South Asians in the Indian Ocean World

This article discusses the cultural currents present in the two Persian Gulf states Kuwait and the United Arab Emirates (UAE). Although the influx of different South Asian populations does not vary greatly between either state, and non-citizens comprise a majority of the population, the ways in which outside cultures live and adapt differs quite a fair amount. The article specifically discusses differences in language, policing, and gender practices. The non-citizens, or expatriates, discussed are laborers from other Asian nations who have come to work in the Persian Gulf. The author discusses the social ranks of different nationalities in each state as well as what these different ranks are entitled to. In general, life for expatriates in the Persian Gulf states is better than the life they would live in their home countries. After the similarities are brought up, they are then set aside and the differences between the two states are analyzed. Differences include: a more evenly spread class system in the UAE versus a wide and distinct gap in Kuwait, more Muslims in Kuwait and more Hindus in the UAE, Arabic spoken at all levels in Kuwait versus Arabic spoken only at the state level in the UAE, Authorities from other Arab states in Kuwait versus UAE-familiar authorities in the UAE, and less independent women in Kuwait versus more independent women in the UAE. The article closes by mentioning again the differences between the two states, ultimately “pointing one society toward the Middle East and the other toward South Asia.”

Questions:

1. Why have two states with such similar backgrounds ended up with such dissimilar cultural practices?
2. What other examples exist of this type of extreme globalization? Are there other non-gulf states where the majority of the population is non-native?
3. Is the Indian Ocean the main source of these types of massively global states? Would this globalization have happened in the same way were it not for British or other outside involvement? Correlations between Indian Ocean states has been
prevalent for centuries so it seems that European involvement must have played some kind of necessary, major role, but perhaps this is not the case.