁴⁸ Royal Decree # 33/2021. 'Regarding the Systems for Retirement and Social Security' issued on 7 April 2021.

⁴⁹ In 2020, Oman instituted its first unemployment insurance scheme. The scheme provided temporary financial support to insured Omani contributors who lost their employment involuntarily and who seek to become reemployed. Unemployed Omanis qualifying for this insurance were entitled to receive benefits upon the first claim. Benefits would be received monthly for six months. To benefit from the unemployment insurance, people had to demonstrate that they had been affiliated with the scheme for 12 consecutive months—or 12 non-consecutive months over 36 months—before unemployment. For more information look into: International Labour Organisation (2020).

Table 7.3 Economic stimulus package measures

Measure	Description
Exemption from income tax for new companies	A 5-year income tax exemption for companies that begin operating during the period Jan 2021 to Dec 2022, in sectors aimed at economic diversification (mainly tourism and hydrocarbon industries)
Exemption from income tax for hotel establishments	Exemption from income tax due for tax years 2020 and 2021 for hotel establishments
Suspension of withholding tax	A 5-year suspension of withholding tax on dividend payments by joint-stock companies and funds (for the tax year 2020 to 2024)
Reduction in income tax rates for small and medium enterprises	The income tax rate for small and medium enterprises reduced from 15 to 12% for tax years 2020 and 2021
Eased license to engage in business	Businesses/investors can start economic activities upon obtaining a 'preliminary license' to engage in business without waiting for the final license
Reduction in rental values	25% reduction of the rental values for lands in Special Economic Zone of Duqm and Industrial zones of Public Establishment for Industrial Estates in Madalyn from 1 Jan 2020 to 21 Dec 2022

economic stimulus plan. The principal measures included in the stimulus package are presented in Table 7.3.⁵⁰

Ultimately, the section above revealed how the new strategy for Oman Vision 2040 created new discourses and practices transitioning into issues of intergenerational equity, labour, investment promotion, and fiscal balancing. The current governance follows a system in which the only changes and improvements in the Sultanate come from the top, starting with the Sultan's royal directives, which are in turn followed up by ministries. According to this pattern, any speech-act from the Sultan invoking 'security' frames his directives as a special kind of politics or as supra-political, placing it in the realm of 'extraordinary measures' to be executed by selected technocrats. As a result, long-term strategies are ineffectively implemented, thus maintaining the Sultanate's status quo. While, on the other hand, the strategies also continue the trend of replacing Oman's dependency on oil to gas with movement towards the energy transition, as will be covered in the second section of this chapter.

⁵⁰ PWC Middle East (2021).

7.2 Securitisation of Climate Change Discourses

This section will demonstrate how global agendas and discourses intersect with local practices. It will highlight aspects of energy discourses that have remained static while simultaneously tracking those that have changed, particularly because of the climate change discourse. As we will see, for example, while a relationship between energy, security and the environment existed in the early 1990s (see Chap. 4), the adopted policies of the energy transition dominated the energy discourses post-2015.⁵¹ Bigo's assumption that we need to analyse practices and discourse within a 'security field', where security professionals struggle over power and knowledge, is relevant insofar as securitisation of energy is a result of the convergence of policies within a *security continuum*.⁵² Moreover, the 'security field' reveals how such agendas gained traction through the rule of the market, thus moving Oman's development towards alternative forms of energy and tying 'energy security' to the energy transition.

7.2.1 *Toward the Energy Transition*

In 2015, at COP21, the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) conference, for the first time in history every country agreed to work together to limit global warming to well below 2°, with an aim of 1.5°. The participants agreed, as well, to make money available to deliver on these aims.⁵³ Following COP21, the Paris Agreement was born. The Paris Agreement set out that every five years, countries must set out increasingly ambitious climate action. This meant that, by 2020, countries needed to submit or update their plans for reducing emissions, known as nationally determined contributions (NDCs). This made the run-up to 2020's⁵⁴ summit in Glasgow a critical moment in the world's mission to keep alive the hope of limiting global temperature rise to 1.5°.

In 2021, following the debates in COP26, over thirty-eight thousand people gathered—from heads of States and high-ranking government officials to academics, climate change activists, students, and people working for environmental campaign organisations—to negotiate and agree on a comprehensive, ambitious, and balanced outcome that took forward coordinated climate action and resolved key issues related to the Kyoto Protocol and the Paris Agreement. Central to the discussion was the call for a rapid scaling-up of clean power, the phasing-down of coal, and the phasing-out of fossil fuel subsidies, as well as the adoption by each country of more ambitious

⁵¹ The term energy transition is coined to denote everything associated with the transformation of the world's energy systems from fossil fuels to carbon dioxide (CO₂) net zero-carbon by 2050.

⁵² Bigo (2002).

⁵³ The commitment to aim for 1.5° is important because every fraction of a degree of warming will result in the loss of many more lives lost and livelihoods damaged.

⁵⁴ While the summit was due to take place in 2020, it was delayed by a year due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

targets for rolling out technologies to support decarbonisation of the hydrocarbon sector.⁵⁵

COP26 concluded in Glasgow with all countries agreeing on the ‘Glasgow Climate Pact’, which promised to keep alive the goal of 1.5° and to finalise the outstanding elements of the Paris Agreement, which included urgent acceleration of climate action. The fact that debates no longer sought economic rationale but rather focused on the *urgency* for countries to act elevated the issue of climate change above politics, turning it instead into a global security issue. Because the threat of global warming was viewed as so urgent and all-encompassing, according to the UNFCCC, here, this move toward ‘extraordinary politics’, was seen as justified.

In the context of Oman, the issue of climate action and global warming is placed within the financial and economic sphere where a balance between the global and local must be struck so that a new understanding of ‘energy security’ emerges. Accordingly, the next sub-section will reveal how climate change discourse in the Sultanate has not so much targeted global warming but rather the fiscal balancing objectives of the country. Its aim has also been to procure emerging technologies and administrative frontiers for local policy makers and entrepreneurs. Before delving into Oman’s current discourses and practices, since the accession of Sultan Haitham, it is worth first tracing the evolution of its environmental policy under the leadership of the late Sultan Qaboos.

7.2.2 *The ‘Gravity of the Present’*

There has been a noticeable shift in Omani environmental discourse under the Sultanate’s new leadership. One is reminded of the words shared in a speech by Qaboos bin Said during a UN Conference on the Environment and Development, in which he addressed the global community on the ‘numerous environmental catastrophes’ which have resulted from ‘conflicts and other human-made pollutants’. Qaboos continued:

As human beings co-existing on this planet, we have gravely neglected the vital necessity of conserving the environment and natural resources due to lack of collective coordination. Indeed, we have taken a potentially fatal opposing course of luxury and industrial progress, regardless of the resulting imbalance between development and the environment; and without taking account of the dire consequences of the effects upon the atmosphere and the ozone layer, river, and sea water, of the extermination of certain species, the destruction of forests, and the contamination of once fertile soil. Should this continue, humanity will commit collective suicide. The conservation of the environment is the responsibility of all of us, a responsibility that knows no political boundaries. [...] Recently the Gulf region and the Middle East witnessed regrettable and painful environmental disasters as a result of regional conflicts. Unless those regional problems are properly settled, the efforts exerted to conserve the environment and to continue the development process will be disastrously jeopardised.⁵⁶

⁵⁵ These are observations drawn from my participation in the COP26 summit in Glasgow, November 8–14.

⁵⁶ Qaboos bin Said (1992).

The late Sultan draws an unambiguous link between the relationship of development and industrialisation to ‘environmental catastrophes’. The collective responsibility for the inevitable climate disaster bears upon several actors, internal and external, and must transcend ‘political boundaries. The expression of humanity reaching ‘collective suicide’ indicates the urgency for collective action and raises issues of the environment and climate action to a level beyond that of politics, society, and economics.

Reflecting both the global energy transition and Oman’s target to achieve thirty percent of power generation from renewable sources by 2030,⁵⁷ the Ministry of Oil and Gas was renamed the Ministry of Energy and Minerals (MEM), taking under its wing the mining sector in Oman.⁵⁸ In contrast, the Ministry of Environment and Climate Affairs, responsible for overseeing the climate change portfolio, was positioned under the Environment Authority as an entity ‘subordinate to the Council of Ministers’,⁵⁹ and the climate change folder was relegated under a Directorate of Meteorology in the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA). For the first time since 1975, the environment folder no longer had representation at the ministerial level. Furthermore, the Authority for Electricity Regulation was restructured and enfolded within the Authority for Public Services Regulation, whose scope had increased to include regulation of natural gas transportation.⁶⁰ While in most cases the stimulus multiplied the number of departments and ministries responsible for implementation, when it came to climate change, a similar increase did not occur.

The lackadaisical attitude toward the climate issue was noted by the former Group CEO of OQ,⁶¹ Musab Al-Mahrouqi, who, as an observer of the unfolding government agendas, stated, ‘Oman is not really serious regarding the urgency of the energy transition’, nor was climate change in ‘the high end of the government’s agenda’ and this is because ‘the energy transition was not pressing from an economic point of view, or from a supply security point of view’.⁶² Al-Mahrouqi went on to explain that Oman has ‘more serious issues: growing the economy, employment, ensuring social security is in place. These issues were concerned with country’s new leadership transition, His Majesty Sultan Haitham reorganising the agenda for Oman 2040,

⁵⁷ In addition to this, in 2018, Oman restructured its utilities sector, making the Ministry of Oil & Gas (MOG), now the Ministry of Energy and Minerals, the main policymaker for all energy projects, and the MOG has also led on the implementation of several renewable energy projects.

⁵⁸ Royal Decree No. 96/2020. ‘Amending the name of the Ministry of Oil and Gas to the Ministry of Energy and Minerals, determining its competencies, and adopting its organisational structure’ issued on 18 August 2020.

⁵⁹ Royal Decree No. 106/2020. ‘Establishing the Environment Authority, determining its competencies, and adopting its organisational structure’ issued on 18 August 2020.

⁶⁰ Royal Decree No. 78/2020. ‘Amending the name of the electricity and related water sector regulation authority to the Authority for Public Services Regulation and assigning some competencies to it’ issued on 12 August 2020.

⁶¹ OQ is an integrated energy company that recently merged Oman Oil Company with Oman Refinery and Petrochemical Company.

⁶² Interview # 35 with Musab Al-Mahrouqi, Former Group CEO of OQ. 13 December 2021, Muscat.

and so forth'.⁶³ As Al-Mahrouqi suggests, the new administration viewed climate change from a fiscal and economic perspective as 'stripping the human element from the discourse'.⁶⁴ The example above exemplifies the different views on how climate change is perceived as either a collective humanitarian threat or an economic crisis. The diverging perspective stems from the diverse actors within the *security continuum* promoting certain policies.

This section has indicated how the Sultanate, rather than tackling climate change as a matter of social concern and intergenerational equity has been observing the matter from an economic standpoint, prioritising the need to balance the fiscal budget of the country, and giving only secondary attention to climate issues. Accordingly, efforts to promote the climate change agenda as well as energy diversification is covered in the next sub-section.

7.2.3 *Efforts Towards Energy Diversification*

During the lifetime of Sultan Qaboos, Oman, in 2015, developed a National Energy Strategy Study to harness a portion of electricity generation from renewable energy by the year 2030.⁶⁵ The implementation of the energy strategy lies with the MEM, the Authority for Public Services Regulation and the Oman Power and Water Procurement Company. However, as discussed in Chap. 5, the diversification of the country's energy pool toward renewables remained a low priority given the high price of renewables compared with gas production. Ninety-five percent of the country's electricity generation came from gas and the rest from diesel used in rural areas.⁶⁶ However, there was a clear shift in 2018 with the introduction of the fuel diversification policy, which stipulated that ten percent of electricity generation should be contributed by renewable energy by 2025, while taking into consideration intermittent sources such as solar PV (without storage) and wind.⁶⁷ Moreover, the price of solar photovoltaic (PV) dropped by ninety percent in ten years as demonstrated in Fig. 7.1 below, and the PV technology itself continued to improve in terms of efficiency, reliability, and longevity—making it a source of energy competitive with unsubsidised gas.⁶⁸

A key objective of the fuel diversification policy was to release domestic gas committed to the power sector and replace it with approximately 2,500 MW of renewable energy plants by 2025,⁶⁹ in order to stimulate and support the country's industrial

⁶³ Interview # 35 with Musab Al-Mahrouqi. 13 December 2021, Muscat.

⁶⁴ Interview #34 with Khalid Al-Huraibi. 13 January 2022, Muscat.

⁶⁵ Civil Aviation Authority (2021), p. 7.

⁶⁶ IHS Energy (2015).

⁶⁷ Oman Power and Water Procurement (2019), p. 15.

⁶⁸ Lazard (2021).

⁶⁹ The power generation has already begun its deployment of renewables in Oman with the first large-scale solar PV project of 500 MW; Amin 100 MW (first PV project in Oman and the biggest single-unit solar park in the world to use N-type bifacial modules); Dhofar Wind Project, 50 MW

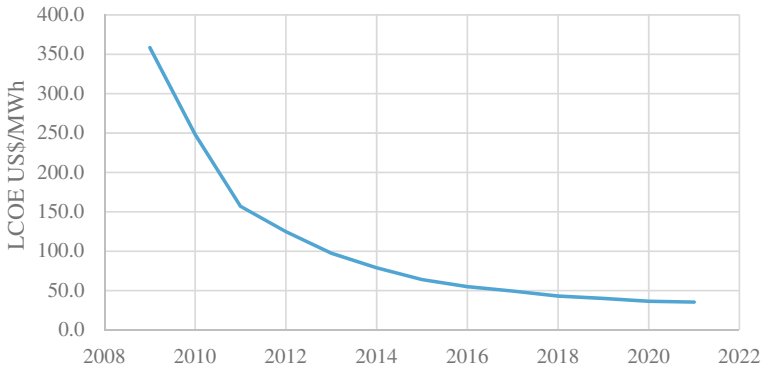


Fig. 7.1 Utility scale solar cost (2009–2021)

and economic development⁷⁰ Aligned with this objective, the government was also working towards furthering energy efficiency promotion and standards programs to be implemented across the residential sector and commercial industries.⁷¹ These programs have allowed for overall energy efficiency improvement from thirty nine percent in 2015 to fifty five percent in 2020 and were mainly attributed to ‘technical advances in the gas-fired plants, and a switch to combined-cycle plants’.⁷² In tandem with the country’s fuel policy, Oman Vision 2040 also included several benchmarks and Key Performance Indicators for economic diversification and the shift toward a low-carbon economy. In 2017, the oil share of GDP amounted to thirty-nine percent, while non-oil sources accounted for 61%.⁷³ The Sultanate aims to reduce the oil share of GDP to sixteen percent in 2030 and 8.4% by 2040.⁷⁴ The policy to push for energy diversification can be conceived as a vertical line extending from Oman Vision 2040 which is benchmarked with global goals for sustainable development.

While the current government has attempted to create fiscal balance, Qaboos bin Said, alternatively, called for the balance between development and a ‘clean environment’ to support intergenerational equity. The current regime has approached climate change and energy diversification solely by focusing on attracting investments, giving scant attention to ‘intergenerational equity’ and the effects of the increasing temperatures seen in Oman. On the other hand, the CAA has recently been working towards a national strategy for adaptation and mitigation to climate change in order to accelerate the pace and scale of the government’s climate actions. In the second Nationally

(1st large-scale wind farm in the GCC) with Masdar; in Duqm, potential for a 600 MW Concentrated Solar Power (CSP) project with thermal storage; 1000 MW in Ibri; 500 MW in Manah; 150 MW Amin Project with PDO; and; Wind IPP 2023, with a capacity of 100 MW and Wind IPP in 2024, with a capacity of 200 MW.

⁷⁰ Oman Power and Water Procurement (2019), pp. 20–30.

⁷¹ Authority for Electricity Regulation (2019).

⁷² Civil Aviation Authority (2021), p. 7.

⁷³ Ministry of Finance (2020), p. 7.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

Determined Contributions (NDCs) report, the Authority contended that the strategic context for adaptation is rooted in Oman's

ineluctable exposure to intensifying tropical cyclones, increasing temperatures, and rising sea levels. Understanding land use, climate, water resources, and agriculture/fisheries are an essential context for identifying, designing, and implementing preparedness/response measures to reduce the vulnerability of communities, resources, and systems. The mitigation strategy basis is rooted in recognising the need to control a trend of greenhouse gas emissions growth. A review of population growth, economic trends, and energy supply/demand represents the essential context for *prioritising finance* and implementing *cost-effective efficiency* and renewable energy strategies to slow the growth in national greenhouse gas emissions.⁷⁵

While efforts are being made to mitigate and adapt to the intensification of climate and weather conditions in the country, the government's focus remains fixed on financing and cost-effectiveness. The issue of finance has been prioritised in the country's security agenda to support economic trends with no sensitivity to the future of social life. The NDC acknowledges that the Sultanate's increasing energy consumption in the coming years will be a leading cause of rising Greenhouse Gas (GHG) emissions over the coming years; nevertheless, many Omanis oppose phasing out electricity and water subsidies. When the Sultanate announced in January 2021 that there would be an approximately thirteen percent decline in government subsidy of electricity for its customers, the consumers complained about 'steep summer bills', calling for lower electricity costs. Accordingly, the Authority for Regulating Public Services adjusted the country's electricity tariffs structure in August the same year.⁷⁶ There is a clear misalignment between the efforts of the government to reduce energy consumption and the policies to which Omani society consents. Analysts have observed that many government decisions are made without consulting the public. For example, as Professor Baabood contends:

The government and the society are each in a different valley; there are no systematic or formal mechanisms, means, or platforms to communicate with officials, policy makers, and decision makers. Some people turn to social media platforms to put forward some ideas, knowing in advance that it will neither nourish nor avail against hunger, so they are just letting off steam and, in return, receive no answer.⁷⁷

Baabood, among others, points to the concern that policy makers and officials are unable to reach the public and vice-versa, due at least in part to the lack of platforms, processes, and procedures for engagement. Without such a platform, Oman's efforts to balance two priorities, namely, to ease pressure on public finance in a debt-burdened country while also maintaining public support of the new leadership and government, will undoubtedly be put to the test.

Regardless of socio-political concerns, in 2016, the Sultanate initiated a series of fiscal improvements to enhance and promote 'the culture of energy-saving by liberalising the prices of petroleum products [...]. In tandem with these fiscal improvements,

⁷⁵ Civil Aviation Authority (2021), p. 4.

⁷⁶ Reuters (2021).

⁷⁷ Interview # 36 with Abdullah Baabood, Professor at Waseda University, School of International Liberal Studies, specialises in the Arabian Gulf and the Middle East. 15 January 2022, Muscat.

the Sultanate of Oman has activated a social protection system for fuels, electricity, and water to support eligible families'.⁷⁸ When discussing climate concerns, the country's fiscal policy is accounted for, and as noted by an energy expert in Oman, 'energy security is about sources of income for the country'.⁷⁹ And that being the case, it is financial security and there are many associations and connections to that. It offers financial security, and implicitly it also offers political security'.⁸⁰ The retraction of the initial plan to reduce the government's subsidy occurred 'because Oman is a welfare state—everything is granted top-down'.⁸¹ In order for Oman to continue to afford its current political structure, the energy expert went on to say, 'you've got to be able to finance and fund that structure or model of governance'.⁸²

In November 2021, the Sultanate affirmed and emphasised its commitments to the parties and attendees of COP26 that it will play a collaborative role with the international community in countering and confronting the negative effects of climate change. In July 2021, the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA), the authority in charge of climate change in Oman, submitted the country's second NDC report to the Secretariat of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), emphasising an increased commitment to limiting the expected increase of GHG emissions in 2030 to seven percent, starting from 2020, while focusing on renewable energy initiatives and projects to enhance energy efficiency and conservation.⁸³ Accordingly, the NDC noted that: 'Four percent of the GHG reduction commitment will be based on national efforts, and the remaining three percent would necessitate grants and other forms of concessional financing and assistance with capacity building and institutional strengthening, and access to appropriate technologies'.⁸⁴ In other words, the assurance of securing financing is a priority for the Sultanate to move towards the energy transition and decarbonise its existing assets.

To govern these initiatives and action plans, the CAA employees explain how the day-to-day work of managing climate change is organised around the measurement of carbon emissions, cost savings, and climatic changes. These phenomena are brought together in a range of models, spreadsheets, charts, and graphs; written into strategy documents; and used as the basis of business cases to draw down funds from internal and external funding sources and finance carbon reduction activities. Despite the centrality of modelling and data analysis to the phenomena of climate change, these practices have remained of marginal concern to most decision-makers in the country who are only interested in the social and political implications of climate change. Since climate has become a global issue, there is a clear focus on 'climate financing' rather than on the idea of changing the status quo and building the capacity of

⁷⁸ Civil Aviation Authority (2021), p. 7.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ Interview # 37 with an Energy Expert, working on strategies in the oil and gas sector for over 20 years. 23 December 2021, Muscat.

⁸¹ Interview # 37 with an Energy Expert. 23 December 2021, Muscat.

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ Author attendance as part of the official Oman delegation to COP26. 9 November 2021, Glasgow.

⁸⁴ Civil Aviation Authority (2021), p. 7.

populations to adapt to climatic changes. Generally, the financial and the social concerns generated by climate change have largely been treated as separate issues.

7.2.4 *Is There an Evolving Vision?*

This section illustrates how ‘energy security’, after the government’s restructuring efforts and fiscal balancing agenda, constitutes a national security concern. The security of energy supply is not an issue in Oman, according to an energy expert working on Oman’s energy strategy (‘we have an abundance of energy’); thus, there is no security threat in this respect. However, energy is ‘linked to the running and functioning of the state from an economic and financial perspective’. He asked: ‘Has this understanding shifted from 1970?’⁸⁵ He went on to explain that economic and financial priorities ‘still exist— with exploration and discoveries and with alternative sources of energy, which only increases the country’s energy abundance. On the other hand, Oman is still intricately connected to energy prices when it comes to its financial wellbeing’.⁸⁶ Therefore energy continues to be a security concern, as ‘we are wedded to the oil prices today as we were in 1970. So, the concept of diversification is still a concept that is work in progress’.⁸⁷ Following the succession of Sultan Haitham, energy (especially the oil prices) is linked directly to the country’s socio-economic security. This link, in turn, extends the ‘security field’ to include practices and discourses related to the move away from hydrocarbons, which are expected to be carried out by ministers leading the implementation of Oman’s vision.

The abundance of energy sources is also highlighted by the Minister of Energy and Minerals, Dr Mohammed Al Rumhy, who also heads the Climate Task Force in the ministry to ensure that the Sultanate’s practices towards the energy transition are aligned with Oman Vision 2040’s aim to ensure sustainable development across all sectors. There are two diverging policies in the country, Al Rumhy explains; one, ‘the strategy of eternal energy landscape and how we provide energy to the country’, and two, ‘the economic impact of our energy business, which is how we are planning to go through this energy transition and the challenges of the next twenty years from now’.⁸⁸ He acknowledges the significance of the energy transition when adding that ‘the environmental impact is big: there is ESG,⁸⁹ the green agenda, and we have to comply on how we meet these expectations from the international community’.⁹⁰ These expectations are not negligible, in view of the Sultanate’s second reported NDC and its commitment to reduce its emissions by seven percent by the year 2030.

⁸⁵ Interview # 37 with an Energy Expert. 23 December 2021, Muscat.

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ Interview # 38 with Dr Mohammed Al Rumhy, Minister of Energy and Minerals. 23 December 2021, Muscat.

⁸⁹ ESG (Environment, Social and Governance) stands for the principles of Sustainability.

⁹⁰ Interview # 38 with Dr Mohammed Al Rumhy. 23 December 2021, Muscat.

On the importance of reducing the country's carbon footprint, the minister explained how, for example, Liwa Plastics was recently inaugurated, and given that Oman

aims to export products from Liwa Plastics to the EU, the international bodies looking into carbon management are going to ask us what is the carbon footprint of our business? The more the production moves from grey to green the easier it will be. If we stick to the current system where everything is grey, and is not environmentally friendly, there will be challenges of carbon tax. That is one side of the story.⁹¹

Moving to the 'second side of the story' is the dilemma, as he puts it, in Oman's plan for energy requirements and the investments and infrastructures created to support the generation of power based on that plan. What one finds today in Oman, according to Al Rumhy, is an oversupply of electricity capacity: 'we have about thirty to forty percent excess capacity in the country. The dilemma that faced Oman was how do we justify investing in renewables when we have excess capacity. From purely a financial and economic analysis, there was no justification'.⁹² The issue was further exacerbated post-COP21, during the Paris Agreement period, when renewable energy became an increasingly important agenda item in the Sultanate and was embedded into the country's energy plan.⁹³

Taking a different view on the country's electricity capacity, the economic expert explained how, based on certain assumptions, excess capacity was generated and planned for. 'The question is', he added, 'until when can we have balance again? We are stopping renewables and we don't have to'.⁹⁴ The over-capacity concern is one that will end within a year and thus there is no reason to stop the development of renewables, as it would take at least a year or more to develop. These diverging and contrasting views demonstrate how there is a lack of alignment in the climate change portfolio. It also demonstrates how the *security continuum* is enmeshed in a dilemma where the financial concern of the country is securitised which consequently desecuritisises the importance of climate change and the global efforts towards decarbonisation. By claiming that the country needs fiscal balancing, the government-imposed restrictions on renewable development. These restrictions may have long-reaching impacts upon future generations in Oman.

It is obvious that the Sultanate, while working towards diversifying its economy and energy sources toward cleaner energy, is not considering climate change a priority in its current agenda. As observed by Baabood: 'This was clear with the abolishment of the ministry of the environment and climate affairs', as well as the lack of a clean 'strategy or policy on climate change' to tackle the extreme weather conditions and cyclones.⁹⁵ His concern, by contrast, with the societal element represents a school

⁹¹ Ibid.

⁹² Ibid.

⁹³ Ibid.

⁹⁴ Interview # 32 with Economic Expert. 7 January 2022, Muscat.

⁹⁵ Interview # 36 with Abdullah Baabood. 15 January 2022, Muscat.

of thought that broadens the concept of ‘energy security’ to include other issues not included in a traditional security framework.⁹⁶

Accordingly, a sceptical view of economic security is enmeshed in the Sultanate’s agenda where climate change is concerned. ‘Even if Oman did have a climate change policy’, Baabood expresses reservations about whether ‘it is sincere or if it is merely lip service to the global issue. The government is currently focused on balancing the budget and getting its act together on internal issues, rather than considering things of a global nature now’.⁹⁷ From a regional perspective and looking at climate change from international sub-system levels, Professor Baabood explains:

There is a comfort that bigger countries with more resources and knowledge are tackling it; and Oman will follow suit. While Oman will do the needful in terms of attending global conferences and announcing its plans for renewables—it is not a sincere or well-thought-out strategy for climate change. Some countries in the region even questioned the concept of climate change and questioned the idea that fossil fuels are contributing to that due to their vested interests. However, we have seen some changes are taking place—in Saudi, the UAE and Qatar and so on, to try to ride this wave as it were—and maybe it is genuine in terms of what we see with investments. I don’t see it happening yet in Oman. It is a small country in terms of oil production and gas exports, and it stays under the radar when it can—it is difficult for Oman to take the lead and do something more substantive than declaratory policy.⁹⁸

Interestingly, Baabood describes how Oman sees itself as a follower rather than a leader on addressing the issues associated with climate change and hence by implication the energy transition. Ironically, the lack of initiative on climate change may result in direct negative pressure on the government’s budget (for example, a carbon dioxide price or tax, or long term falling demand for hydrocarbons). The *security continuum* therefore can be expanded to include multiple layers and levels of actors, policies, and different sectors. In this respect, the new leadership of Oman, in its attempt to compartmentalise climate security dynamics to mere financial concerns, have obscured the broader forms of ‘energy security’ and the discursive continuity in approaches to issues concerning environmental change.⁹⁹

To tackle the imminent changes that are enveloping this global transition and decarbonisation efforts, the MEM established a Climate Task Force (CTF) in 2020 headed by the Minister of Energy and Minerals. It aimed to create an agenda on climate change for the Sultanate prior to the COP26 summit in Glasgow. The members included international and national energy companies like Shell Oman, BP Oman, Occidental, OQ, PDO, the Environment Authority and the CAA, as well as representatives from the electricity sector. According to Al-Rumhy, the CTF was enacted as he believed that ‘the energy sector is the culprit of most of the emissions in the country’.¹⁰⁰ This is shown in Oman’s NDC whereby the energy sector made up sixty-four percent of total GHG emissions, primarily due to the emissions

⁹⁶ Buzan et al. (1998).

⁹⁷ Interview # 36 with Abdullah Baabood. 15 January 2022, Muscat.

⁹⁸ Ibid.

⁹⁹ McDonald (2008), p. 571.

¹⁰⁰ Interview # 38 with Dr Mohammed Al Rumhy. 23 December 2021, Muscat.

from hydrocarbons, transportation and electricity generation using natural gas and diesel.¹⁰¹ Ultimately, the purpose was to prepare a narrative for the country on the issue of climate change during COP26 as ‘Oman was lagging in its ESG commitments, which would affect our borrowing’. To that end, the ministry exchanged ideas with international and national energy companies to see how Oman could adopt a strategy to support its aim and build a model to ascertain how the country will be able to achieve net-zero by 2050.¹⁰²

While the government has faith in international companies’ agenda on climate change, an alternative energy expert and finance director working in Oman, has a less positive prognosis:

There is no more room for “traditional” oil and gas companies. Often they are in the way as they attempt to extend the useful life of their business models, which revolve around the production of hydrocarbons, the central cause of the climate crisis. Oil and gas companies to date have ramped up their rhetoric on ESG and climate change but in the end are still investing a relatively little amount from their annual budgets. Most of the money is still going to upstream development. To take an example, Oman has a potential game changing technology through carbon dioxide mineralisation, currently being explored through a start up and international venture capital funding. Imagine the progress that could have been made if the major oil and gas company, together with the government, would have focused their vast technological and financial resources on this.¹⁰³

The ‘climate crisis’ is cited above to conceptually bring together actors from different fields (national and international) into a *security continuum* possessing a range of knowledge and expertise on climate and energy concerns. The noted crises and insecurity stems from the continuous reliance on hydrocarbons. Along with this security risk, the energy expert further contends that Oman does have a ‘climate challenge, which is an energy challenge and a demographic challenge’, and moreover, ‘a serious financial risk for Oman’.¹⁰⁴ This insecurity connects individual fears with the anxieties about collective survival. Financial risk dominates the discourse of energy and climate challenges in Oman post-2015.

Ultimately, to achieve Oman Vision 2040, the Sultanate would need to incorporate and prioritise climate change within its diversification policy. ‘Energy security’ would mean a divergence from the status quo.

Conclusion

Two approaches on ‘energy security’ during the period 2015–2020 are reflected in this chapter. The one represented by the Qaboos era takes broader stock of issues not traditionally included in the *security continuum*, including the environment and social concerns, such as labour and unemployment. The other, represented by the more recent reforms under Sultan Haitham, are more focused on addressing urgent

¹⁰¹ Civil Aviation Authority (2021), p. 4.

¹⁰² Interview # 38 with Dr Mohammed Al Rumhy. 23 December 2021, Muscat.

¹⁰³ Interview # 39 with Finance Director and Alternative Energy Expert in Oman. 7 January 2022, Muscat.

¹⁰⁴ Interview # 37 with an Energy Expert. 23 December 2021, Muscat.

budgetary issues arising from the fiscal deficit. As this chapter has shown, energy starts getting attached to financial instability through climate change; it is no longer simply linked to development practices as was the case in the 1990s. This makes 'energy security' fluid and changeable in both discourse and practice. Through the examination of climate concerns and interviews with technocrats and senior officials, the chapter untangles how climate change and the resulting need for alternative forms of energy became the dominant security-related discourses from the year 2015 onwards. Even when not discursively articulated as such, the energy transition becomes central to understanding the role of energy discourses and practices in Oman today.

The Sultanate's core initiative for its Tenth FYDP included diversification and sustainable growth. Unlike the previous Vision, in which energy was related directly to liberalisation and the whim of actors, after the year 2019, principles of sustainability and fiscal balancing took centre stage. The global discourses on the energy transition, which opened debates on the seriousness of climate change, allowed neoliberal logics and practices to migrate into Oman's policy. As part of Oman Vision 2040's integrated and comprehensive action plan for the coming five years, royal directives instructed each ministry to assert their political powers to push their respective agendas to ensure the realisation of the Sultanate's long-term economic strategy.¹⁰⁵ These ministries shaped the ways in which neoliberal logics were integrated into Oman's political processes, while also reforming social, economic, and political structures. Concomitant with Oman Vision 2020, the new Vision 2040 became a vector for financial transformation and fiscal balancing. Through analysis of the Sultanate's process of sustainable growth, the chapter demonstrated how energy and fiscal balancing has impacted socio-economic development as well as expenditures for many government institutions.

Additionally, the multiple policies aimed at introducing forms of energy beyond hydrocarbons showed how the movement towards the energy transition brought internal and external actors into the same arena. While the Sultanate has formulated a discourse on the need to diversify, it has failed to act on its own word, largely on account of contradictory practices caused by competing interests during the 1990s and 2000s (Chaps. 4 and 5). To maintain the status quo, the government continues to contradict its national objectives in order to prevent social dissent. At the same time, however, it is conversely creating a future without intergenerational equity, a result which may breed insecurity if foreign investment and fiscal balancing outside of reliance on hydrocarbons is not achieved.

Ultimately, the crisis comes amidst preparation to live with Covid-19 longer term, the easing of pandemic-induced economic activity closures, and a gradual return to normal economic activities. The Sultanate needs to stick to its proposed set of strategic programmes in order to stimulate economic activity, encourage the private sector, restore confidence in the local investment environment, and attract foreign investments. Finally, the Sultanate could take advantage of promising opportunities beyond hydrocarbons that will help it stay in lockstep with the energy transition.

¹⁰⁵ Ministry of Economy (2020b).

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Chapter 8

Conclusion: Oman's Eclectic Take on 'Energy Security'



Introduction

Using Oman as a case study, this research aimed to provide a comprehensive and non-Eurocentric perspective on 'energy security'. Based upon the identification of various lacunae in comparative contemporary sources, it adopted, as most rigorous and contextually appropriate, a historically inflected, sociological approach. By applying this approach to the political, social, and economic transformations that took place during the process of state-building in Oman, this study aimed to track and analyse the generation and transformation of the varied energy discourses and practices that have arisen in Oman's modern history. More specifically, it attended to the ways in which these discourses have been shaped through 'expertise' and networks of 'experts'.

This Conclusion first brings together the empirical and theoretical contributions that the study has made. Most literature on 'security', generally undertaken from an economic or politico-historical perspective, fails to demonstrate the multidimensional aspects of 'energy' discourses and practices as caught up in or related to security. The majority of studies that do approach 'energy security' more topically, however, tend to overlook the postcolonial history of oil-producing states and ignore the process by which 'energy security' evolved. Instead, analysing state formation through Eurocentric models, they ultimately replicate the state–society binary, obfuscating the true complexity not only of the state formation process, but of the very notions of 'state' and 'society'. Second, this Conclusion aims to justify both the selection of Oman as a case study, and energy as a referent object of securitisation. Third, in supplementing critical security studies with contested concepts borrowed from postcolonial studies, the Conclusion will outline the empirical and methodological breakthroughs made possible by combining critical security studies with postcolonial studies approaches. Fourth, it intends to review the theoretical advances made in light of sociological narratives provided through four main themes: (1) the process of state formation, (2) 'expertise' and networks of 'experts', (3) materiality,

and (4) the security continuum. Finally, the scope and limitations of this research will be discussed, before providing a more comprehensive conclusion.

8.1 Filling Theoretical Gaps

The goal of this study was to provide a sociological framework that would help us understand how plural understandings of 'energy security' have been and continue to be formed in Oman. Tracing energy discourses and practices from the 1920s onwards reveals the process of energy securitisation in Oman. The dynamics of history have allowed for the construction of multiple and complex understandings of 'energy security'. Through a sociological analysis, the research more deeply probed the decision-making processes involved in Oman's state formation process. By focusing acutely upon the convergence of 'experts' and their networks within the *security continuum*, it shed light upon the ways in which energy intertwines with issues of governance, security, development, neoliberalism, and economic diversification. By examining critical junctures in Oman's political history from the first circulation of discourses on energy in 1921 to the events post-Bouazizi, the study highlighted the dominant practices and discourses that developed alongside of socio-economic and political reforms.

Dominant studies of 'energy security' currently fall within the realist and liberal schools of thought (Chap. 1). The notion of 'energy security' was first conceived in relation to a 'security' threat to the Western consuming oil countries, especially because energy was geopolitically linked to the Middle East. Such approaches are, however, almost exclusively state-centric, and economic-centred. Furthermore, given the historical complexity of conceptualisations of 'energy security', they are inherently limited. To make up for the limitations of existing paradigms, this research aimed to provide, as an alternative, a comprehensive theoretical framework embedded in sociology. Its sociological framework departs from Eurocentric models, ultimately deconstructs their limitations, and offers in their place a comprehensive analysis of the dynamic social, political, and economic influences on the concept of 'security'.

Unlike the Copenhagen School, which prioritises securitising actors as actors who have 'authority', this study first advanced its analysis through a sociological approach to demonstrate both the interplay between internal and external 'expertise', and the contradictions among theory and practice/policies (see Chaps. 4 and 5). Secondly, it revealed the complex picture of how actors merged to form different understandings of 'energy security' in Oman. The process of securitisation carried out through the 'experts', created the basis for daily formations and constructions of energy discourses and practices. These discourses and practices formulated their own complex dynamics, all of which further complicated the relationship of energy to the economic, social, and political processes in the country. Furthermore, the use of securitisation provided this study with a combined post-structuralist and sociological analysis of the state.

By focusing on the particularity of these dynamics, the study showed thirdly how, contrary to Orientalist assumptions, which assume a stagnant perspective, an accurate understanding of ‘energy security’ must be considered as expansive and evolving (Chap. 3). By using Oman as a case study, this research aimed to contribute something new to critical security studies.¹ Insofar as it would be categorised as a non-democratic state, Oman solicits the creation of new evaluative methods; in striving to develop paradigms that are commensurate to postcolonial states, the field gains new insights into non-Western ideas about energy securitisation processes.

In developing the theoretical framework for this study, the main architects of the Copenhagen School were introduced to explain how the notion of ‘security’ is a socially constructed term (Chap. 2). Such a conception diverges from traditional security studies by moving away from both realist and liberal preoccupations with the ‘balance of power’ and state-centric threats. Arising from the context of the Cold War, the Copenhagen School began to question these axioms and proposed an alternative that widened and broadened the concept of ‘security’. Adopting from the Copenhagen School the premise that ‘security’ is a construct, this study then turned to the Paris School to appropriate a sociological approach and the concept of the *security continuum* (Chap. 7).

The result of employing sociological analysis in questions of ‘energy security’ is, as Balzacq et al. put it, that surrounding the term one discovers a ‘kaleidoscope of practices non-reducible to a core meaning or/and a linguistic formulation’.² Given the complex formulations of ‘energy security’, it would seem that there is no definitive understanding of what it fixedly *is*. The sociological approach enables one to see that dominant policies and practices often emerge in an informal manner and thus are difficult to track. Still, with careful attention to the very personal level of history, one can see how, through informal decision-making processes, certain actors are empowered at the expense of others, and that these actors play significant roles in generating discourses and practices that impact notions of ‘energy security’ in Oman that evolve as time unfolds.

Mindful of the contextual difference in Oman, a non-democratic state, the study supplemented the Eurocentric framework of critical security studies with concepts utilised for analysing postcolonial states. It drew, for example, from Timothy Mitchell’s analysis of state formation, governance, and formation of expertise,³ which in turn prepared the way for the examination of *power relations*, as they played out across Didier Bigo’s *security continuum*, comprised of the *network of experts*.⁴

Adopting Aihwa Ong’s concept of *neoliberalism*, this study illustrated the way in which Oman re-formulated the concept by adapting it to its own social, economic,

¹ Further discussed in the next paragraphs.

² Balzacq et al. (2010).

³ Mitchell (1988, 1991, 2002, 2011).

⁴ Bigo (2001, 2002).

and political structures.⁵ In this respect, the migration of neoliberal ideas and practices brought complex assemblages that shaped the way 'energy security' interacted within the Sultanate's processes. The neoliberal process further permitted the Sultanate to outsource its governmental functions to external 'experts'. These processes occurred post-Bouazizi as new formations of 'energy security' emerged. Therefore, the concept of *materiality*, as understood by Mitchell, is utilised to show how post-Bouazizi the role of energy corporations was to handle social development through their social investment programmes (SIP).⁶ Mitchell's analysis enables different ways of thinking about energy which showed how the material properties of energy shifted and influenced culture.

Ultimately, a sociologically informed approach to critical security studies, supplemented with concepts such as *neoliberalism*, *rule of experts*, *security continuum*, and *materiality*, allows one more effectively to analyse the evolution of 'energy security' in a non-Western state by illuminating the structures of power and the roles of actors (local and global) that have shaped associated discourses and practices.

8.2 Case Selection

To deepen our understanding of critical security studies from a non-Western perspective, this research embarked on an empirical study of energy discourses and practices in Oman, which has not yet been subject to extensive securitisation analysis. The intention was to place this study of Oman in conversation with the existing literature on securitisation for two mutually beneficial reasons. First, because the current literature has not been applied in Gulf studies literature, the field of Gulf studies could benefit from its (limited) application. Second, because the field of critical security studies is largely Eurocentric, it fails to capture realities of the Gulf and could therefore benefit from a closer look at Oman. The case of Oman can assist in broader comparative analyses of energy and security in 'authoritarian' states, postcolonial states, and oil-producing countries.

The selection of energy as a referent object of securitisation was driven by several considerations. First, energy meets the criteria for classification as a 'securitised object', which is to say, an object that has been elevated above politics.⁷ Secondly, various international reports on energy in Oman interpret its current misuse as a policy failure and a cause of national insecurity. Thirdly, the study of critical security studies with contested concepts from postcolonial studies broadens the analysis and nature of governance in 'authoritarian' states and oil-producing countries. This inquiry into the case of energy in Oman explains how energy securitisation becomes fundamental for political power, in both domestic and foreign policy.

⁵ Ong (2007).

⁶ Mitchell (2011).

⁷ "Security' is the move that talks politics beyond established rules of the game and frames the issue as either special kind of politics or as above politics." Buzan et al. (1998).

8.3 Methodological Eclecticism

To adopt a full contextual understanding of ‘energy security’ in Oman, as Nelson Phillips and John Brown claim, ‘any data source that adds to understanding of the context is therefore appropriate’.⁸ This study, therefore, approached its research through the ethos of ‘methodological eclecticism’, which included specialised interviewing and archival work, followed by discourse and historical analysis.

The mixing of data was used to integrate the collection of information based on cross-sectional data with semi-structured interviews about energy and its relationship to social, economic, political and security issues. The unique combined methodology also allowed this research to obtain a fuller view of the embeddedness of the ‘experts’ and their networks internally and externally—all the truer when analysing ‘energy security’ in a Gulf state. Moreover, the eclectic approach also managed to interrogate the Eurocentric and economic-centred perspective of how ‘energy security’ is understood in the context of a postcolonial state.

To make sense of why energy was securitised in Oman, the research utilised archival data to develop a historiography of the interconnected relationship between energy and security. The archival foundations provided primary contextual sources that highlighted critical junctures in the Sultanate’s history explaining how and why certain understandings of ‘energy security’ were formed. In this respect, the archival research provided ‘the possibility of an experience of discovery [...] to formulate explanatory questions that will in turn allow access to alternative ways of knowing the world’.⁹ Therefore, this researcher combed through thousands of pages of archival material to comprehend the singularity of critical historical events related to the formation and understanding of ‘energy security’.

By linking history to contemporary issues, archival analysis combined with specialised interviewing provided a new angle for surveying the literature of the ‘energy security’ field, Middle East studies and critical security studies. Dealing with questions of context, practice and expertise, the analysis sought narratives that would become key to the interpretations and understandings of the referent object—energy. It also critiqued the concept of securitisation’s applicability only to liberal democracies; and demonstrated through this study’s combined approaches the way in which energy was securitised in a postcolonial state.

Through specialised interviews and archival work, the study traced the recent state formation process and showed how it is connected to the production of a polyphonic idea of ‘energy security’. The unique access to a wide range of specialised interviews with key decision-makers, officials, and non-officials (see Appendix A) across multiple sectors related to energy hopefully offers the reader a deeper understanding of the intricate dynamics of decision-making. Ultimately, a dual-sided methodological tool was more suitable to explore certain depictions and practices that perpetuated particular energy policies in Oman.

⁸ Phillips and Brown (1993).

⁹ Lobo-Guerrero (2013).

8.4 Sociological Approach

In Oman, the role of hydrocarbons has historically been, and continues to be, attached to domestic, regional, and international concerns, complicating the way 'energy security' has emerged as a web of discourses and practices. The analyses of the sociological narratives correspond to the interrelated historical periods (discussed in the Introduction).¹⁰ However, this study provides a more integrated treatment of 'energy security' in Oman and divides the study's contribution thematically:

Theme 1: The process of state formation

Given the role of colonialism during the formation of the Omani state, this study showed how the relationship between state and society is complex in the way it shapes governance outcomes. Unlike in Western nations, the state apparatus in Oman does not maintain a dichotomy between state and society. Most of the literature on the Gulf has utilised theories, such as the 'rentier state theory', which fail to consider the state as inseparably embedded within society. These studies, moreover, not only fail to question but perpetuate an over-simplified Eurocentric and Orientalist understanding of the region. To offer an alternative, this study unpacked the notion of 'the state' with a sociological and postcolonial understanding of what the state *is*. It did this by questioning who possesses legitimate authority and decision-making power in Oman, while transcending the analytical focus on only the Sultan. In many ways, this research showed how, throughout the stages of state formation, the 'country' of Oman was a mix of multiple, indeterminate configurations of power and authority. Made possible by British imperial rule, these formations, since the 1920s, merged with the convergence of 'experts' and the belief that securitising energy would pave the way for the accumulation of energy wealth.

Furthermore, this study deconstructed the notion that a linear narrative of 'energy security' exists. This was seen, for instance, through the pattern of inclusion and exclusion during and after the country's development. The role of external parties, such as the British government and the Anglo Persian Oil Company, catered the notion of development to the needs of oil operations and fostered explorations at the expense of national unity (Chap. 3).

In 1970, to further ensure its influence, the British orchestrated a bloodless coup and helped to form the 'modern' state of Oman. Unlike in Western democracies, this type of event is somewhat normal in the Gulf context; many sons (the heirs apparent) have taken power from their fathers in this way. When Qaboos took over, he set himself the task of national unification declared under his new leadership. By delineating this history, the study revealed how the transformation of economic,

¹⁰ The historical periods are as follows: (1) Oman's colonial history and energy securitisation since 1920; (2) the formation of the state in 1970 to the end of the Cold War; (3) the relationship between energy and *neoliberalism* after the Cold War; and (4) the *materiality* of energy and social development post-Bouazizi.

social, and political processes—from pre-oil discovery to exporting oil in 1967—brought new associations (like international companies and expertise) to ‘energy security’ conceptualisations.

Moreover, this study traced the sociological processes and their historical transformation during the Cold War period to illustrate the role of British and American experts and consultants in the Sultanate’s decision-making processes. Unlike its neighbouring countries, Oman relied on external support to secure its regime during the rule of Said bin Taimur and his son Qaboos. As Michael Herb mentions, Qaboos divided power among wealthy merchants, expatriates, internal and external intelligence officers, and other prominent tribes in the country.¹¹ The attention paid to British alliance (Chaps. 3 and 4) strongly suggested the depth of their influence within the state structures and every-day-endeavours of the country. Through the lens of the *rule of experts*, the study demonstrated that, contrary to the ‘rentier state theory’, the structure of governance in Oman is not limited to the Sultan and parliament, it extends to external consultants, international organisations, and local merchants—all of whom have real decision-making power and authority.

Theme 2: ‘Expertise’ and networks of ‘experts’

In the wake of social unrest, competition, state formation and colonial interest, the study showed how certain ideas about ‘energy security’ and its influence on development emerged. This context brought with it the inflow of oil wealth and allowed the Omani government to consolidate power in local commerce and external consultation networks, also winning the country international presence and recognition. Here ‘experts’ were central and not incidental to Omani state formation (Chap. 4). The concept of the *rule of experts* thus ties into questions of who wields power in the case of Oman; and how some functions of the state are sub-contracted. The concept also touched upon the concept of sovereignty, which is not explicitly addressed in this study and can be further explored in future research.

An examination of ‘experts’ and ‘expertise’ further illustrated how the Omani merchants—associates of the Sultan, former intelligence officers, and so forth—informally constructed the state. Therefore, the study explained how the Omani ‘experts’ became a fluid organisation, where their coming together produces neoliberal logics and practices that contribute to how ‘energy security’ is understood. Throughout the Cold War, energy played an integral role in sustaining Oman’s national security interest via the financing of weapons and arms from both America and Britain. In many ways, the balance among the Western powers contributed to a state-centric and security-focused understanding of ‘energy security’.

Moreover, the analysis of the role of intelligence and security officers and their competitive relationship with local merchants showed how certain processes are actively maintained by the operations of these competing forms of ‘expertise’. These processes, for example, are demonstrated in the implicit rivalry between the semi-nationalised oil company (Petroleum Development of Oman—PDO) and the American consultant James Critchfield (Chap. 4). In the 1970s and 1980s, the knowledge

¹¹ Herb (1999).

produced by these 'experts' led to a power struggle wherein internal and external policies and actors clashed within the state apparatus. In this respect, the centralising of power via the *network of experts* paved the way for the country's socio-political and economic development that is still functioning (rather ineffectively) today. Furthermore, the material practices of these 'experts' assisted in constructing and shaping the state while they conducted their private businesses, eliminating traditional notions of 'state boundaries'.

During the 1990s and 2000s, neoliberal practices and logics were imported into Oman through a network of external and internal 'experts' that shaped Oman's political, social and economic processes (Chaps. 5 and 7). The neoliberal policies were represented through the emergence of free-economic zones, ports, privatisation, and the push for small and medium size enterprises. While most economic discourses during this period centred on the need to diversify, diversification failed to play out, as 'experts' maintained the status quo when oil prices increased after the energy crisis of 1998. The lack of implementation, as this study demonstrated, can be attributed to the intersection and convergence of different decision-maker interests involved in a post-colonial state structure. Therefore, the concept of the *rule of expert* sheds light on how certain discourses and practices re-produced and re-constructed different conceptualisations of 'energy security'. The 'experts' carried out the re-conceptualisation of 'energy security' by controlling and influencing the political and economic processes of government. The neoliberal logics and practices articulated through the 'experts', however, failed to prepare the Sultanate with social demands voiced by Omanis post-Bouazizi. Tracing how energy attached itself to economic, political and security concerns, it was found that the challenges discussed can only be met through the desecuritisation of energy.

Moreover, through the examination of climate concerns and interviews with technocrats and senior officials, Chap. 7 untangles how discourses surrounding the connections between hydrocarbons and alternative forms of energy were constructed and evolved from 2015 to 2020. Precisely due to the contingency in the conception of 'energy security', Chap. 7 draws on the work of Didier Bigo, particularly his concept of the *security continuum*, which merges internal and external security issues and actors, to illustrate how global energy discourses circumscribe Oman's local agenda for development. Even when not discursively articulated as such, the Sultanate's restructuring efforts under Sultan Haitham in an environment of increasing financial uncertainty becomes central to understanding how energy discourses and practices in Oman is attached to economic and financial security concerns.

As opposed to a distinct set of identifications, therefore, the concept of 'energy security' includes an evolving, flexible, and overlapping set of practices and discourses. The research showed how through critical junctures in Oman's history, 'energy security' is (re)made and (re)formed through the 'experts' and their networks, which are also displayed and further expanded through the *materiality* of energy.

Theme 3: The concept of *materiality*

To broaden the conceptualisation of 'energy security' even further, the concept of *materiality* provided the study with an analytical tool to analyse the emergence

of CSR (Corporate Social Responsibility) in Oman (Chap. 6). Rather than only focusing on the material base of oil and gas in terms of production/consumption and import/export, this study considered the *materiality* of energy in terms of its industry being more capital than labour intensive suggests that energy—an object whose meanings and forms remain unstable as they engage diverse networks and geographies—continually reinvents itself. An analysis, therefore, of the energy companies' CSR programmes, as well as the novel techniques (enhanced oil recovery and fracking) and technological advancement, suggested how the energy companies dealt with the social and political challenges post-Bouazizi. While CSR programmes have been around in Oman since the 1990s, it was only after the 2011 protests that SIPs emerged. These programmes, expanding through the energy companies (BP Oman and PDO), became inseparable from the state. The alignment of interest of the energy companies SIPs (designed to push forward a culture of 'entrepreneurship') with the government's Oman Vision 2020 objective also assisted in promoting neoliberal practices. Given the material limitations of the oil and gas industry in terms of employment, the energy companies developed CSR initiatives and intertwined with the Sultanates' social framework.

To illustrate how the *materiality* of energy was conceived during the complex proceedings post-Bouazizi, Chap. 6 focused on BP Oman and PDO, given their prominent roles in Oman's state apparatuses. It revealed the institutionalised relationship that continues to exist between these international energy companies and the state. Through state-funded SIPs such as Riyadh, Sharakah and Injaz, the energy companies enact new meanings and practices of 'energy security' to direct the country towards creativity, transformation, and entrepreneurship.

8.5 Scope and Limitations

This study acknowledges that the findings and observations presented do not necessarily apply in other parts of the world. All such studies are limited by various factors including differences in the scope of issues, different circumstances relating to internal and external factors, different historical patterns, regional or international interests, and differences in perceptions of what should or should not be considered a referent object of securitisation. Nevertheless, the methodology used in this study could be applied and expanded to include a comparison of Oman and the other Gulf states to produce a comprehensive analysis that would demonstrate other ways that 'energy security' has been and continues to be understood and formed. Along these lines, other oil-producing states outside the region would also make good comparative studies, as well as good case-studies when applying a sociological approach. This is especially so with other non-democratic and postcolonial states.

Moreover, while this study's combined methodology can be attributed to other case studies, particularly oil-producing countries, and postcolonial states, it is essential to remember, as Claudia Aradau has argued, that methods are context-dependent

and constructed. Aradau writes: 'Methods develop in close relation to theoretical approaches, epistemological positions, and empirical problems.'¹²

Theoretically, this research has yielded useful insights that could be expanded to other cases. First, explicitly two-pronged sociological approach within critical security studies (utilising postcolonial approaches applied to the case of Oman) is the first of its kind. Second, given that the process of energy securitisation took an informal process carried out by a *network of experts* since 1920, it would be interesting to see how this process would carry out in settings outside the Gulf region. A comparative analysis between the Gulf region and Europe, for example, would bring new insights regarding the process of energy securitisation and how the concept of 'energy security' is formed depending on context. In many ways, the interpretation, formation, and construction of 'energy security' are context-dependent and must be explored in specific ways.

Further ways in which this study can be developed in the future would be to take the concept of *materiality* and utilise it to sketch how the transportation of technical and engineering matters have influenced the social, cultural, and political processes in the country. While this study focused on the role of energy companies in influencing social development in the country, it would be interesting to mirror the work of Mitchell in *Carbon Democracy* and zoom into the Gulf region and analyse the technical aspects of energy, its industry, and see their implications at present and in the future. Instead of using political economy as a framework for analysing energy security in Oman, this study's use of a sociological approach to securitisation meant focusing on how discourses and practices, experts and materiality produce complex articulations of 'energy' and 'security'.

Another way would include tracing other point of views and additional archives. In Chap. 3, for example, most of my analysis centred on archives obtained from the Indian Office Records thus focusing on one part of the story which included only correspondences to and from the British Office. While archives from the Omani side are non-existent, one might address this by interviewing Omani historians to incorporate their perspective into the country's historical narrative prior to 1970. In Chap. 4, again, rather than depending solely on British sources (archives) in order to obtain perspective, it would have been useful to look into correspondences from former US intelligence, military personnel, and American consultants working in Oman during the Cold War period from the National Archives in Washington DC. Ultimately, by delving into these additional sources we would, in turn, extend our inquiry into the network of experts while also including the everyday understandings of 'energy security' provided by the Omani people themselves.

Finally, because some researchers are from the country under study, as is the case with this author, they share many of the taken-for-granted, common sense understandings expressed in the material.¹³ This can cause difficulty since it is precisely the common-sense understanding that needs to be investigated. As a result, this research analysed why and 'how some statements are accepted as true or 'naturalised',

¹² Aradau (2013).

¹³ Jorgensen and Phillips (2002).

and others are not'.¹⁴ It considered the known energy challenges and the prevailing assumptions within their context, and the role of actors, the decision-making process, and the way policies are executed—this was closely analysed to avoid any potential biases. What is more, when it came to energy issues in the Sultanate, a wide range of stakeholders, policies, financing and programming mechanisms, cutting across many sectors, institutions, and authorities, were all involved. Therefore, it was difficult to analyse and cover all the discourses and practices in this research. However, the issues covered and analysed provide a sufficient snapshot of the discussions taken from a broad cross-section of interviews and document reviews.¹⁵

Conclusion

The formation of 'energy security' in Oman, which began with the first circulation of energy discourses in 1921, revealed how governance in Oman included and excluded certain actors through its energy policies. Through its use of sociological narrative and analysis, this study has aimed to illustrate how the need to explore for oil, as well as to exploit and control it, has collectively contributed to structuring energy discourse and practice in the country. By adopting a sociological framework within critical security studies and supplementing it with concepts used to analyse postcolonial states, the case of Oman has provided an ideal ground for the development of a project never before carried out in the Gulf region. While focusing on Oman, the analysis provided in this study has aimed to draw connections across societies, with the broader goal of providing a new methodology for analysing the production of discourses and practices in non-democratic contexts. It is my hope that this case study, of a non-Western example, can more generally benefit the fields of critical security and Gulf studies by providing a coherent framework by which to move away from the state centrism prevalent in most energy studies.

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Appendix A

List of Interviewees

*blue (identified); green (partially identified); red (anonymous)

Organisation		Name	Position
Public Authority for Electricity and Water	1.	Saleh Al-Rumhi	GM Policy and Strategy
	2.		High ranking official and expert
Supreme Council for Planning (SCP)	3.	HE Talal Al-Rahbi	Deputy Secretary General
	4.		Government employee worked on economics for over fifteen years
	5.	Dr Samir Ridhwan	Economic Advisor
Ministry of Commerce and Industry (MOCI)	6.		High-ranking official
Authority for Electricity Regulation (AER)	7.	Qais Al-Zakwani	Executive Director
Zubair Co.	8.	HE Mohammed Zubair	Economic Advisor to HM
Sohar Port & Free zone	9.		High-ranking representative
Consultant	10.	Mr Nicholas Patterson	Oil and Gas industry for over forty years
	11.	HE Dr Mohammed Al-Rumhy	Minister
Ministry of Oil and Gas	12.	HE Salim Al-Aufi	Undersecretary
	13.	Mohammed bin 'Oyoun	Former advisor
Ministry of Finance	14.	HE Nasser Al-Jashmi	Undersecretary
	15.	Taher Al-Amri	GM Finance
Ministry of Environment and Climate Affairs (MECA)	16.	HE Dr Mohammed Al-Tobi	Minister
	17.	Najeeb Al-Rawas	Undersecretary
Oman Power and Water Procurement Company	18.	Ahmed Al-Jahdhami	CEO (now CEO of Orpic)
	19.		Consultant working in the electricity sector in Oman for twenty years
	20.		In the energy sector for over fifteen years

Ministry of Foreign Affairs	21.		High ranking official
	22.	HE Sayyid Badr Hamad Al-Busaidi	Secretary General
	23.	Prof Sleiman Hadj	Office for Peaceful Nuclear Technology
	24.	Sheikh Saif Hashil Al-Maskari	Former Secretary General of GCC
British Embassy	25.		High ranking official
MENA Babcock International Group	26.	Dr Noel Guckian	Advisor and Former British Ambassador
Oman British Friendship Association	27.	Maqbool Sultan	Chairman and former Minister of MOCI
Petroleum Development of Oman (PDO)	28.	Raoul Restucci	Managing Director
	29.	Dr Abdullah Al-Lamki	Advisor, Former Deputy Managing Director PDO
BP Oman	30.	Michael Townshend	Head of Middle East
	31.	Yousuf Al-Ojaili	BP Oman President and former CEO of Omani Gas Company
	32.		High ranking official
	33.	Abdulrahman Al-Maskari	Process Engineer
	34.	Shabib Al-Maamari	Corporate Communication and External Affairs Manager, Former CEO of Injaz
	35.		Environmental specialist
	36.		High ranking official
State General Reserve Fund	37.		Former high-ranking official
Omani Economic Association	38.	Dr Mohamed Al-Harthy	Chairman
Oman Oil Company	39.	Isam Saud Al-Zadjali	CEO
Tasneea Technologies	40.	Dr Amer Rawas	Group CEO
Oman LNG	41.	Harib Al-Kitani	President and CEO
Sultan Qaboos University	42.	Dr Hatim Al-Shanfari	Economist
	43.	Prof Slim Zekri	HoD Natural Resources
Majlis al-Dawla (State Council)	44.		Parliamentary Member
Public Authority for Investment Promotion and Export Development, Ithraa	45.	HE Dr Salim Al-Ismaili	Chairman
	46.		Consultant/Economic Advisor
Capital Muscat Market	47.	Ahmed Al-Mukhaini	Economic Expert
Government entity	48.		Former high-ranking Minister
The Research Council	49.		High ranking official
	50.	Dr Abdullah Al-Zakwani	Director, Innovation Centre
Mubadala Petroleum	51.	Dr Abdulla Al-Yahya'e	President – Oman Branch
Environment Society of Oman	52.	Saada Al-Harthy	Environmental Researcher
Middle East Desalination Research Centre (MEDRC)	53.		High ranking official
Central Bank of Oman	54.		Economic and financial expert

Occidental	55.		Director in Oxy
Oman Water Society	56.	Zahir Al-Sulaimani	Chairman
Mott MacDonald Consultancy (British company since 1960s)	57.	Abdulkarim Al-Shanfari	Divisional Director and nephew of former Minister of Petroleum
Sultan Armed Forces (SAF)	58.	Michael Wilson	Retired Lieutenant General SAF, Royal Army of Oman (1976)
Sultan Armed Forces	59.	Lieutenant General Ahmad Hariith Al Nabhani	Chief of Staff Sultan's Armed Forces
Riyada (SME Authority)	60.	Khalid Al-Huraibi	Former Deputy Director of Riyada, and former managing director of Tawasul, former Corporate Communication and External Affairs Manager BP Oman
Former Ministry of National Economy	61.	Mahdi Al-Abdawani	Technical coordinator of the Committee for Formulating the fifth five-year development plan and Vision Conference: Oman 2020. He was also the Director General of Development and Planning in the Ministry of National Economy.
Oman LNG	62.	Hamed Al Nuamaani	Chief Executive Officer
OQ	63.	Musab Al-Mahrouqi	Former Group CEO of OQ
Energy Company in Oman	64.		Finance Director and Alternative Energy Expert
Tawazun	65.		Senior Official, working in Tawazun (the medium fiscal plan of Oman).

Interviews in the United Kingdom

British Government	66.	Sir Terence Clark	Former British Ambassador to Oman in 1990
	67.	Robert Alston	Former British Ambassador to Oman in 1986

Interviewed more than once in Oman (Follow-up)

Petroleum Development of Oman	68.	Mohammed Al-Ghareebi	In Country Value Development Manager
Shell Development Oman	69.	Chris Breeze	Managing Director/Chairman
Ministry of Oil and Gas	70.	HE Mohammed Al-Rumhy	Ministry of Oil and Gas
BP Oman	71.	Yousuf Al-Ojaili	BP Oman President and former CEO of Omani Gas Company
W. J. Towell Group	72.	HE Maqbool Sultan	Former Minister of Commerce and Industry
Impact Integrated	73.	Khalid Al-Huraibi	Chief Executive Officer
Waseda University, School of International Liberal Studies	74.	Abdullah Baabood	Professor specialises in the Arabian Gulf and the Middle East
Ministry of Energy and Minerals	75.	Dr Mohammed Al Rumhy	Minister of Energy and Minerals

Anonymous interviews

The following anonymous individuals specified how they would like to be identified.	76.		Former British high-ranking official that lived in Oman in the 1990s for over five years
	77.		Oil and Gas specialist for over thirty years in Oman and abroad
	78.		Former Minister that dealt with issues relating to the economy and development
	79.		Employee in the Royal Office
	80.		Employee in Duqm
	81.		Environmental specialist and academic
	82.		Scientist
	83.		Interview with anonymous individual works in the military sector
	84.		Financial expert for over twenty years
	85.		Government representative and economic advisor in foreign affairs
	86.		Anonymous senior employee working in PDO
	87.		Advisor in Ministry of Education
	88.		Anonymous interviewee who worked in the government sector for over twenty years
	89.		Economic and Financial analyst working in the Central Bank of Oman
	90.		Omani source who worked in high-ranking positions in the government for over thirty-five years
91.		Anonymous former high-ranking official that worked in both the private and government sector	
	92.		Economic Expert, with over fifteen years' experience in Oman
	93.		Energy Expert, working on strategies in the oil and gas sector for over twenty years

Appendix B

Consent form for interviewees approved by King's College Research Ethics Committee

Ref: REP/14/15-54

CONSENT FORM FOR PARTICIPANTS IN RESEARCH STUDIES

Please complete this form after you have read the Information Sheet and/or listened to an explanation about research.



Title of Study:

Energy Development to 'Energy Security': The case of Oman

King's College Research Ethics Committee Ref: REP/14/15-54

Thank you for considering taking part in this research. The person organising the research must explain the project to you before you agree to take part. If you have any questions arising from the Information Sheet or explanation already given to you, please ask the researcher before you decide whether to join in. You will be given a copy of this Consent Form to keep and refer to at any time.

I confirm that I understand that by ticking/initialling each box I am consenting to this element of the study. I understand that it will be assumed that unticked/initialled boxes mean that I DO NOT consent to that part of the study. I understand that by not giving consent for any one element I may be deemed ineligible for the study.

Please tick
or initial

- 1. *I confirm that I have read and understood the information sheet dated 13 November 14 and Ref. REP/14/15-54 for the above study. I have had the opportunity to consider the information and asked questions which have been answered satisfactorily.
- 2. *I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without giving any reason. Furthermore, I understand that I will be able to withdraw my data up to September 2017.
- 3. *I consent to the processing of my personal information for the purposes explained to me. I understand that such information will be handled in accordance with the terms of the UK Data Protection Act 1998.
- 4. *I understand that my information may be subject to review by responsible individuals from the College for monitoring and audit purposes.
- 5. I understand that confidentiality and anonymity will be maintained and it will not be possible to identify me in any publications
- OR
- 6. Anonymity is optional for this research. Please select from the following three options:
 - a. I agree to be fully identified
 - b. I agree to be partially identified
 - c. I wish to remain anonymous
- 7. I agree that the research team may use my data for future research and understand that any such use of identifiable data would be reviewed and approved by a research ethics committee. (In such cases, as with this project, data would/would not be identifiable in any report).
- 8. I understand that the information I have submitted will be published as a report and I wish to receive a copy of it.
- 9. I consent to my interview being audio/video recorded.

 Name of Participant Date Signature

 Lamya Harub Al-Kharusi Date Signature

Appendix C

Approved Information Sheet for Interviewees (Dated 13 November 2014)

INFORMATION SHEET FOR PARTICIPANTS

REC Reference Number: *REP/14/15-54*



Title of study

Energy Development to 'Energy Security': The case of Oman.

Invitation Paragraph

I would like to invite you to participate in this research project, which forms part of my PhD Research. You should only participate if you want to; choosing not to take part will not advantage you in anyway. Before you decide whether you want to take part, it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what your participation will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. Ask me if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information.

What is the purpose of the study?

The aim of the study is to explore how 'energy security' is understood and governed in the Omani context. I am also interested in understanding how Oman's domestic policy on 'energy security' links to its foreign policy. Specifically, I am looking at interviewing high-ranking officials and employees from various ministries (e.g., Foreign Affairs, Finance, Commerce and Industry, National Economy, Oil and Gas, etc.). I will also be conducting semi-structured interviews with key participants that

include high-ranking officials from government and non-governmental organisations and energy-related authorities.

Why have I been invited to take part?

You have been invited to take part because you fit the profile mentioned above and your knowledge and expertise will be of great value to my research.

Do I have to take part?

Participation is voluntary. You do not have to take part. You should read this information sheet and if you have any questions feel free to contact my supervisor at claudia.aradau@kcl.ac.uk. You should not agree to take part in this research until you have had all your questions answered satisfactorily.

What will happen to me if I take part?

If you decide to take part, you will be given this information sheet to keep and will be asked to sign a consent form. At a time, convenient for you, I will then contact you to discuss the interview procedure with you. On request, you will be given the interview topic guide. With your consent, I will arrange to interview you in a private area (for confidentiality reasons) on premises where you work (or at a suitable venue in a local public site if you prefer).

The interview will take approximately 1 h and based on the interview topic guide, but it is designed to be flexible to meet your needs. The interview will be recorded, subject to your permission. Recordings of interviews will be deleted after transcription. Even if you have decided to take part, you are still free to cease your participation at any time and to have research data/information relating to you withdrawn without giving any reason up to the point of publication in September 2017.

What are the possible risks of taking part?

There are no foreseeable risks in participating in the study. The main disadvantage to taking part in the study is that you will be donating around an hour of your time to take part. It is possible that you may find answering some of the questions challenging. This is unlikely but if it were to occur the interview could be terminated at any time.

Will my taking part be kept confidential?

What is said in the interview is regarded as strictly confidential and will be held securely until the research is finished. Your participation is entirely voluntary. If you change your mind, you are free to stop your participation and to have your data withdrawn without giving any reason up to the point of publication in September 2017. All data for analysis will be anonymised. In reporting on the research findings, I will not reveal the names of any participants or the organisation where you work. At all times, there will be no possibility of you as individuals being linked with the data.

The UK Data Protection Act 1998 will apply to all information gathered within the interviews and held on password-locked computer files and locked cabinets within King's College London. No data will be accessed by anyone other than me; and

anonymity of the material will be protected by using false names. No data will be able to be linked back to any individual taking part in the interview. You may withdraw your data from the project anytime up to the point of publication in September 2017. All recordings of data on audio-equipment will be deleted after transcription. If you ask me to withdraw your data at any time after 6 months of the conducted interview date, I will remove all traces of it from the records.

How is the project being funded?

The Ministry of Higher Education of the Sultanate of Oman is funding this research. For further information, visit: www.mohe.gov.om. The King's College London Research Ethics Committee has also approved this study.

What will happen to the results of the study?

The completed project will be submitted in September 2017. Following the requirements for PhD completion at King's College London. It is possible that parts of the project will be published. I can, if desired, send you the thesis upon completion for your perusal.

What if I have further questions, or if something goes wrong?

If you have any questions or require more information about this study, please contact me using the following contact details:

Ms Lamyia Harub

Department of Political Economy

Faculty of Social Science & Public Policy

King's College London

Strand Campus

London

WC2R 2LS

lamya.harub@kcl.ac.uk

Tel: + 447,885,666,952, + 96,896,778,966

If this study has harmed you in any way or if you wish to make a complaint about the conduct of the study you can contact King's College London using the details below for further advice and information: **Dr Claudia Aradau, Reader in International Politics, Department of War Studies, School of Social Science and Public Policy** claudia.aradau@kcl.ac.uk.

Thank you for reading this information sheet and for considering taking part in this research.

Appendix D

According to Royal Decree No. 37/97, the Financial Affairs and Energy Resource Council considers the following roles

<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Adopt financial policies and plans as well as the necessary measures to implement them2. Discuss the general state budget for projects3. Study funds for economic development projects4. Approve requests that exceed the approved appropriations for the establishment of a development project more than 10% of the estimated cost of the approved five-year plan, provided that the implementation of the tender supports the Tender Board or the Internal Tender Committee or sub-Committee5. Decide on requests for additional appropriations submitted by ministries and government units while taking into account the applicable laws6. Consideration of the final state accounts to observe the organisation of the laws in preparation for submission to His Majesty the Sultan7. Approval to write off the losses of public funds beyond the value of ten thousand rials Omani at a time. In absence of those responsible for losses or if you cannot know despite the necessary investigation. The approval of the value of losses incurred by government cars from the government's side—regarding exceeding the value of five thousand rials Omani at a time—the offended is exempt from this value in whole or in part with a maximum of ten thousand rials Omani. In all cases, the write-off or loading on the side of the government or the exemption at the request of the Minister supervising the Ministry of Finance. According to the proposal, a competent Minister or Head of a government unit or the Board may write off losses or upload to the government side with a total of over five hundred thousand rials Omani per year8. Consider the policies and procedures employing state funds9. Consider the monthly statement provided by the Ministry of Finance on the development of the financial position of the state and by the actual spending on various state budget items, and the status of the state accounts with local and foreign banks and the status of aid and loans and the balance of existing commitments	<ol style="list-style-type: none">10. Consider the exploration and production concessions in the field of oil and natural gas in accordance with the laws of the organisation to do so11. Consider projects that use oil or natural gas as materials with major ore relics study and obligations that may ensue because of the implementation of these state enterprises12. Consideration of the State's investment in the field of oil and natural gas and related industries13. The development of public policy governing and the relationship between the state companies engaged in the production and transportation of oil and natural gas14. Approval of the foundations on which follow when determining the selling price of oil and gas as well as determine the sale price for domestic consumption15. Supervision of the oil reserve fund16. Drawing plans and policies for the development of water resources. Explore more of them, maintain and exploit the best use in light of the overall development of state plans17. Review and approval of the long-term national plan for the development of water resources and submitted to His Majesty the Sultan for approval18. Take the necessary measures to guide the exploitation of water reserves of the Sultanate to serve the agricultural and development plans and controls the use of this stock to the extent that does not affect the available quantities19. Review and approval of proposals for cooperation with the common interest of the development of water resources of countries through bilateral agreements and regional and international organisations specialised20. Financial policies, plans and procedures for the evaluation of energy resources and so on a regular basis to confirm the agreement with specific goals and with international and regional financial and economic variables considered in the development of these policies, plans and procedures21. Any other functions determined under Laws or Royal Decrees22. Any other topic is referred to His Majesty the Sultan
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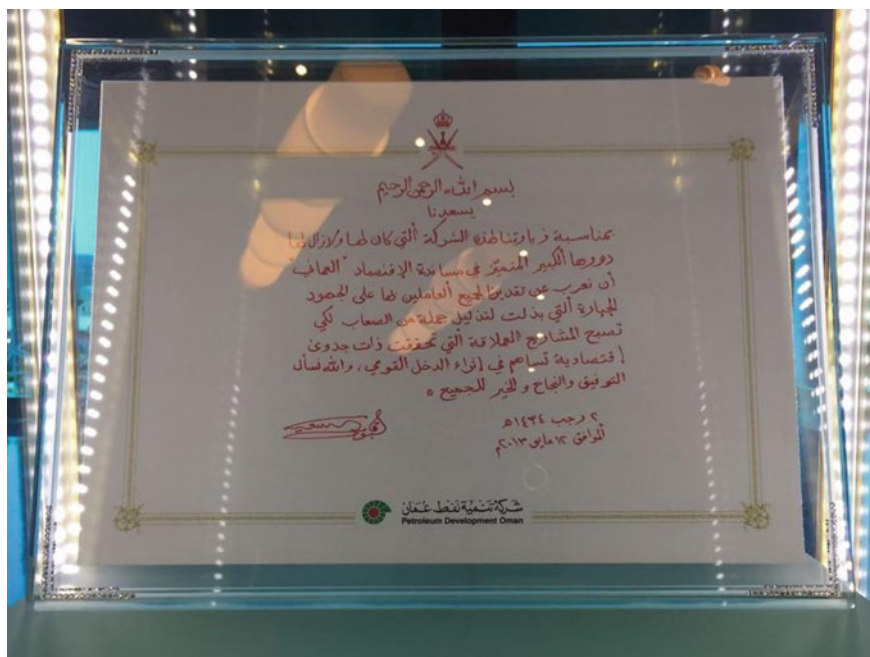
Appendix E

Image showing an Omani crowd listen to speeches during the 2011 protest in Muscat (image taken from the Getty)



Appendix F

Image from Petroleum Development of Oman headquarters of Qaboos bin Said's hand-written message to the company during his visit on 12 May 2013 (image taken by author of this study)



Appendix G

Oman Vision 2040 Priorities and Strategy Direction Mapped out with the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

Priority	Strategy Direction	SDG Mapping
Education, Learning, Scientific Research and National Capabilities	Inclusive education, lifelong learning, and scientific research that leads to a knowledge society and competitive national talents	Direct: SDGs 4, 8, 9 Indirect: SDGs 7, 17
Health	A leading health system with international standards	Direct: SDG 3 Indirect: SDG 6
Citizenship, Identity, National Heritage and Culture	A society that is proud of its identity and culture, and committed to its citizenship	Direct: SDG 11 Indirect: SDGs 1, 10, 14
Well-being and Social Protection	A decent and sustainable life for all	Direct: SDGs 3, 11 Indirect: SDGs 1, 2, 14, 15
Economic Leadership and Management	A dynamic economic leadership with renewable competencies and operating within an integrated institutional framework	Direct: SDGs 8, 9, 16 Indirect: SDGs 12, 17
Economic Diversification and Fiscal Sustainability	A diversified and sustainable economy that embraces knowledge and innovation; operates within integrated frameworks; attains an accomplished competitiveness; keeps abreast of the industrial revolutions, and is fiscally sustainable	Direct: SDGs 8, 9 Indirect: SDGs 7, 12, 16
Labour Market and Employment	A dynamic labour market that attracts talent and is responsive to demographic, economic, knowledge and technological change	Direct: SDGs 8, 9
The Private Sector, Investment, and International Cooperation	An empowered private sector that drives a competitive and globally integrated economy	Direct: SDGs 8,17
Governorates Development and Sustainable Cities	Comprehensive geographical development, following a decentralised approach, that develops a few urban centres and utilises land in an ideal and sustainable way	Direct: SDGs 8, 10, 11 Indirect: SDGs 14,15
Environmental and Natural Resources	Ecological systems that are effective, balanced and flexible to protect the environment and sustain its natural resources in support of the national economy	Direct: SDGs 6,7, 11,12,14,15 Indirect: SDG 13

(continued)

(continued)

Priority	Strategy Direction	SDG Mapping
Legislative, Judicial and Oversight System	A participatory legislative system A judicial system that is independent, specialised and swift; and an oversight system that is effective and transparent	Direct: SDG 11 Indirect: SDG 12
Partnership and Integration of Roles	A balanced partnership and an effective regulatory role of government	Direct: SDGs 16,17
Governance of the Administrative Apparatus, Resources and Projects	Flexible, innovative and future-shaping administrative apparatus that embraces good governance	Direct: SDG 16

Appendix H

Ministerial changes and restructuring that took place under the leadership of Sultan Haitham bin Tarik

Institutions Staying the Same	Comments	
Ministry of Social Development	New minister and undersecretary	
Ministry of Education	Same minister, new undersecretaries	
Ministry of Health	Same minister, one undersecretary changed	
Oman Technology Fund (OTF)	Different CEO	
OLD STRUCTURE(S)	CHANGE	NEW STRUCTURE
1. Ministry of Manpower	Transfer and Merger into new Ministry	Ministry of Labour
2. Ministry of Civil Service		
3. Civil Service Council		
4. National Training Fund		
5. National Centre for Employment		
1. Ministry of Transportation	Merger	Ministry of Transportation, Communications, and Information Technology
2. Ministry of Technology and Communications		
1. Culture Sector from the Ministry of Heritage and Culture	Merger	Ministry of Culture, Sports, and Youth
2. Ministry of Sports Affairs		
3. Ministry of Arts Affairs		
4. National Youth Commission		
1. Ministry of Justice	Merger	Ministry of Justice and Legal Affairs
2. Ministry of Legal Affairs		

(continued)

(continued)

Institutions Staying the Same	Comments	
1. Heritage Sector from the Ministry of Heritage and Culture	Merger	Ministry of Tourism and Heritage
2. Ministry of Tourism		
3. Heritage Sector from the Public Authority for Crafts Industries		
1. Water Sector and Food Safety and Quality Centre from the Ministry of Regional Municipalities and Water Resources	Merger and transfer	Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries, and Water Resources
2. Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries		
3. Public Authority for Stores and Food Reserve		
1. Municipalities Sector from the Ministry of Regional Municipalities and Water Resources	Transfer into existing Ministry Transfer into the governorate structure, which reports to the Ministry of Interior	Ministry of Interior
2. Municipality of Muscat		
3. Municipality of Sohar		
4. Municipality of Musandam		
1. Ministry of Industries and Commerce	Merger	Ministry of Industry, Commerce, and Investment Promotion
2. Public Authority for Investment Promotion and Exports Development		
3. Competition Protection and Monopoly Prevention Centre		
1. The Research Council	Transfer into existing ministry and merger	Ministry of Higher Education, Research, and Innovation
2. DG of Professional Training and DG of Professional Standards and Curriculum Development from the Ministry of Manpower		
1. Ministry of Information	Merger and transfer into existing ministry	Ministry of Information
2. Oman Establishment for Journalism, Publication, and Advertisement		
3. Public Authority for Radio and Television		
4. Media Training Centre		

(continued)

(continued)

Institutions Staying the Same	Comments	
5. DG of Communications from the Secretariat General of the Council of Ministers		
1. Ministry of Housing	Transfer into existing ministry	Ministry of Housing and Urban Planning
2. Urban Planning Sector from the Supreme Council for Planning		
Environment Sector from the Ministry of Environment and Climate Affairs	Transfer into new authority	Environment Authority
Climate Sector from the Ministry of Environment and Climate Affairs	Transfer into existing authority	Civil Aviation Authority
Non-Urban Planning Sectors from the Supreme Council for Planning	Transfer into new ministry	Ministry of Economy
National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI)		
1. Ministry of Oil and Gas	Merger	Ministry of Energy and Minerals
2. Public Authority of Mining		
1. Taxes Authority	Transfer into existing ministry	Ministry of Finance
2. Public Authority for Privatization and Partnerships		
1. Public Authority for the Development of SMEs	Merger and transfer into new authority	Authority for the Development of SMEs
2. Al Rafd Fund		
3. Craftsmen Development Funds		
1. Implementation Support and Follow-up Unit (ISFU)	Merger and transfer into new authority	Vision 2040 Implementation Follow-up Unit
2. DG of Government Services Monitoring		

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- Anonymous Senior Employee working in Petroleum Development of Oman. 24 December 2014, Muscat.
- Mr Ahmed Ali Al-Mukhaini, former Assistant Secretary General for Information at the Omani *majlis al-shura* and currently an Economic Expert in Capital Market Authority. 29 December 2014, Muscat.
- Dr Salim Nasir Al-Ismaili, Chairman of *Ithraa* (Public Authority for Investment Promotion and Export Development). 1 January 2015, Muscat.
- Dr Hatim Bakheet Al-Shanfari, Member of the Board of Governors at the Central Bank of Oman, and Professor of Economics in Sultan Qaboos University. 1 January 2015, Muscat.
- Eng. Abdulrahman Al-Maskari, Process Engineer in BP Oman. 2 January 2016, Muscat.
- Anonymous BP engineer. 3 January 2016, Muscat.
- Economic Analyst working in the Central Bank of Oman. 4 January 2015, Muscat.
- Anonymous Oil and Gas Specialist for over twenty years in the industry. 6 January 2015, Muscat.
- Consultant working in the electricity sector in Oman for twenty years. 8 January 2015, Muscat.
- Anonymous High-ranking government official. 8 January 2015, Muscat.
- Mr Mohammed Salim Al-Tobi, Minister for Environment and Climate Affairs and formerly an elected member of the *Al-shura* (Consultative) Council. 11 January 2015, Muscat.
- High-ranking official from The Research Council. 14 January 2015, Muscat.
- Mr Michael Townsend, BP President - Middle East. 15 January 2015, Muscat.
- Sayyid Badr Hamad Al-Busaidi, Secretary General of Foreign Affairs, Oman. 18 January 2015, Muscat.
- Senior employee working in the Public Authority for Electricity and Water. 18 January 2015, Muscat.
- Anonymous government employee worked on economics for over fifteen years. 19 January 2015, Muscat.
- Eng. Ahmed Saleh Al-Jahdhami, Chairman for Oman Power and Water Procurement. 22 January 2015, Muscat.
- Mr Nick Pattison, former employee for Shell (joined in 1998) and Consultant for over 35-year experience in the oil sector. 25 January 2015, Muscat.
- High-ranking Representative of Sohar Port and Free-Zone. 25 January 2015, Muscat.
- Mr Qais Al-Zakwani, Executive Director for the Authority for Electricity Regulatory. 25 January 2015, Muscat.

- Mr Mohammed Ali Zubair, Economic Advisor for Sultan Qaboos. 27 January 2015, Muscat.
- Mr Zahir Khalid Al-Suleimani, Chairman of Oman Water Society. 28 January 2015, Muscat.
- Mr Najeeb Ali Al-Rawas, Undersecretary for Environment and Climate Affairs. 29 January 2015, Muscat.
- Former Minister that dealt with issues relating to the economy and development. 1 February 2015, Muscat.
- Dr Abdullah Al-Lamki, former Deputy Managing Director of Petroleum Development of Oman. 2 February 2015, Muscat.
- Mr Maqbool Ali Sultan, former Minister of Commerce, and Industry (1991–2011) and played a key role in the privatisation of the power sector. 4 February 2016, Muscat.
- Mr Dave Campbell, Vice President for Operations and Chief Operation Officer, BP Oman. 5 February 2015, Muscat.
- Anonymous individual works with the Military sector. 5 February 2015, Muscat.
- Mr Talal Al-Rahbi, Deputy-Secretary General of Supreme Council of Planning. 8 February 2015, Muscat.
- Dr Samir Radwan, Economic Advisor to the Supreme Council for Planning and former Minister of Finance for Egypt. 8 February 2015, Muscat.
- Eng. Abdullah Al-Yahya'e, Country President of Mubadala Petroleum and former Director-General in the Ministry of Oil and Gas. 9 February 2015, Muscat.
- High-ranking employee working in *Ithraa* (Public Authority for Investment Promotion and Export Development). 10 February 2015, Muscat.
- Anonymous interviewee who worked in the government sector for over twenty years. 15 February 2015, Muscat.
- Eng. Isam Saud Al-Zadjali has been Chief Executive Officer at Oman Oil Company, formerly President and General Manager of Occidental of Oman. 16 February 2015, Muscat.
- Interview with Senior employee in Occidental Petroleum Oman. 16 February 2015, Muscat.
- Eng. Nasser Al-Jashmi, Undersecretary of the Ministry of Finance and former Undersecretary of the Ministry of Oil and Gas. 17 February 2015, Muscat.
- Dr Mohammed Al-Rumhy, Minister of Oil and Gas. 18 February 2015, Muscat.
- Mr Raoul Restucci, Managing Director of Petroleum Development of Oman. 19 February 2015, Muscat.
- Ms Saada Al-Harathi, Programme Director for the Environmental Society of Oman. 19 February 2015, Muscat.
- Anonymous Omani scientist and researcher for over thirty years. 19 February 2015, Muscat.
- High-ranking official in the Ministry of Commerce and Industry. 10 March 2015, Muscat.
- Mr Michael Wilson, former Lieutenant General and soldier in the Sultan Armed Forces Royal Army of Oman during the 1970s. 16 January 2016, Muscat.
- Sheikh Saif Hashil Al-Maskari, Former Secretary General of the GCC secretariat. 31 January 2016, Muscat.
- Former Minister working in the government for over thirty-five years and was very influential in many decision-making in government. 15 February 2016, Muscat.
- Anonymous former High-ranking official that worked in both the private and government sector. 7 May 2016, Muscat.
- Sir Terence Clark, Former British Ambassador to Iraq (1986) and to Oman (1990) and British Diplomat in the Middle East. 16 March 2016, London.
- Mr Robert Alston, Former British Ambassador to Iran and then Oman (1986) and current Chairman to the Anglo-Omani Society. 17 March 2016, London.
- Former High-ranking British official that lived-in Oman for over five years and continues to fly back and forth to Oman. 17 March 2016, London.
- Eng. Abdulkarim Al-Shanfari, nephew of former Minister of Petroleum, Fisheries and Minerals, has a scientific and engineer background, is currently working in Mott MacDonald Group (where his father is the Director for the Group). 25 April 2016, Muscat.
- Lieutenant General Ahmad Harith Al-Nabhani, Chief of Staff Sultan's Armed Forces. 26 April 2016, Muscat.

- Eng. Yousuf Al-Ojaili, former CEO of Oman Gas Company and current BP Oman President. 26 April 2016, Muscat.
- Anonymous Senior employee working in Petroleum Development of Oman. 17 July 2016, Muscat.
- Mr Shabib Al-Maamari, Corporate Communication and External Affairs Manager for BP Oman, and former executive director of Injaz. 5 October 2016, Muscat.
- Mr Khalid Al-Huraibi, former Deputy Director of Riyada, former Managing Director of Tawasul, and former Corporate Communication and External Affairs Manager BP Oman. 13 October 2016, Muscat.
- Eng. Mohammed Al-Ghareebi, In-Country Value Development Manager for Petroleum Development of Oman. 13 October 2016, Muscat.
- Mr Chris Breeze, Country Chairman at Shell Development Oman. 17 October 2016, Muscat.
- Anonymous Board of Director in Oman Society for Petroleum Services. 19 October 2016, Muscat.
- Mr Mahdi Al-Abdawani, Technical Coordinator for the Committee for Formulating the fifth Five-Year Development Plan, and Vision Conference: Oman 2020. He was also the Director General of Development and Planning in the Ministry of National Economy. 10 April 2017, Muscat.
- Eng. Salim Al-Aufi, Undersecretary in the Ministry of Oil and Gas. 17 August 2017, Muscat.
- Hamed Al Nuamaani, Oman LNG CEO. 18 December 2021, Muscat.
- Senior Official, working in Tawazun (the medium fiscal plan). 4 January 2022, Muscat.
- Economic Expert, with over 15 years' experience in Oman. 7 January 2022, Muscat.
- Khalid Al-Huraibi, CEO of Impact Integrated. 13 January 2022, Muscat.
- Ahmed Saleh Al-Jahdhami, Chairman for Oman Power and Water Procurement. 22 January 2015, Muscat.
- Musab Al-Mahrouqi, Former Group CEO of OQ. 13 December 2021, Muscat.
- Energy Expert, working on strategies in the oil and gas sector for over 20 years. 23 December 2021, Muscat.
- Dr Mohammed Al Rumhy, Minister of Energy and Minerals. 23 December 2021, Muscat.
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