CHAPTER III

REGIONAL INFLUENCES ON EXPERIMENTS IN POLITICAL LIBERALISATION

The chapter considers trends toward genuine democratization. In that context, much discussion focuses on types and levels of political liberalization. Political liberalization and political democratization are two processes that must be distinguished from each other. Whereas democratization, with a focus on popular political participation and elite accountability, requires political liberalization (the promotion of individual freedoms and rights), the latter can happen without the former. Although political liberalization can be witnessed throughout much of the Arab world, movement toward genuine democratization, enshrined and consolidated in both constitutional arrangements and political practices, is rare. Yet, as one regional analyst argues, “it is no longer possible to delay the establishment of the pluralistic, democratic state in our Arab world because we need the benefits that such a state provides – good governance, marked by transparency, accountability and participation at the grass-roots level in the march of the nations.” The following chapter explore the extent of genuine progress toward democratization and the degree to which it has in fact been eluding the region despite the urgency with which true change must be pursued if the countries of the region are to overcome the “tremendous challenges . . . in achieving the levels of human development that only good governance, including its political aspects, can ensure.”

Democratisation in the Arab World and Africa proceeds unnoticed. It could be that traditional images and stereotypes of Arabs and Muslims are so deeply engraved in the minds of people in the West that the notion of democracy among Arabs and Muslims is still- for Many- unthinkable. The origins of political parties in the West Asia go back to the seventh

century, when schisms within Islam began to emerge. Even though those parties lacked some attributes of modern political parties in Western Europe and the USA, they clearly contained some important elements that characterise modern political parties. If one uses the characteristics of political parties used by LaPalombara and Weiner, it becomes clear that some of the political movements of early Islam were not the religious movements that they were- and still are- considered to be. Early sects within Islam, including that of Shiite Islam, started as a movement seeking not only a change of policy by the ruling group, but the seizure of power itself. And although the movement was centred on the leadership of "Ali, it continued long after his death. The later theological characteristics of Shiite Islam were intended to distinguish the movement sharply from its rival, Sunni, version of Islam. Similarly, the Kharijites enjoyed all the characteristics of political parties, if a party is understood to mean "an association that activates and mobilizes the people, represents interests, provides for compromise among competing points of view, and becomes the proving ground for political leadership".

The roles of political parties and movements in the Arab world did not diminish because of an inhibiting cultural environment, but because of repressive political conditions. The Ottoman empire, for example, stifled political activities and endorsed only one version of truth, and one authorised political line, not different from the certainty of truth contained in Plato's theory of the Forms. The millet system, which recognised juridically the cultural, social and religious autonomy of the various sects living within the empire in matters of personal status laws, encouraged-and in fact insisted on- the assumption of representative responsibilities by the clerical establishments within the various sects. This later blurred the lines between nationhood and sectarian consciousness, which explains why the word milli in Persian and Turkish means "national". The notion of ummah, as an all-encompassing community of believers, could be seen as one that is incompatible with the requirements for pluralistic political institutions. But despite Quranic references to the

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ummah, and despite the desires and wishes of ordinary Muslims, the Muslims were never united, not even during the reign of Muhammad. Civil war, known in Arabic as al-fitnah al-kubrah (the Great Sedition), broke out among Muslims in the wake of Muhammad’s death. Islamic history bears witness to the inability- and unwillingness- of Muslims to agree on matters relating to faith and government.

Orientalists, and Muslim wishful thinkers, have been presenting an image of Muslims united against everybody else, while Muslims have been at war against one another perhaps more than they have been against non-Muslims. Tracing original roots of party politics in Islamic/Arab history remains outside the scope of this chapter. It was this century that introduced Western-style political parties into the region. The colonial- and semi-colonial- period witnessed the rise of political parties as new voices of political expression. They were intended, by some colonial authorities, not as a supplement to traditional leaderships of families, tribes and clerics, but perhaps as a possibly useful alternative. Far from that, modern party politics did not replace old, traditional forms of leadership and organisations. In the language of James Bill and Robert Springborg, the informal groups in Arab society penetrated and dominated the formal groups, including modern political parties. Many forms of informal groups, like the family, tribe, sect and the clique, have shaped, and in many cases helped produce, political parties. To emphasise the increasing role of political parties in the Arab world is not to expect inevitable democratisation in those countries where political parties have been active, and is not to expect the political parties themselves to lead the process of democratisation, although they remain its main beneficiaries. But political parties have to face their own record, which does not leave many people comfortable with their ability to lead the process of democratisation. Professional associations, like syndicates of lawyers, physicians, journalists, artists, university professors, and teachers may enjoy a credibility that political parties do not have anymore. Professional associations could be entrusted

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8 This has been eloquently represented in the writings of the influential Orientalist Bernard Lewis.
9 This does not mean, of course, that colonial powers fought traditional forms of organisation and loyalty. In many cases, colonial governments used the tribal and sectarian systems to their own advantage, especially when faced with the sophisticated political threat of effective political parties, like the communists in Iraq during the monarchist period.
with the task of political transformation and democratisation because they appear less corrupt and rigidly organised than political parties. In all countries where democratization- as a process- has begun, professional associations are asserting themselves.

The high energy prices of the past few years have brought the Arab world the highest growth rates in nearly three decades. In the oil-exporting countries, the oil boom has gone hand in hand with surging fiscal and external surpluses, shrinking public debts and raising levels of foreign reserves. This windfall has been shared by the non-oil-exporting countries through investment flows, remittances, and trade. These developments appear to have dramatically transformed the economic prospects of the region, bringing a renewed sense of optimism and overshadowing the heightened geopolitical insecurity of the past few years. As long as energy prices remain at their present high levels, it is safe to suggest that the Arab economies —especially those endowed with substantial oil and gas reserves—could sustain the ongoing prosperity for a while. But therein lays the danger as well. What if oil prices take an unexpected downward dive, as they have done over the past three decades? More worrisome, what if the current prosperity postpones the adoption of structural reforms needed to achieve international competitiveness and sustain the current growth momentum? After all, oil booms have traditionally provided breathing space for governments and delayed the implementation of reform programs. Such concerns about the long-term prospects of the region and the likely trajectory of reform are shared by international observers and, more importantly, policymakers and the general public in the Arab world. Yet only a few regular assessments of economic developments in the Arab world are produced, notwithstanding the increased relevance of the region’s energy resources, financial liquidity, and geopolitics to the stability of the world economy. In addition, the region suffers from serious gaps in the availability of basic economic and financial indicators, not to mention a lack of transparency in policymaking and limited accountability in reviewing outcomes.
STATE, CIVIL SOCIETY AND DEMOCRATIC TRANSITIONS

Recent years have witnessed a proliferation of studies on the role of political, economic, social and cultural dynamics in bringing about processes of democratic transition. While many of these studies differ on the degree of importance that they attribute to the various forces responsible for the democratization process, most agree that, at some point in the transition, either before the actual demise of the non-democratic state or afterwards, civil society develops and plays a crucial role in influencing the political system.11 For most democratic theorists, who tend to see democratization processes and outcomes as contingent on the confluence of international and domestic actors and developments (democratic contagion, state breakdown, class actors, pacted negotiations, etc), a democratic civil society develops after the actual process of transition from an authoritarian to a democratic state has taken place.12 There have been others, however, arguing mostly from a sociological and cultural perspective, who maintain that civil society frequently develops before, and is in fact a main cause of, the transition to a democratic system.13 In either case, both camps agree that civil society is one of— if not the— crucial phenomena that takes shape and becomes influential during processes of democratic transition. Civil society organizations— defined here as self-organising and self-regulating groups with corporate identities that are autonomous from the state— may exist within any given social or political setting. But for them to become politically relevant, and more importantly, to become agents of democratisation, they must have three additional, specific characteristics: (1) they themselves must operate democratically,14 encompassing and respecting pluralism and diversity, thus in turn bestowing the virtues of democracy on their own members; (2) they must complement their own issue-driven agendas with implicit or explicit demands for political democracy, therefore adding to the pressures the state feels in opening up; and (3) they need either to


13 See, for example, C Bryant, ‘Civic nation, civil society, civil religion’, in Hall, *Civil Society*, pp 136-157.

gather sufficient powers on their own or, better yet, be complemented by other CSOs, in a process of horizontal relations of civil society within itself. Civil society, in other words, cannot by itself spark the overthrow of an authoritarian system and replace it with a democratic one. Neither can interest groups, which often have narrowly defined and specific agendas, simply take the place of political parties and replicate their functions.

Civil society must view political society as legitimate and be willing to work with and through it. As this section of the chapter will demonstrate later, one may find a plethora of CSOs in the Arab world (as well as in Africa), ranging from tribal confederacies to freemasons and syndicates belonging to traditional merchants (bazaaris). However, not meeting the three additional preconditions outlined above, none of these groups has so far served as a viable medium for societal democratisation or for increasing demands on the state to become more representative and/or accountable. The democratic contingency of civil society organisations relates to a second proposition, this one dealing with their initial appearance and subsequent rise in numbers. For CSOs to appear and become agents of political liberalisation, four sets of conditions must be in place. In broad terms, they include the weakening of the state resulting from its failure to deliver its promises or to fulfill many of its functions; the cultural alienation of the state from society; political effects of economic adjustment and liberalisation; and the existence of social actors able and willing to mobilise various constituents for specific goals that may be local or even national in scope. There are some functions that every state performs- the provision and building of infrastructure, for example- and there are functions that it promises to perform- stimulating economic growth and enhancing its citizens’ standards of living. Civil society organisations tend to develop in response to an actual or perceived breakdown in the functions of the state in some specific area, be it in the protection of the environment, helping the indigent, sponsoring literacy classes or religious seminars, helping expectant mothers, providing health care to needy communities, and so on. Thus they emerge and organise themselves to satisfy those needs and functions which the state has been unable or unwilling to deliver. CSOs also develop when existing state-affiliated or even largely independent organisations appear tainted in the popular eye (political parties, women’s rights groups, etc) because of their apparent or actual connections with the state.
The situation in the Arab world is completely different, with most Arab world states having effectively tied their own corporate identity with that of most or some of the more powerful social groups and organisations (e.g. the religious establishment), therefore curtailing much of society’s independence and autonomy. If autonomy has to do with the amount of power that state and society have in comparison to one another, then the state’s ownership of, or control over, the various economic resources found in society is of utmost importance. Under these circumstances, civil society is given no alternative but to look inward in order to find cooperative solutions to the decline in the living standard of its constituents.\footnote{P. Oxhorn. (1995). Organizing Civil Society: The Popular Sectors and the Struggle for Democracy, University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, p 44.}

In crisis situations, it is also a signal to other economic actors that they can, if they so choose, defect from the old political alliance on which the non-democratic state relies. In other words, the inability to avoid or adjust successfully to economic crisis increases the probability that authoritarian regimes will be transformed and reduces the capacity of authoritarian leaders to control the process of political change, including the terms on which they exist.\footnote{S. Haggard & R. Kaufman. (1995). The Political Economy of Democratic Transitions, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, pp. 7-8.} The potential ramifications for CSOs could be far-reaching, particularly in light of the increasingly freer environment within which they operate and the mounting pressures on the state. The breakdown of paternalistic, ISI strategies prompts the state to scale back its role, thereby reducing its ties to society (e.g. subsidies, etc). Civil society is no longer tied materially to the state, thus allowing it to organize itself in an autonomous fashion. Finally, CSOs are made up of social actors, some of whom are located strategically in society in terms of their cultural prestige, their access to communication networks and means of mass mobilisation, and the degree to which they can safeguard their autonomy from the state. Some of the more notable social actors that belong in this category include clergymen, intellectuals, community activists, union organisers, and the like. Having the opportunities and the facilities to organise into independent action from the state is one thing; doing so democratically and for larger democratic goals is quite another. Just because CSOs exist does not mean that their
individual or collective efforts will automatically amount to democratic pressures on the state. To facilitate a democratic transition, CSOs must inculcate the norms of tolerance, trust, moderation and accommodation. Contingency comes into play again, with some actors being democratically inclined at some points and in some contexts while others less so. The role of the clergy within Arab world is most illustrative.

In Arab world, many clergymen jealously guard their independence from the state and, especially in recent years, have seriously challenged the powers and legitimacy of the political elite, few are interested in giving popular currency to the ideals of democracy and in bringing about truly representative political systems. Reinforced by a long heritage of familiarity with the concept and practice of democracy in the region, the coming political transition was likely to result in a representative democracy. The situation in the Arab world has been quite different, however. Although some conditions favourable to the development and spread of democratically inclined civil society organisations have been present in a few Arab world countries, many more have been conspicuously absent. The rentier, corporatist states of the Arab world have been able to continue drawing rent revenues, albeit at much smaller rates compared with a decade or so ago, and to make good on the implicit and explicit promises that underlie their popular legitimacy. Most Arab world states have also been able to manipulate enough cultural norms and premises—be they Islam or charisma, nationalist sentiments or patrimonialism—still to retain evocative and emotional ties with broad strata of society. Moreover, while there has been some economic liberalisation in the Arab world, it has been neither enough nor in a direction that would result in a meaningful rolling back of the extensive reaches of the state.

This chapter makes a contribution toward closing this gap by assessing the competitiveness of Arab economies. Utilizing the results of the most recent World Economic Forum's Executive Opinion Survey, the chapter benchmarks the competitive

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performance of Arab countries against selected comparators. Having briefly analyzed some of the critical problems in Chapter I that impede democratic transition in the Arab World, this chapter documents some quantitative data on the status of democracy in Kuwait. This requires objective criteria for measuring the progress or regression of democracy over time. The chapter presents the annual Freedom House survey of the Arab countries for the year 2006 (See Table). But to give greater insight over time. An alternative composite Status of Democracy Index (SDI) has also been presented with the Table, designed by Saliba Sarsar. For the source of composition, the data related to some variables for Saudi Arabia and UAE have also been incorporated. Ms. Sarsar’s study is particularly interesting and illuminating not only because it compares the status of democracy over time, in 1999 and 2005, but also because the SDI comprises nine variables including the Freedom House Index. The first “four variables address governance and representative government. These mark how heads of state and members of the legislature are selected, as well as political party development, suffrage, and the maturity of political rights and civil liberties. The fifth variable measures media freedom as provided by the Freedom House annual survey. The sixth variable is religious freedom, derived from U.S. Department of State reports. The seventh variable measures the observance of human rights, derived from data provided by Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, and the U.S. Department of State. The eighth and ninth variables measure human development and economic freedom respectively, the first provided by the UN Development Index, and the second by the Heritage Foundation’s index of economic freedom, respectively. The SDI assigns each of these nine variables 2 points for a total of 18 points. Each score ranges from 0 to 2, with 0 being nonexistent and 2 being the highest measurement. For example, if the head of state or legislature is not elected, then that country receives a score of zero. Prohibition of political parties would also equate to a 0 while tight controls would merit a 1, and reasonable free functioning would score to a 2. Media freedom religious liberty, and respect for human rights are each easy to quantify: 0 for not free, 1 for partly free, and 2 for free. Human development is scored by level: 0 for low, 1 for medium, and 2 for high. Economic freedom, the last variable, is scored on the level of governmental interference in the economy, with 0 for strong, 1 for moderate, and 2 for low interference. It is then possible to convert the totals to a percentage for easy digestion.

18 'Quantifying Arab Democracy, Democracy in the Arab world' in Arab world Quarterly, Summer 2006.
Legend for Table:
A: 0 = no; 1 = indirect or partially free; 2 = yes
B: 0 = no; 1 = indirect or limited; 2 = yes
C: 0 = prohibited or nonexistent; 1 = controlled by government approval; 2 = reasonably free
D: 0 = none; 1 = some; 2 = yes
E: 0 = not free; 1 = pretty free; 2 = free
F: 0 = none; 1 = some; 2 = yes
G: 0 = not observed; 1 = partly observed; 2 = fully observed
H: 0 = low human development; 1 = medium development; 2 = high human development
I: 0 = strong governmental interference; 1 = medium government interference; 2 = low government interference

**TABLE I: STATUS OF DEMOCRACY INDEX'S (SDI), 1999, 2005.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S. No.</th>
<th>FACTORS</th>
<th>SAUDI ARABIA</th>
<th>KUWAIT</th>
<th>U.A.E</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Free Election of Head of State</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Free Election Legislature / National Council</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Political Parties</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Suffrage</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Media Freedom</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>Religious Freedom</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>Human Rights</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>Human Development</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>Economic Freedom</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>Total SDI</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.</td>
<td>% SDI</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.</td>
<td>Arab SDI Ranking</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>N.A.</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13.</td>
<td>Political Rights</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14.</td>
<td>Civil Liberties</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Another striking result for these countries is that they have relatively low rankings on indicators related to health and education when benchmarked against the group of advanced economies. Despite their relative wealth all four countries rank toward the bottom of the group on this pillar, particularly on indicators measuring access to primary education. On the positive side, most of these countries have made significant progress over the past three decades with respect to increasing educational enrollments, demonstrating the capacity to make further advances in the future. Aside from quantitative targets, the quality of outcomes in tertiary schooling needs to be enhanced to reverse the low valuation of educational credentials by the private sector.

Over the last half a century, Arab societies have witnessed a tremendous transformation of almost all aspects of socio-economic and political life. In the closing years of the millennium, the countries in the Arab world look very different from what they were in the aftermath of the Second World War. One of the most salient, and least analyzed, developments is the change in their educational system in bringing about democratization and liberalization. In the late 1990s, the great majority of young citizens in Kuwait had the opportunity to receive formal education. This dramatic shift in the educational system is different in many ways from the experience in other developing countries. After achieving political independence, most Third World states sought to develop their own human resources in order to be really independent from their former colonial masters. These countries, however, have suffered from a capital shortage. Simply stated, there are not enough financial resources to meet their ambitious plans. On the contrary, the Kuwaiti monarchy has enjoyed substantial surpluses of capital. Since the early 1950s, the regimes have accumulated huge wealth from oil revenues. After the boom in oil prices in the mid 1970s, Kuwait had to deal with an unusual dilemma, what to do with the extremely vast revenues from oil export. It seems that they decided to invest in three interrelated major fields: the creation of socio-economic infrastructure and public bureaucracy, the development of the agricultural and industrial sectors, and the improvement of social services including health care and education system. Thus, the creation and expansion of the public system of education can be strongly attributed to the rise in oil revenues. This strong connection between oil and education suggests that the
expansion of the latter was not in response to a well-articulated development plan. Rather, unlike many other countries, the expansion of the educational system in Kuwait was not part of a slow and gradual process of social and economic development. Instead, it was part of the newly-created welfare state where most of the social services, including schools, were offered for the indigenous population either completely free or for a minimum charge. The goal was to share oil revenues among the local population and to bring in democratization and liberalization. Moreover, these impressive social and economic achievements were not accompanied by similar changes in domestic culture and values. The mentality and attitudes of the citizens seem to have changed very little. As one scholar puts it, "modernization and economic growth raced far ahead of social and political development". This imbalance between economic growth and social development has produced a unique educational system in the region. The number of individuals with formal schooling is rising, but the quality of the education they receive does not correspond to the need of Kuwaiti and other Gulf societies. In other words, the educational policies pursued in the last several decades have contributed to a number of societal distortions. These include a mismatch between traditional and modern schooling, an imbalance between indigenous and foreign laborers, and a gender gap between men and women. In most developing countries which have embraced structural adjustment reforms, it is the social sector which has most severely been reduced, forcing women to make up for the shortfall.

In terms of gender justice and education, current statistics underscore the significant improvement and the remarkable expansion of educational opportunities at all levels for Arab women in the last two decades. A new born girl in the Arab world today has much better chance than her mother to attend school and finish college. Arab governments are committed and determined to augment educational opportunities and to make them accessible to all eligible women. It is firmly believed that without emancipating women from the bondage of illiteracy no real political, social or economic development can take place. Several studies in the Arab world show that the education of women is the most

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powerful weapon for improving their status as well as the most potent force of social change, and will touch every aspect of their life from the family to economics. For example, it was discovered that women's education is the best weapon against the population explosion. It was also shown that the educational attainment of the women determines the attitudes of others toward women and their role in their society. Men whose mothers had no formal education are inclined to oppose the notion of granting women equal political rights and equal employment opportunities. Quite the opposite is true of men whose mothers attended a university. Furthermore, women's participation in public life is proportionately related to the degree of education. As educational opportunities increase for women in the Arab world, so do their chances for integration in the labor force and moving up the employment ladder.\(^{21}\)

It may be argued that fundamental changes need to be introduced in the Gulf educational system in order to overcome these imbalances and to bring in democratization. For centuries the most common form of education in the Gulf monarchies was the *kuttab*, where a group of boys or girls were taught to recite the Qur'an and sometimes learned basic writing and arithmetical skills.\(^{22}\) This kind of education usually took place either in mosques or houses. There were no organized classrooms. Additionally, the sons of the ruling elites received religious education from the *ulama* (Muslim scholars). This traditional form of learning started to change at the end of the 19th century. A group of missionaries, usually referred to as the Arabian Mission, was founded in 1889 by an independent American Protestant group.\(^{23}\) The Mission opened its first school in 1892 in Bahrain\(^{24}\) but achieved a limited success in promoting modern education due to its close association with Christianity. Instead, the foundations of a modern school system were laid down in the early 1950s in most of the Gulf monarchies. Two important factors contributed to this development. First, the acute shortage of skilled indigenous manpower to meet the requirements of modernization. Second, the enormous rise in state revenues

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from the sale of oil meant that the financial resources to carry out an ambitious plan to promote public education were available. The result had been a tremendous expansion of educational facilities all over the region. It is important to point out that this impressive achievement was made, to a large extent, with the assistance of expatriate teachers from neighboring Arab countries, particularly Egypt, Jordan, Syria, and Lebanon. This apparent acute shortage of national teachers prompted the Gulf States to establish domestic teacher-training colleges which were later expanded into comprehensive universities. On November 28, 2008, MPs Abdullah Al-Roumi, Khaled Al-Sultan Bin Essa, Hassan Johar, Musallam Al-Barrak, and Marzouq Al-Hubaini Al-Azmi proposed a law to extend the mandatory retirement age for Kuwaiti teaching staff at Kuwait University from 65 to 70 years. The MPs argued that Item 32 of Law no. 15/1979 has denied the country services of able and intelligent professors by restricting the retirement age of Kuwaitis to 65 years. The public education at all levels is provided free of charge and, in some places, students are provided with a monthly allowance, uniforms, books, transportation, and other necessities. This close association between Gulf governments and the ruling families on the one hand and institutions of learning at all levels on the other has strengthened the governments' hand in controlling universities. Put differently, since the former provide all the funding for the latter, there is very little room for academic and political freedom. Universities were created by the governments to perform a specific job: to prepare citizens for employment in the expanding bureaucracy. In addition to creating comprehensive universities, the Gulf States established Islamic schools and universities. There are many reasons for the generous funding for these institutions. These include an attempt by the ruling families to appease the leaders of the religious establishment at home and, at the same time, to underscore their Islamic credentials abroad. These Islamic universities - with their traditional character and curriculum, easy admission requirements, and high stipends - attract a growing number of students particularly those who come from a low social class. Ironically, these schools and colleges have become the breeding grounds of populist Islamic ideas and ideals. In addition to these exclusive religious institutions, public education in the Gulf monarchies

is dominated by two characteristics. First, the curriculum of schools and colleges continue to be dominated by Islamic and Arabic studies.26 Given the shortage of vocational and technical training among the local population, the need for foreign manpower is likely to endure for the foreseeable future. Still, all the Gulf states have sought to "nationalize" their labor force. Thus, the "Kuwaitization," "Omanization," and "Saudization" of domestic employment have become important goals for the Gulf governments. The reason for this change is the necessity to generate jobs for the better educated but increasingly unemployed local population. Consequently, a number of Gulf states have initiated policies to replace foreign workers with nationals by establishing limits on hiring expatriate workers, setting minimum quotas for hiring nationals, and raising the cost of employment of non-nationals.27

The Arab region has witnessed a remarkable increase in the distance higher education domain over the past two decades. This significant progress, however, does not necessarily denote quality programs. A key problem is regarding how to ensure that a quality learning experience is being provided. Thus, the need for developing quality assurance frameworks for distance higher education institutions and programs in the Arab region is evident. With the development of quality assurance frameworks, some points should be considered: Historically and culturally, the Arab region has many features in common, in particular from the linguistic and religious standpoints; however, it is in many respects a highly inconsistent in terms of population, size and national income, resources, stability, prosperity and so forth. So the exact framework, which will be adopted by each country, will depend on the conditions prevailing and no single framework can be presented that is applicable to all universities in all Arab countries. Therefore, we need a number of skeletal or basic frameworks to start with, and will be ultimately set up within the context of each institution's own vision and mission, as well as, objectives and core values relative to distance education.

Of course, there is complex interplay among the separate elements that go together to make a quality distance education program; therefore, it is important that quality

assurance of all aspects of distance education programs be considered. Otherwise, the failure in assuring quality of one aspect may have a knock-on effect on the quality of the whole system. Given all issues highlighted in Chapter I, it seems honest to conclude that developing such a framework is essential for ensuring quality, but is not enough on its own to ensure quality distance education offerings. It should be regarded only as the beginning of an ongoing comprehensive process that has to be supported effectively to produce the desired results. For successfully executing such a framework, all essential synchronous conditions which foster quality assurance have to be present, such as integration of the quality assurance into the institution’s commitments, staff persuasion and engagement, commitment by each of the organizational units involved to ensure the quality in all of the services provided, and the development of a positive corporate culture.

**FACTORS AFFECTING THE DEMOCRATIZATION PROCESS**

The context of democratization studies on the Arab world has been set by the global trend towards democracy. The most important factor causing this trend was, of course, the disintegration of the Soviet Union. The disintegration brought about change at two different levels. First, new political systems had to be constructed in the former Soviet territories and in many of the states which had been heavily dependent on Soviet support. Second, pro-Western regimes were more vulnerable than before to demands for political liberalization. They could no longer use the ‘Communist threat’ as a justification for restricting political freedoms, for there was no such threat. The Western powers themselves, moreover, were no longer inhibited from exerting pressure for political reform by a fear that such pressures would drive these countries into the hands of an opposing camp. Major international actors in the region, such as the United States, must not dodge their responsibility for regional peace-making; American support for Israel’s policies in the region and American and Soviet intervention in regional politics during the Cold War have in large part created or compounded many of today’s problems. The Soviet Union has disappeared, but the United States survived the Cold War and has to

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confront its Cold War legacy in this, and other, regions of the world. Although the chapter makes some references to the application of its arguments in the Arab world, it remains largely at the theoretical level, leaving the practical application of the discussion to Kuwait that pick up on many of the main themes of education as a factor in liberalization and democratization.

A further important factor inducing political change stemmed from economic factors. The increasing emphasis which international financial institutions were giving to economic liberalization, from the mid-1980s onwards, posed new political challenges to the regimes in those countries where reform packages were imposed. The cuts in state expenditure inevitably lowered standards of living (at least in the short term). One strategy for meeting the resultant unpopularity was to institute a measure of political liberalization, thereby both diverting public attention and spreading the blame/responsibility for economic policy. Political liberalization was also used as a means to signal to international investors that the character of the regime was changing towards one which had more Western-style characteristics and which was therefore more safe for investment. The Arab world stands out as the region of the world where democracy is least in evidence. Very few of the political systems of the region can be regarded as liberal democratic, and for most of the populations of the area there is little indication that democratization is a short-term prospect. This phenomenon has been particularly apparent since 1992. Whereas from 1988 to 1991 democratization seemed to be making progress in the Arab world (with Egypt, Tunisia, Jordan, Morocco, Algeria, and Yemen all experimenting with liberal parliamentary systems), since 1992 there has been regress. The last parliamentary elections in each of the above-named countries have been less free, less open and less genuinely representative than the elections before. The most important achievement of democratization studies of the Arab world has been to conduct an enlightening debate on the reasons why the Arab world has been so little touched by the global trend. Much of the debate has revolved around the concept of

The latter concept refers not to the reality of a low level of democratisation in the region (in these terms, the Arab world is indeed 'exceptional' internationally), but to whether there are substantive long-term reasons why democracy has not proved, and will not prove, workable in the region. In other words, is it just a matter of time before the Arab world follows other parts of the world into democratisation, or is it likely to remain for the conceivable future outside of this process? The achievement, then, has not been one of reaching an agreed position on the causes for lack of democracy, but of clarifying the arguments which can be put forward to explain it-and perhaps identifying some of the key weaknesses in each argument. In what follows, I will present the main explanatory lines of analysis, commenting briefly on the strengths and weaknesses inherent in each. The first line of analysis, which rests strongly on a perception of the Arab world's long-term exceptionalism, is the explanation in terms of culture-especially the Islamic component of Arab world culture. It is contended here that the belief-system of Islam, embodying divinely-ordained prescriptions which cover a wide range of different aspects of social, political and economic life, negates the concept of popular sovereignty and renders it impossible to entertain a political system which functions according to majority votes. While this approach is still maintained in some quarters, it has been subject to strong and persuasive counter-arguments: the Islamic framework has a fluidity about it, leaving room for a wide variety of different interpretations, many of which have no problem in accommodating liberal parliamentary institutions; some Islamic countries have succeeded in establishing democratic systems (e.g. Malaysia and Turkey); and some elements in Islam are specifically favourable to democratic values (e.g. the emphasis placed on extending full participation in the sacred community to all, and on universalism, the 'rational systematisation of social life' and spiritual egalitarianism). The second line of analysis focuses on the structural relationship between state and society in the Arab world. The contention made is that social groupings (whether class formations or civil associations)

30 An issue of the Arab Studies Journal was devoted to 'Arab world Exceptionalism', see Arab Studies Journal, (1998). Spring, vol. 6, no. 1.
32 See Simon Bromley, 'Arab world Exceptionalism: Myth or Reality', in Potter et al., p. 333. Bromley is in this passage referring to some of the arguments put forward by E. Gellner. (1981), in Muslim Society. Cambridge University Press.
are in a weak and dependent position in relation to the state, and are not capable of impelling the state towards an agenda which reflects their political interest in achieving a stake in policy-making. The bourgeoisie, often regarded as imbued with a crucial role in leading the move towards democratization, has developed within a framework where its interests are closely interlinked with the interests of key elements in the state, and where it is dependent on these elements for contracts and licences. More broadly, it is dependent on the state for the suppression of radical threats to its position. The intelligentsia and the wider middle classes are similarly dependent on the state—many of the members of these strata being state employees. The industrial and service workers are kept in position through a combination of social welfare and oppression. The Arab world state has, it is contended, achieved this dominance over society due to a variety of different economic and politico-historical processes. Rentier income has accounted for a substantial part of government revenues (and not only in oil-producing states), such that the state has not been greatly dependent on revenues raised through tax from the population. The 'revolutions' which removed regimes based on the old landed classes and the urban notables were carried through by the military, which then used a carefully-constructed web of security, economic and political measures to ensure that no social or economic grouping could challenge the power of the new regime. National and international problems (such as those given rise by the legacy of imperialism and by political zionism) have often enabled the Arab world state to lay claim to a 'sacred mission' on behalf of the population, thereby justifying the construction of a large military/security infrastructure and the suppression of opposition as treason. The structural line of explanation has two significant advantages. First, although it is sometimes advanced as an argument for Arab world 'exceptionalism', it uses variables which can be of significance anywhere (although no doubt to differing degrees). It provides, therefore, a basis of comparability with democratization experience elsewhere, suggesting that the Arab world's political development may in the long-term not be greatly at variance with that in other parts of the developing world. Second, it enables differences between Arab world states to be

brought out: the factors do not impinge in the same way on every Arab world state, either in extent or in manner. The structural explanation, therefore, enables researchers to explain why some Arab world states have developed parliamentary systems with at least a veneer of democracy, while other have not. A difficulty about the structural approach, however, lies in reconciling it with the experience in East Europe—for there the state was even more dominant over society than it was in the Arab world, yet democratization occurred. The third line of analysis will be referred to here as the practical problems approach (in general the range of problems have mostly been described individually, rather than being welded together into an overall approach). The contention here is that Arab world governments are held back from democratizing by the very real problems which democratization would pose to the coherence and perhaps survival of the state. The main problems referred to are: the likelihood that elections would be won by an Islamist movement antithetic to the liberal democratic framework; that the process of economic liberalization, on which most of the states of the region are embarked, requires a strong government capable of adhering to unpopular decisions in the face of mass protest; that, given the strategic importance of the region, external powers would use a liberal democratic framework to buy influence and distort the political process; and that freedom of political organisation would encourage inter-ethnic and inter-religious conflict, as parties would base themselves on ethnic and religious loyalties. The practical problems approach benefits from the same two advantages as the structural approach: the variables used enable comparisons to be made between Arab world states and other states, and among Arab world states. A valid criticism, however, is that the approach may display a naively trusting attitude towards Arab world governments—it assumes that they would be happy to press forward with democratization if only the practical situation rendered it more straightforward. The practical problems may, perhaps, be more accurately characterized as excuses used by Arab world governments to mask their underlying refusal to compromise their hold on power. One line of analysis which has not been covered above is that of modernization theory, where emphasis is placed on the socio-

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economic prerequisites for liberal democracy. The main prerequisites which are identified are those of education, industrialization, social mobility, urbanization and standard of living. Although modernization theory may contain some useful insights, there is no reason to believe that it explains the slow pace of democratization in the Arab world relative to other developing countries. A number of Arab world countries score relatively highly on the above indices, yet they have been surpassed on the road to democratization by countries with lower scores. Identifying Inadequacies in Democratization Studies of the Arab world The academic debate on democratization in the Arab world has clearly made some good use of wider theoretical literature on democratization processes. There are, however, three respects in which perceptions in the wider literature have been given insufficient attention. First, the Arab world related literature purveys a romanticized conception of the nature and characteristics of liberal democracy. This occurs not through any explicit description of liberal democracy, but precisely through the absence of any analysis of the concept and its practical application. The concept hovers, like a mystical symbol, in the background of the discussion on democratization in the Arab world, with an implied assumption that liberal democracy constitutes an ideal polity where the common good is realized by means of the population deciding issues through the election of individuals who carry out the people's will. Yet the wider theoretical literature on democracy and democratization has, over a prolonged period, pointed to the unreality of this perception of democracy. As early as the 1940s, Schumpeter in Capitalism, Socialism and Democracy showed that liberal democracies are in fact managed by elites. Democracy should, he said, be re-defined in terms of 'an arrangement for arriving at political decisions in which individuals acquire the power to decide by means of a competitive struggle for the people's vote'. Schumpeter referred to the classical doctrine of democracy as having survived despite its lack of realism, acquiring the status of religious belief. Democracy, he said, had changed from a mere method that can be discussed rationally 'like a steam engine or a disinfectant', to an ideal and a mystical symbol. Much of the more recent theoretical literature has emphasized that

there are social and economic costs to democratization: it is likely to be elite-led, and
there is 'no room in the new democracies for either "social democracy" (the extension of
the democratic principle to the workplace, and to other institutions) or "welfare" or
"economic" democracy''. The practical effect of the failure to provide a realistic
conception of liberal democracy is that the political systems of the Arab world are being
compared with an ideal which does not exist in reality-hardly a fair comparison. It is not
surprising, therefore, that these political systems emerge in a poor light. It might be
useful if the advantages of democracy could indeed be discussed rationally 'like a steam
engine or a disinfectant', rather than occurring under the shadow of a mystical ideal. The
ideal-laden conceptualization of democracy has, moreover, had a negative impact on
empirical research on Arab world political systems. Having written off the political
systems of the area as being congenitally undemocratic, researchers have clearly felt that
it would be a waste of time to examine or analyse the participative or representative
aspects of the systems. There has consequently been very little empirical research on
either the elections or the parliamentary/consultative bodies of the Arab world. Yet there
are elements of accountability, representation and political conflict which are present in
these processes and institutions. Even when an election is rigged, it may be worth
considering what social groupings have been prepared to collaborate, and why voters
may still deem it worthwhile voting. Similarly, the study of government- dominated
parliamentary or advisory bodies can provide insights into the struggle for influence
between different factions in the regime, the latitude within which free discussion is
permissible, and the rationale or lack of rationale in the government policies which are
debated. The second weakness is that the literature concentrates mainly on the under­
lying factors impeding democratization, giving relatively little attention to how
democratization may come about. Much of the recent theoretical literature on
democratization has moved away from the former focus, mainly because democratization
has occurred in so many countries which were previously deemed ill-suited to it (e.g.
Eastern Europe). The concentration has shifted towards examining the processes whereby
internal divisions within a regime, or a crisis confronting a regime, can open up a process

37 P. Cammack, Capitalism and Democracy ..., pp. 220-1. Cammack is referring in particular to G.
O'Donnel, and P. Schmitter. (1986). Tentative Conclusions about Uncertain Democracies. Johns Hopkins
University Press, Baltimore.
of democratization. A faction within an authoritarian regime may initiate such a process not because its members adhere to the intrinsic values of democracy, but because it needs popular support to out-maneuver a rival faction. Or else, a ruling party/clique may opt to democratize so as to lessen the danger of being eradicated when an opposition movement comes to power. The chance of competing for power can be seen as preferable to remaining in power but living with the risk of long-term elimination. Shifting the focus of democratization studies of the Arab world towards a concern with how democratization might be initiated could prove productive. It is, at least, a possibility that the intense jockeying for power and influence which is currently taking place within the Saudi royal family (mainly over the succession) could lead to one faction or other seeking to buttress its position through popular support, and championing the opening up of the political system. Indeed, in certain respects this has already happened. The same possibility arises over the succession struggles which are occurring within the ruling families of the United Arab Emirates (especially Abu Dhabi) and Kuwait. Similarly, the very intensity of the conflict between oppositional Islamists and governmental secularists in Algeria could push both sides to accept a democratic framework. Each could realistically calculate that having a chance to compete for power may be preferable to running the risk of losing everything. John Waterbury has given some attention to this 'pacted' approach to democratization, but the idea has not been widely applied in democratization studies of the region.

A third dimension where the wider literature has had insufficient impact on the Arab world case relates to the role of international political factors. The particular mix of economic and strategic interests which Western powers have in the Arab world, it could be contended, ensure that the regimes there will be supported against internal as well as external threats. All proclamations of commitment to democratization are overridden by these interests.

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38 See, for example O'Donnell and Schmitter, Tentative Conclusions ..., The latter draws conclusions from vols. 1-3 of the work edited by O'Donnell, Schmitter and Whitehead, Transitions .... Also of key importance here is D. Rustow. (1970). 'Transitions to Democracy: Toward a Dynamic Model', Comparative Politics, No. 3, pp. 337-63.

39 See the interview given by Prince Talal bin Abd al-Aziz Al Saud in Al-Quds al-Arabi, 17 April 1998. Prince Talal was advocating free elections and a general opening up of the political system. He is believed to be a supporter of the faction of the Al Saud which is closely identified with Crown Prince Abdallah.

40 Waterbury, 'Democracy without Democrats ...', pp. 34-42.
DEMOCRATIZATION IN THE ARAB WORLD

A new project has been established entitled "Challenges to Genuine Democratization in the Arab World." Under the direction of Daniel Brumberg, Special Adviser to USIP, this project explores the risks, costs, and benefits of Arab states moving beyond state control to genuine democratization. The project examines key Arab states that have begun to experiment with political liberalization through political systems, media independence, and intellectual debate, and examines the move from full autocracy to some limited experimentation with releasing state control over all aspects of society. Interestingly, these states make up the majority of the Arab world and include Algeria, Egypt, Jordan, Kuwait, Morocco, and Yemen—all of which are at differing stages of political liberalization. The events in Morocco, Kuwait, Egypt, Jordan, and Lebanon suggest that the edifice of authoritarianism in the Arab world is under unprecedented siege. Incensed by the economic, social and political failings of the region's autocracies, and emboldened by calls from within and outside the Arab world for fundamental political change, a myriad of opposition parties and civil society organizations have issued calls for democracy and reform. Clearly, the barrier of fear that has long pervaded the region has been severely rattled. While these events are encouraging, their implication for the survival or transformation of the Arab world's autocracies is far from clear. Most of these regimes are not despotisms in the classic sense. Instead, the vast majority are semi-authoritarian composites—liberalized autocracies — that combine a measure of openness in the press, civil society and electoral/parliamentary arenas, with varying degrees of state-managed control and selective repression.

ROAD MAP FORWARD FOR DEMOCRATIZATION

While such regimes are under enormous domestic and global pressures, the path from liberalized autocracy to competitive democracy has not been systematically studied by scholars, or chartered by the relevant players in the Arab world. What we do know is this: liberalized autocracy remains a complex and resilient hybrid, a multi-dimensional system that presents its own particular legacy and distinctive challenges. Thus what is urgently required is a road map that suggests how—if at all—regimes and oppositions can move beyond the boundaries of state-managed liberalization to competitive democracy. This
relates at least partly to what Nietzsche calls "slave morality"\(^{41}\) which remains powerful in the political cultures of different communities. Suffering and toleration of misery are championed to rationalise the rule of the elite and to justify one's inferior status in society and polity. Belief in one's ability to bring about necessary change weakens as anticipation of the miraculous grows. As people believe that individuals as a collective are weak and helpless, belief in the "one man" grows.

Part of the challenge in imagining this road map derives from the unwritten consensus that has sustained liberalized autocracies, or at least kept them from falling apart. These regimes have survived in part because political elites in both regimes and oppositions have viewed liberalized autocracy as a second best alternative to full democracy. This tacit consensus has been most evident in countries beset by conflicts over national identity. In Yemen, Morocco, Jordan, Kuwait, and Algeria, political elites have long feared that full democratization would exacerbate these conflicts by making it possible for the victors of elections to impose their religious, cultural or ethnic agenda on the losers. Thus many elites came to prefer or at least tolerate liberalized autocracy precisely because parliaments and electoral systems that lacked real authority or power nevertheless promoted a measure of peaceful coexistence among competing groups. Although the consensus that has sustained such accommodations has certainly frayed, liberalized autocracy has bequeathed a troubled legacy, three dimensions of which will complicate the effort to move beyond state managed liberalization.

1) Ambivalence About Full Democratization - Because Islamists can attract a mass constituency through mosques and other religious institutions, they have benefited most from the opportunities for political mobilization afforded by liberalized autocracies. As a result it is not merely regimes that exhibit ambivalence about the risks entailed in moving beyond state-managed liberalization. Such caution can also be found within non-Islamist opposition groups, such as liberals, women's organizations, and ethnic groups such as Kurds and Berbers. Because these groups fear that democratization might empower their Islamist rivals, they have often preferred the imperfections of liberalized autocracy to the

black hole of full democratization. Some Islamists have tried to reduce the fears of these
groups by not mounting a decisive challenge to the status quo. Thus during Morocco’s
2002 parliamentary elections, the Islamist Justice and Development Party (JDP) chose
not to run a full slate of candidates nation-wide, thus coming in third in an election that
the JDP might very well have won. But such short-term tactics only accentuate the
perceived costs to national stability that full democratization often provokes, without
offering any long-term institutional solution other than the persistence of an increasingly
fragile status quo. The identity cleavages that have sustained liberalized autocracy have
been exacerbated by socio-economic tensions arising out of efforts to shift from state-
managed economies to fee market systems. Because democratic competition could
strengthen the hand of groups opposed to privatization and free trade, advocates of
market reform have often viewed state-managed political liberalization as a safer
alternative to full-scale democratization.

2) A Radical Reform Menu - While allowing for a measure of pluralism in civil society
and the press, as well as state-managed competition in parliaments and elections, the
institutions, constitutions and laws that have sustained liberalized autocracies remain
deeply dysfunctional. "Elected" parliaments often lack the authority to legislate on behalf
of their purported constituencies. Indeed, ultimate power remains in the hands of
presidents and monarchs who rule through the formal institutions of the executive, or
through informal networks and cliques that give decisive power to regime cronies in the
military, intelligence community and/ or ruling family. This sad situation has been
perpetuated by constitutions and laws that are filled with provisions that emasculate
legislatures, and by judiciaries that are largely extensions of the executive.

Democracy's Third Wave. In The Global Resurgence of Democracy, edited by Larry Diamond and Marc
democratic Age'. In The global resurgence of democracy, edited by Larry Diamond and Marc Plattner.
democracy'. The Annals of the American Academy of Political Science and Sociology, Vol. 524, pp. 120-
Thus any transition from liberalized autocracy will require a total overhaul of the existing political system. Absent comprehensive political reforms that give real substance, authority and power to formal political institutions and processes, Arab leaders will continue to undertake the kinds of baby steps that they have long preferred—partial measures that effectively strengthen liberalized autocracy and thus obstruct a transition to competitive democracy. It is far from clear what the precise nature and content of such reforms should in each country. Algeria, Egypt, Jordan, Kuwait, Morocco, and Yemen are all liberalized autocracies in that they tolerate or foster some measure of opposition activity. But these regimes have allowed different degrees (and mixes) of opposition independence and regime hegemony. As a result, the probabilities for making a transition differs from case to case, as does the required mix of constitutional, institutional or legal reforms. Given the paucity of both conceptual and case-specific work on how to move beyond liberalized autocracy, the task of defining the menu or reform remains a vital if difficult challenge.\(^{43}\)

3) High Stakes Pact Making - Few political actors—especially within the non-Islamist opposition—are well positioned to advance (or take advantage of) dramatic change. As result, whether political change occurs via regime collapse, or as is more likely, via a gradual transformation of existing political systems, the net result will be the same: intense conflict over the economic, political and cultural content of any substantive democratization program. Given this lack of consensus regarding the purposes of democracy, any stable, non-violent and durable transition will probably require a negotiated accommodation or pact within the opposition and then between opposition parties and regimes. How such a pact will be brought about remains a mystery. It could also be argued that democratisation of the Arab world is a potentially dangerous project from the standpoint of US foreign policy. The interests of the USA would be harmed by a situation of political reform in a country like Saudi Arabia, where the royal family has been instrumental in providing the West with the necessary predictability in oil production and pricing. Radical political and economic change in the Arab would alter

not only relations between regimes and peoples in the region but also between ruling groups and the world at large. This has meant that the USA can only afford to call for democratisation in countries that are harshly critical of its foreign policy and economic interests. Blanket support for democracy and human rights could undermine the powers of pro-US regimes. The current political landscape in the Arab world differs in a number of fundamental ways. To begin with, while most Arab world states are authoritarian, none can really be classified as bureaucratic-authoritarian. The non-democratic states of the Arab world have yet to fall victim to the successes of their own social and economic development policies. As the preceding pages demonstrate, most have managed to retain a degree of functional viability vis-à-vis society that has enabled them to maintain power. In essence, despite significant weaknesses, the authoritarian, corporatist states of the Arab world have not reached a complete political deadlock. Nor have Arab world states embarked on economic liberalisation programmes that have transferred greater autonomy and power to social actors. Moreover, most Arab world leaders have been able to complement the institutional basis of their rule with at least one or more sociocultural dynamic, thus reducing (but by no means eliminating) the need for society-based alternative venues for organisation and participation. A growing variety of autonomous or at least semi-autonomous groups and organisations has, nevertheless, appeared in a number of Arab world societies, ranging from religious endowment organisations to private social clubs.

Some observers of the region have even gone so far as to maintain that Arab world leaders are ‘facing persistent crises of government’, with old political remedies no longer yielding traditional results.44 Thus ‘the new language of politics in the Arab world talks about participation, cultural authenticity, freedom, and even democracy’.45 The number of political parties in some of the region’s countries is in itself an impressive indicator of a ‘blossoming civil society’. More impressive, however, are the plethora of professional associations, businessmen’s groups, and cultural clubs found especially in Kuwait.

among other Arab countries. Of particular note are Kuwait's *diwaniyyah*, a gathering place in leading citizens’ homes where men (and in recent years a few women) gather to socialize and share views on a range of topics from sports to politics*. There are also political parties, syndicates and, more importantly, professional organisations that engage in ‘politics by proxy’- Kuwait’s University Graduates Society, etc.\(^47\) To begin with, given the persistence of authoritarian rule in the Arab world, it is doubtful how truly autonomous and detached from the state these organizations can become. In fact, it is doubtful whether ‘civil society’ is an apt description for these organisations at all. In Kuwait, civil society is at best still ‘a work in progress’, being pursued by ‘quasi-autonomous associations’ which operate in a system that has ‘controlled participatory institutions’.\(^48\)

The controversy over the very existence or viability of civil society organizations in the Arab world notwithstanding, it is important to remember one of the defining characteristics of the phenomenon of civil society. As noted earlier, not every politically autonomous societal group is a democratic or democratically-inclined CSO. Some CSOs operate on the assumption that the democratisation of the larger polity is in their interest, and therefore pressure the state, whether directly or indirectly, to open up and democratise. There are other similar groups, however, whose interests are highly specific and do not extend beyond protecting certain rights and privileges vis-à-vis the state. On the whole, they are not concerned with a general relaxation of state authoritarianism. The most powerful examples of this phenomenon are found not only among many of the groups mentioned above, but, in specific relation to the Arab world (and Africa), among tribal groups and the bazaaris.\(^49\) Both these groups tend to be highly interested in curtailing the specific activities of the state in so far as the extent of their own autonomy is concerned. Their chief concern has been securing a more profitable share of the

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\(^{46}\) *Ibid*, p 16.

\(^{47}\) S. E. Ibrahim, 'Civil society and prospects for democratization in the Arab World' in Norton, *Civil Society in the Arab world*, p 42.


corporatist arrangement in relation to the state and those other groups whom they perceive to be unfairly advantaged. As a result, neither group has so far served as an agent for the democratisation of the larger polity, either on its own or in conjunction with other societal actors. There are, in sum, three broad clusters of forces that have impeded the emergence and growth of a dense, democratic civil society in the Arab world. To begin with, although Arab world states have suffered substantial and deep economic and political reverses since the global recession of the early 1980s, they have managed to retain enough powers to i) hold onto the reins of power and not be overwhelmed by societal pressures; ii) manipulate enough social and cultural values to retain just enough popular legitimacy. This touches on a second set of factors responsible for the stunting of CSOs in the Arab world so far, namely the absence of a need for alternative, non-official or non-state related venues for popular organisation, expression and participation. Arab world states have not severed all their cultural ties with society. In the Arab world, either through charisma or patronialism, connection with Islam or clientelistic populism, the state continues to present itself, with varying degrees of success, as an extension and indeed a guardian of some of society’s most important norms. This seeming reluctance actively to foster non-state and non-official alternatives is reinforced by the region’s pattern of economic development, the third reason for the widespread absence of democratic CSOs. Rentier economics has enabled the state to maintain a mutually beneficial corporatist arrangement with selected social groups, therefore lessening the possibility of demands for radical political change and, by extension, for democratisation. The groups outside the ‘contract’ demanding changes are repressed.50

Total autocracy is the exception rather than the rule in the Arab world. Most Arabs live under autocracies that allow a measure of openness. Three factors have generated and sustained such regimes. First, the rulers of Morocco, Egypt, Jordan, Kuwait, and Lebanon have not tried to impose a single vision of political community. Instead, they have put a certain symbolic distance between the state and society in ways that leave room for competitive or dissonant politics. By not nailing the state’s legitimacy to the mast of one ideological vessel with a putatively sacred national or religious mission, they have helped

to short-circuit the growth of counter-hegemonic Islamist movements. Second, partial autocracies are non-hegemonic. Within limits, they allow contending groups and ideas to put down institutional roots outside the state. This ensures competition not only between Islamists and non-Islamists, but among Islamist parties as well. The more such contention there is, the likelier it is that rulers will risk an opening. Third, partial autocracies have enough economic development and competition to free the state from obsessive concern with any single interest, class, or resource. In many such regimes, for instance, one finds public-sector employees and bureaucrats vying with independent professionals and private businessmen for the state’s political and economic support. Consensus politics and state-enforced power sharing can form an alternative to either full democracy or full autocracy, particularly when rival social, ethnic, or religious groups fear that either type of rule will lead to their political exclusion. In Kuwait, Lebanon, Jordan, Morocco, and to some extent Egypt, the peaceful accommodation of such forces depends in part on the arbitrating role of the ruler. Given the present constellation of social and political forces in today’s Arab world, democratisation does not appear as a likely possibility in the foreseeable future. What perhaps makes this third phase in the development of civil society unique is that for the first time associational life has organised and mobilised itself independently from the state, pressuring and demanding greater representation and accountability from public officials. An American political scientist, Samuel Huntington’s ’third wave’ of democratisation may be irreversible if this third phase in the development of civil society continues to value and promote democratisation.

Democratization in the Arab world usually takes a top–down approach, is applied arbitrarily, and is hostage to internal and regional conflicts. The region is in need of more than purely symbolic democracy. However, a certain period of top–down rule in the democratization process is required to balance and stabilize the effects of economic, political, and cultural reforms. These reforms establish the foundations for a solid civic culture and instill faith in democracy and government among ordinary citizens. This will help overcome the frustrations that exist over persisting authoritarian rule of the state.

Syria's democratization process has been characterized by several coups d'état, multiple constitutions, and the Ba'th party's tight and autocratic grip on power, but also by some limited economic liberalization. Lebanon is characterized by strong sectarianism and both coexistence and segregation of different religious groups. Lebanon enjoyed some autonomy under Ottoman rule, and its Christian population developed strong ties with Rome. The French "adoption" of Lebanon heralded an era of Westernization. In the wake of the 1926 liberal constitution, high political posts and parliamentary seats were divided among the four main religious groups. The remaining 14 groups, however, have been excluded from holding high office. Although the Lebanese enjoy some freedoms, democracy is still at a very rudimentary stage. Nevertheless, commitment to a free press, a functioning parliament, and growing civil society have helped build a relatively strong sense of identity among the Lebanese. Jordanians enjoy similarly basic political freedoms. Jordan’s Hashemite lineage has offered secular and religious legitimacy to the state, which supports an institutionalized, moderate political system. The country benefits from an almost homogeneous population, with political representation offered to minority groups. Even during periods of transition and heavy-handed rule from the top, only little violence has occurred. Under martial law, opposition parties continued to operate, suffering only limited repression. Many of their leaders were later brought into high-ranking government posts. Jordan’s kings have managed to lend legitimacy to a patriarchal monarchy with democratic characteristics. A relativist approach to defining and designing democratization processes in the region is necessary to allow for deviations from idealized (Western) concepts of democracy.

"Why have Arab world political regimes not followed the 'Third Wave' of Democratization?" is the intriguing question that has preoccupied scholars' minds throughout the 1990s - and still no convincing answer has been found. We argue here that this should not come as a surprise, since the question itself is highly problematic: triggering innumerable contributions and based on normatively biased and teleological premises, it led authors to examine what did not exist, instead of what was actually going on in the Arab world. Rather than the nature of regime change, it was the perceived
"failure" of democracy and democratization\textsuperscript{52} that was examined, and the remedies suggested to cure that "disease" are uncountable. While the problem of regime change\textsuperscript{53} is probably the most central in Arab world studies today, we argue that such approaches to the question are failures in themselves: what doctor would prescribe a medicine without offering a diagnosis first? Instead, we inquire into "diagnostic" questions: what has changed in Arab world regimes, what has not, and what do the changes that have occurred signify? We start with the observation that there is no such thing as democracy or democratization in the Arab world today.\textsuperscript{54} Quite naturally, most of us immediately ask "Why?" We discard any explanations that rely on what has been called "the Arab mind" or other culturalist explanations a la Huntington.\textsuperscript{55} Similarly, we are unhappy with the assumption that blunt repression alone accounts for the fact that not a single Arab democracy has developed when all other world regions experienced democratic transitions. With few exceptions, political regimes hardly ever rely on only repression to safeguard political power. Another assumption is that incumbents rarely give up political power voluntarily. Authoritarian rulers possess a structural advantage over their democratic counterparts in maintaining power since they do not have to put power at stake in regular competitive elections. Instead, the specific type of non-democratic rule still dominating in the Arab world is (neo-) patrimonialism,\textsuperscript{56} in which political power rests primarily on co-optation. However, political change has occurred in most Arab countries and in a variety of ways. Thus, a first puzzle enters the scene: why has any

\textsuperscript{52} Democracy is a political system in which competition at regular intervals for all effective positions of government power takes place. Further definitional aspects are a highly inclusive level of political participation, and civil and political liberties (cf. Diamond, L., Linz, J. and Lipset, S. (1988). Democracy in Developing Countries, Vol. II (Africa). Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner. A good operationalization is Dahl's eight institutional guarantees (For details see, Dahl, Robert (1971). Polyarchy: Participation and Opposition. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, p. 3. Democratization is defined as the transition of a non-democratic to a democratic polity.

\textsuperscript{53} Regime change is not equal to transition: the latter means a systemic change of the type of polity, while the former refers to any sort of change, thus also to change within a given type of political regime while the systemic attributes of the polity remain in place.


\textsuperscript{55} We consider such approaches as nonscientific in that they do not offer the possibility of intersubjective testability and, thus, can hardly be falsified (cf. Popper, 1935).

political change taken place? While, certainly, many factors account for the existence of political change and regime change, we regard the following two as especially important since they constitute structural and longer-term variables.\(^{57}\)

In our understanding, regime change is primarily induced by the following:
1. The scarcity of resources as an essentially economic factor. The assumption is that the scarcer resources become, the greater the likelihood of political change.\(^{58}\)
2. The uncontested global paradigm that political change, if it occurs, should generally be in the direction of democratization. The assumption is, according to these expectations, that political rulers have to pay attention to the paradigms of capitalism and democracy and pursue at least some sort of window-dressing policy unless they can find new sources of political legitimacy.

These two factors have been structural constraints on the political options of ruling authoritarian elites in all Arab regimes since the mid-1980s. On the other hand, authoritarian rulers have a range of political options at hand that the politically powerful in democratic regimes do not have. The most important examples include the outright use of force against opponents, which is foreclosed to democratic rulers. Restricting competition (by law or actual practice) through fraudulent elections and constrained civil liberties (of the media, of association, and so on) is another area where the means of power maintenance are clearly less restricted in authoritarian regimes than in democracies. On the flip side, however, non-democratic regimes also face systemically embedded constraints, the inherent lack of democratic legitimacy being the most important one. Consequently, we add this condition to the two constraints mentioned above, yet must point out its systemic nature: while the other two constraints affect the policy options of Arab elites in a given time frame but are, in principle, open to change, the lack of democratic legitimacy is, by definition, an inherent feature of every non-democratic polity. Thus, our assumption is that the search for some form of legitimacy

\(^{57}\) Apart from these structural conditions, we can identify other constraints affecting policy options at certain times only, such as strong domestic pressure through Islamist groups or current US foreign policy, characterized by an outspoken preparedness for direct military intervention. However, such constraints are temporary rather than structural.

\(^{58}\) Ibid., Schlumberger, Oliver (2002).
must be at the core of every regime-survival strategy in non-democratic polities. Of course, political decision-makers find themselves embedded in a given set of constraints and opportunities. The point is that in democratic systems the incumbents' maintenance of power is constrained by Dahlian contestation, but in non-democratic regimes by the lack of democratic legitimacy. The persistence and durability of all political systems, in turn, crucially depends on legitimacy or repression - and in almost all cases, on a combination of both. Which variables, then, are responsible for the fact that all Arab regimes (with the exception of those countries that suffered from direct foreign military intervention) managed to survive in amazing stability in times when so many dictatorships all around the world broke down? Assuming bounded rationality, we agree with most of the existing literature that the top priority for authoritarian rulers is regime maintenance. What we should investigate is therefore not the "failure" of democracy, but the "success" of authoritarianism in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA).

ARAB EXPERIMENTS

Arab regimes' experiments with political liberalization have been a major focus of scholarly attention since the early 1990s: multiparty elections, fewer restrictions on the media, a higher level of individual freedoms, and the proliferation of nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) have all contributed to the impression of a more liberal Arab world. However, political liberalization was not a new phenomenon when it occurred in the early 1990s. Bahrain, for instance, had initiated parliamentary experiments between 1971 and 1975. More prominently, Anwar Sadat's infitah policies in Egypt led not only

59 Even in democracies, the state preserves its monopoly on the use of violence and resorts to repression when it is threatened. At the same time, even the most illiberal regimes try to create at least a minimum of legitimacy, be it through ideology (as in fascist or communist systems), religion (as in Saudi Arabia), or economic benefits for the population (as in much of the Gulf peninsula).

60 This happened in Iraq and in Lebanon. The Iraqi regime survived two wars, but was toppled by the US-led military campaign in spring 2003. In Lebanon, the composition of the postwar political elites significantly differs from that of the prewar elites, even though the consociational trait of the 1943 National Pact was reinvented in the Ta'if formula of 1990.

61 From perceived options, actors will choose those perceived as serving their interests best, trying to minimize constraints and maximize opportunities. In fact, periods of liberalization have become more numerous over the past two decades. We therefore disagree with the view held, for instance, by Ehteshami and Murphy (1996), who see a general trend toward more suppressive authoritarian rule, and away from an inclusionary, corporatist state.

to an economic, but also to a political, opening. Political liberalization, thus, existed well before the current "wave of transitology," with its focus on democratization through liberalization. Nonetheless, there was a renewed drive toward liberalization from about the late 1980s until the mid-1990s. In 1989, Jordan saw its first parliamentary elections in decades, considered by and large as free and fair, just like the 1993 Yemeni elections. The Syrian parliament, in 1990, was enlarged to include 60 seats for "independent" candidates.

In 1992, Saudi Arabia introduced a written basic code (al-hukm al-asasi, in which fundamental civic rights were laid down) and established the majlis ash-shura, a 60-member consultative body. But nowhere did political liberalization go as far as in Algeria: the regime had permitted truly competitive local elections in 1990, and when the Front Islamique du Salut (FIS) had gained the majority of town halls, the scenario that Algeria's government, dominated by the Front de Liberation National, would become the first Arab regime to lose power through subsequent national elections seemed likely. These developments roughly coincided with the demise of the Soviet Union, when what Huntington called the "Third Wave" of transitions to democracy reached Central Eastern Europe. In the light of these two simultaneous trends, it was tempting to proclaim that the Arab world had joined the global trend toward democracy. Most scholars, therefore, searched for what they wanted to find, and rarely for what actually happened. Since the mid-1990s, skepticism has gained ground. While most authors still waited for future steps toward more liberal regimes, some observers noted that, in fact, the opposite was happening: not increased liberties, but renewed restrictions became apparent in those countries that were watched most closely. Kienle (1998) demonstrated that political

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deliberalization in Egypt was "more than a response to Islamism" and constituted a general reprise du control by the regime. Morocco, Tunisia, Lebanon, Jordan, and Yemen joined the ranks of deliberaling countries. Harsher press laws, massive clampdowns by security forces on opposition movements, and the repeated postponement of elections made it clear how ill-founded were any hopes for the advent of Arab liberal democracies. Yet again, the processes of deliberalization were not uniform across the region. Other regimes, among them the most illiberal ones in the region, started what could be called a "belated phase of liberalization" in the late 1990s. Qatar introduced a new constitution in July 2002 which allows the population, including women, direct and secret voting for the first time in the country's history. Bahrain released political prisoners and promised to hold elections. In addition, even though deliberalization in Egypt has been evident since about 1995, the 2000 parliamentary elections were for the first time supervised by a judiciary which is not always in line with the regime. A third category of countries (for example, Syria) made it through that period without any significant change in the degree of existing liberties. These examples demonstrate that political liberalization and deliberalization are not linear processes that occur in easily discernable patterns in the MENA region. Variations in both timing and scope are significant and disprove "end of history"-style hypotheses. Political liberalization and deliberalization are successfully employed by Arab regimes as strategies for political survival. Their alternating use is ultimately a function of each individual country's political situation at a given moment in time, that is, its given constraints and opportunities. It is important that, from a political-systems view, (de)liberalization does not render the regime's character "more authoritarian" or "less authoritarian," as many academics have claimed. This argument is easily falsified through a quick look at Linz's classical definition that

67 In fact, periods of liberalization have become more numerous over the past two decades. We therefore disagree with the view held, for instance, by Ehteshami, Anoushiravan and Murphy, Emma (1996). 'Transformation of the Corporatist State in the Middle East,' Third World Quarterly, Vol. 17, No. 4, pp. 753-72, who see a general trend toward more suppressive authoritarian rule, and away from an inclusionary, corporatist state.
explicitly acknowledges "limited pluralism" as a defining element of authoritarianism. The relevant variable for classifying a polity as authoritarian is not its level of pluralism, but whether pluralism is restricted or not, which is a simple yes-or-no question. Accordingly, we should not use the terms "more authoritarian," "less democratic," or vice versa when speaking of types of political system. Political liberalization entails a widening public sphere and a greater, but not irreversible, degree of basic freedoms. It does not imply the introduction of contestation for positions of effective governing power. That elections are held in the Arab world does not contradict our argument: while the Moroccan and Jordanian parliaments, for example, may be elected democratically, this is not where strategic political decision-making takes place. Likewise, the Egyptian, Syrian, and Tunisian presidents are elected, but not in competitive or open elections. Lastly, the inner circle of approximately 15 generals who constitute le pouvoir in Algeria are not elected at all. Nowhere in the region can the center of power be contested. The common denominator of liberalization and its opposite is that systemic political transition has not occurred in a single case. This is not to say that regimes do not change or that changes beyond the transition level would not matter. But to examine such sub-systemic regime change solely with respect to the level of political liberties leaves us in a democratization trap. In addition, while liberalization does not necessarily lead to democratization, it still remains difficult to convince observers that "examining political liberalization is not an instrument for finding out whether regime change is systemic or non-systemic, let alone an instrument for tracing democratization." When reflecting on regime change, we should therefore not look at (de)liberalization only. Such an exclusive focus is detrimental to our understanding of the functional logic of the existing regimes. It diverts our attention from possible non-democratic changes of regime and from important changes in regime. In sum, academic research on Arab world political regimes throughout the 1990s can be characterized as a period of waiting for expectations to materialize. Those who think that political liberalization has to tell us something about

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the possibilities of democratization ignore the categorical difference between changes in kind and changes in degree, which represents a fundamental methodological error. We do not deny possible future democratizations (that is, the emergence of democratic polities) in the Arab world. However, we urge the reader to bear in mind that democratization is a process with a clear end result (in contrast to liberalization). In the course of the past decade, absolutely nothing has indicated the existence of such processes in the Arab world. While a majority of specialists agree that important changes have taken place over the past 15 years, the variables that might have changed are still waiting to be analyzed. Given that the durability of political regimes is a function of repression and legitimacy (Schlumberger, 2004), it is not surprising that the patterns of liberalization and deliberalization in the MENA region have been neither uniform nor linear. We assume that levels of repression have oscillated, but remained relatively stable, over this period. In the remainder of this article, we focus on the issue of legitimacy and its sources, examining strategies of change which are in fact designed to help incumbent regimes persist.

REGIME CHANGE IN THE ARAB WORLD

Starting with our initial assumption that an individual country's given set of opportunities and constraints determines the range of options to choose from, we find a "pool" of strategies that Arab leaders employ for the purpose of regime maintenance. However, empirical observation suggests that some of them are more important in that they have been selected more often and by more leaders than others. We investigate five core strategies of "change for stability," or strategies of adaptation. These include alterations to the polities themselves (structures), to the mechanisms according to which they work (procedures), and to the composition of socio-political elites, as follows:

2. Elite change: adapting elites to a changed political and economic environment.

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3. "Imitative" institution building: establishing Western-style institutions.
4. Co-optation: restricting populism and widening the regime's power base.
5. External influences: transforming constraints into opportunities.

There are numerous interlinkages between these strategies. Obviously, co-optation is closely related to elite change. New elites, in turn, are often incorporated into institutions and thereby may change the latter's face or working mechanisms. At times, new institutions are created which may, in turn, serve to enhance legitimacy. All of the above listed strategies have an underlying relation to legitimacy, which can thus be seen as an overarching category. Structures of Legitimacy and Strategies of Legitimation

In examining legitimacy and its sources, we distinguish between internal and external dimensions, the first of which refers to the explicit or diffuse support of political regimes by domestic society. "External legitimacy" signifies the extent to which political regimes are considered legitimate by the leading external powers, that is, Western governments and international organizations. This dimension is important because developing nations often depend on substantial external aid, which is, among other factors such as geo-strategic importance or international alliances, dependent on how a given regime is seen abroad. Prior to the current phase of political and economic changes, sources of internal legitimacy for the Arab states consisted of a combination of the following:

(1) allocative power through international rent income (oil and gas),
(2) traditional religious legitimacy, and
(3) distinct developmental concepts based on collectivist ideologies.\(^3\)

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\(^3\) A fourth type of legitimacy that is generally open to both traditional and modern forms of authoritarian legitimation is charisma. Gamal Abd an-Nasir, Jordan's late King Hussein, Bourguiba in Tunisia, or Algeria's Boumedienne are cases in point. For an in-depth analysis of legitimation patterns in the Middle East, see Hudson, Michael (1977). Arab Politics: The Search for Legitimacy. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
All of them are well known, but a brief description seems necessary to demonstrate their relevance in our context. The external dimension of legitimation strategies is linked to the structural constraint of global ideological paradigms. Analyzing Western interest structures (more on that below) tells us not to overestimate the efficacy of democracy and capitalism in the Arab world as concepts rigidly applied in actual policies. Direct pressure on the regimes to abide quickly and consequently by these ideas is rather low; yet they do constitute strong expectations among Western politicians, who still assume unilinear developmental progress toward democracy and market economies. Arab incumbents quickly learned the lesson of what was expected internationally and adopted the "democracy language"; talking the "donor talk" became a prerequisite for political rent-seeking. "Democracy-money" that results from the successful adoption of this language is extremely attractive to Arab regimes because it consists almost exclusively of nonrefundable grants and does not increase the state's financial burden as much as economic development assistance, where the share of loans is higher. A disadvantage of "democracy-money" is that it is less easy for the state to control, since the target groups belong to civil society. However, as we explain below, new co-optation mechanisms have been engineered to maintain control over such resources and their spending. The events of 9/11 played into the hands of many Arab regimes that quickly joined the "war against terrorism": now they could suppress domestic opposition in the name of combating terrorism without raising serious Western concerns (other non-democracies, such as Russia, China, and the Central Asian republics, have also demonstrated that the demand for democratic policies and human rights has turned into a secondary issue at best). Since this new internationalized terrorism originated precisely in the Arab world, authoritarian regimes there could even more convincingly ask for active external support for

oppressive policies by claiming to pursue genuinely Western interests. We turn now to
the internal aspects of legitimacy, beginning with allocative power. The influx of
international oil and gas rents has been crucial for regime maintenance throughout the
region since the early 1970s when the system of "petrolism" emerged. Since these
resources accrued directly to the regimes, they could be used for a broad-ranged
subsidization of basic foodstuffs and consumer goods, but also for privileging a loyal
political clientele. "Even limited revenue from abroad dramatically improves the state's
ability to buy legitimacy through allocation and increases regime stability." All Arab
states benefited from the oil wealth of the region, albeit to different degrees. Countries
with a small population and large oil exports have more allocative power than those with
a large population and few mineral resources. Even the non-oil countries, however,
developed into "rentier-states of [a] second order," as a look at the portion of external
non-trade capital inflows in their budgets shows. Traditional religious legitimation is a
mechanism only Arab monarchies can credibly invoke. Rulers of the kingdoms and
emirates on the Arabian peninsula, plus Jordan and Morocco, can rely upon emanation,
tradition, and religion. Saudi Arabia and Jordan exemplify these countries' identities
through an uncontestable link between the rulers' families and the state itself that is
written down in the very names of the states as "Hashemite" and "Saudi" kingdoms,
respectively. The Saudi kings have employed religion as a source of legitimacy by
founding the state on the Wahhabi interpretation of Islam and on the historical alliance
between the Al-Sa'ud tribe and Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhab. Second, legitimacy results from the
kings' role as guardians of the holy Islamic cities, and from hosting millions of pilgrims
who perform the Hajj to Mecca every year. The incumbents of the smaller Gulf states are
all members of important families who trace their dynasties' rule back to the 19th century.
Here, legitimacy is based on history, identity, and the tradition of wise leadership in
strictly hierarchical Bedouin societies. Legitimation through ideology and
developmentalist strategies has been pursued by the progressivist presidential republics of
Syria, Iraq, Egypt, Libya, Tunisia, Algeria, and South Yemen, at least during some phase

Beblawi and Giacomo Luciani (eds), The Rentier State. London: Croom Helm, p.76.
76 Another phenomenon is that regimes strive for control of the "clergy" in order to have their policies
legitimized by the Ulama (religious leaders) through fatwa (legal statements based on the Koran), as the
Al-Sa'ud have done to justify US troop deployments after the Second Gulf War.
in their history: after a revolutionary takeover of political power or anti-colonial wars, the new regimes followed collectivist ideologies and egalitarian development models referred to as Nasserism, Ba'thism, or Arab nationalism. Common features are state-led development and, in the organization of polities, state apparatuses of elitist guidance with corporatist single-party systems, initial mass mobilization, and a strong military under the supervision of the president as the ultimate source of power and national unity. In these states, a collectivist ideology and egalitarian policies were the most important components of political legitimacy. While traditional religious legitimacy has remained essentially intact, the other two legitimating foundations of Arab states eroded structurally as a consequence of lower world oil prices (the "rent factor") or economic liberalization, or both. Development models based on import-substitution industrialization (ISI) broke down altogether during the second half of the 1980s. Thus, over the past 15 years, the Arab regimes have faced a structural loss in political legitimacy. To give but a few examples: how would regimes such as Egypt, Yemen, or Syria communicate the ideas of export-led development strategies having left their countries virtually bankrupt after import-substituting industrialization had failed? How was Saudi Arabia to explain the necessity of a prolonged US military presence on its lands? How would politically liberalizing regimes explain to their Western financiers and to their own populations their determination to hold to non-democratic policies? Throughout the Arab world, economic crises and direct or indirect foreign pressure have turned into virulent crises of legitimacy. While all Arab regimes have been affected, the formerly radical progressivist states have been hit hardest because their prime basis of legitimacy was washed away with the end of communism and the failure of ISI-based developmental strategies. Another significant change is the disappearance of the strict distinction between traditional (religion, history, and kinship) and modern (ideology and developmental strategies) forms of legitimacy. The young rulers of Morocco and Jordan, for instance, successfully combine legitimation through emanation with legitimation through modernization and policies in the style of the International Monetary Fund (IMF). Abdullah II of Jordan has managed to turn the public discourse entirely away from the political sphere (liberalization) that had dominated in the 1990s under his father
and toward the economic arena. Arab monarchies which had formerly faced legitimation difficulties domestically because of their traditional pro-western orientation are now on the "winning side" since alternative ideologies have failed. By contrast, the presidential republics have not only suffered from the breakdown of their ideological bases, but also from the fact that traditional religious legitimacy cannot be created as quickly as the ideological, developmentalist, or performative form of legitimacy. The fact that some presidents react defensively to the perceived re-Islamization within their societies or tolerate verdicts against the "un-Islamic" behavior of citizens, might be an indicator that republican regimes aim at creating this type of legitimacy - or that they try at least not to appear as un-Islamic, as has often been claimed by the Islamist opposition.

But they clearly have greater difficulties in adapting to the changed situation than those countries with a traditional religious basis of legitimacy. Elite Change "Politically relevant elites" (PREs) are the pillars of the political process and therefore a crucial element to look at when studying regime change. Yet, Arab political elites have been understudied throughout the past 20 years. Politically relevant elites in the Arab monarchies as well as in the republics have predominantly consisted of those who were most closely and personally affiliated to the regime leadership. Until the 1990s, loyalty was the most indispensable quality needed in order to accede to the PRE, and political competence played a secondary role. Elites remained very closed circles and access was strictly controlled by the leaders.

Within this setting, two typical patterns of elite dynamics are discernable, as follows:

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77 New free zones, technological progress, accession to the World Trade Organization (WTO), and progress in the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership Initiative came to dominate speeches and local media, displaying an economic activism hitherto unknown in Jordan.

78 The Egyptian cases of Nasr Hamid Abu Zeid or Nawal al-Saadawi as well as the legal prosecution of homosexuals are prominent examples.

79 We adopt, here, Perthes' (2004) definition of "politically relevant elites." Such elites comprise: (1) those who can wield influence on political decisions of strategic importance for a country; (2) those who can, on a second level, influence decisions in a specific issue area or implement the regime's decisions; and (3) a third circle of elites who are implementers of regime policies at the local level or who, as opposition elites, act as agenda setters. See the introductory chapter in Perthes, Volker, ed. (2004). Arab Elites: Negotiating the Politics of Change. Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner.

1. Continuous elite rotation or reshuffling. Here, positions of political decision-making are held by elite members who, as a rule, are "circulated" from one post to the next, with the "pool" of personnel remaining stable. Thereby, no individual or group of elite members becomes strong enough to develop an independent power base. Jordan is a prime example of this type of elite politics.

2. Elite maintenance. This strategy essentially relies on keeping those with proven loyalty in their posts. One example is Mustapha Tlass, who, as an old comrade of the late Hafiz al-Asad, has retained his post as Syrian deputy prime minister and minister of defense since 1970. Both strategies aim at ensuring an uncontested leader(ship) autonomous from demands by individual elite members. If elite members raised such claims, they would have to expect their exclusion from the PRE, repression, or even physical liquidation. Well-remembered cases are former Algerian President Boudiaf (killed in 1992) or Rif'at al-Asad, brother of the late Syrian president, who went into exile after his vain attempt to take power. These are typical Arab elite politics, which have not changed. By contrast, elite change "is an at least partial exchange of structurally different elite segments, i.e. ... parts with a different background and other political priorities enter the PRE or lose their standing within the elite."\(^1\) In the Arab world, elites have partially changed in response to new policy priorities, which, in turn, have been influenced by the structural constraints mentioned above (economic malaise, the need for referencing democracy, and economic liberalism). Not only have elites changed, but so have the mechanisms and channels of their recruitment. Looking at Arab political elites today, one evident feature is that elites have changed in their composition: in almost all Arab countries, private-sector business representatives have found their way into the PRE.\(^2\) In turn, many elite members with a bureaucratic or military background have started to run private businesses. The main underlying reason is clearly the economic crisis and the subsequent adjustment policies that were forced upon the non-oil states: unavoidable structural changes since the late 1980s could not have been handled credibly or successfully by old-guard bureaucrats.

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\(^2\) The focus on the amalgamation of reformist parts of the bureaucracy with export-oriented parts of the bourgeoisie in Egypt is discussed in Albrecht et al. (1998).
with a self-interest in oversized states. A new generation of technocrats acceded to the second-level elites, for example, Egyptian Minister Youssuf Boutros-Ghali, who was put in charge of negotiations with the Bretton Woods institutions and creditor organizations. This increasing technocratization of political elites went along with the loss of the dominant position of the former state bureaucracy in economic policy-making.

Some of the most dramatic challenges are faced by the state as an institution. Many of the reforms implemented under structural adjustment programmes contain an element of reduction in state structures and functions. In some cases, these reforms are based on an ideology which regards state institutions as inefficient, unresponsive to the needs of citizens, and inherently corrupt.83 The requirement to streamline state institutions and reduce expenditures has led to the privatisation of services, and the introduction of fees and targeting of interventions, especially in the education sector.

In 2002 Kuwait started allowing private universities in the country, beginning with the Gulf University for Science and Technology.84 On September 28, 2008, MPs Abdullah Al-Roumi, Marzouq Al-Ghanem, Ali Al-Rashid, and Adel Al-Saraawi proposed a law to have the government pay half of Kuwaiti students' tuition at these private colleges.85

On December 26, 2003, the Kuwaiti cabinet informed the parliament that it was modifying Kuwaiti textbooks to remove references to alleged Islamic intolerance and extremism. In the ensuing debate, MP Hassan Jawhar said, "I hope the government will not bow to external blackmail and threats... and be forced to delete important sections of Islamic education." MP Mohammad Al-Busairi claimed the United States had been

85 http://www.zawya.com/Story.cfm/sidZAWYA20080928041835/Govt%20funding%20for%20Kuwaiti%20students%20higher%20education%20at%20private%20colleges/
pressing Gulf states to change school textbooks since the Sept. 11, 2001 attacks, and rejected accusations that school syllabi in the Gulf breed terrorists.  

Coeducation

Coeducation in Kuwait has been a contentious issue since the Islamists gained power in parliament in the 1990s. In 1996, conservative lawmakers banned coed classes at the state universities and technical colleges, including Kuwait University. In 2000, when foreign universities were first allowed to open branches in Kuwait, the ban was extended to those institutions as well. On February 6, 2008, MP Ali Al-Rashid proposed a bill that would allow men and women to take classes together in Kuwaiti universities, which would reverse the 12-year-old ban on coeducation.

In light of externally supported private-sector development, representatives of big business significantly increased their political influence and sometimes acceded to political posts they could use for self-enrichment via (quasi-)monopolies and to suppress prospective competition. Along with technocratization, we thus see a growing "economicization" of both political elites and policies. As a parallel development, established avenues of recruitment via military academies or through the ruling party became less attractive to the new generation. Rather, education and family were now key variables for access. While proven loyalty is still a condition sine qua non, this is no longer sufficient. Among the most obvious features of elite change in the Arab world is the inclusion of new segments comprised of smart, Western-educated, younger individuals with a technocratic or private business background who are able to negotiate with international partners on an equal footing. While this layer of the PRE still represents the offspring of well-established and well-connected families, competence as a criterion for elite selection has clearly risen in importance. At the same time, however,  

the old elites remained in place in all Arab countries, despite the fact that they have lost relative importance. Elite change has therefore been a process of widening the regimes' social bases and has greatly helped leaders maintain their ruling positions: a successful strategy for avoiding change of regime is change in regime.

Another strategy employed by Arab regimes is a new phase of institution building. One of the most salient features of institutional structures in the Arab world is the incongruity between formal and informal institutions. Often, real power structures do not correlate with formal institutions or the positions of individual decision-makers. Libya, according to its constitution, is a decentralized "mass republic" (jamahiriyya); yet, real power remains exclusively with Qaddafi and his core elite (the chiefs of the security forces, Qaddafi's sons, plus a few advisors). Neither the top representatives of the General People's Committee that acts as the government, nor the parliament (mu'tamar ash-sha'ab al-'amm), have access to the closed circles where political power is exercised.\(^9\) In Algeria, it is not the government, but the generals in the background, who are "les decideurs." The 1990s were a period that witnessed the proliferation of formal institutions in a wide range of areas in the Arab world: from hitherto unknown ministries (for example, for privatization or the environment) to thousands of NGOs in numerous fields of activity, parliamentary bodies and political parties, institutions for the arbitration of economic disputes, ombudsmen, and many more. After independence, political parties, professional associations, and governmental structures had been created in a first "wave" of institutional building. The 1990s can therefore be interpreted as a second institutional surge in the Arab world. In Algeria, one major step in this institutionalization was the 1995 presidential election. While after 1991 the military had ruled the country directly through the Haute Conseil de l'Etat (HCE), the generals later obviously perceived their rule as stable enough to retreat from the public arena and to return the nation to civilian rule. A second parliamentary chamber (Conseil de la Nation) was created and a new constitution was adopted in 1996. Parliamentary and communal elections followed in 1997 and presidential elections in 1999. But there was no doubt that real political power remained in the hands of the military. The Arab states also saw the establishment of new

\(^9\) Economist Intelligence Unit, 2001
rules and procedures such as antitrust legislation, decentralization, the supervision of elections, constitutional reforms, more liberal press or election laws, and the like. Libya experienced constitutional reforms in May 2000, at the heart of which was the issue of decentralization. Some 14 ministries were abolished, and their responsibilities were (formally) transferred to roughly 2000 Basic People’s Congresses. In July 2000, Egypt’s Supreme Constitutional Court ordered full and independent judicial supervision of elections. Such processes represent concepts, procedures, and institutions that perform important functions in democratic political systems. For well over a decade, however, Arab rulers have found it increasingly useful to establish these in a categorically different, authoritarian context. Why? The answer lies in the functions they perform. In democracies, political parties, interest groups, private nonprofit organizations, and other institutions and procedures are instruments for autonomous societal interest aggregation and articulation, and encapsulate, in a Tocquevillean sense, the civic and political liberties that constitute the very nature of democratic polities. Obviously, this is not what authoritarian leaders have in mind. It is therefore not enough to look at a given formal institutional framework; rather, we have to examine the functions they fulfill in an authoritarian polity. Arab parliaments, for instance, have no decisive legislative power. Seats are normally tightly controlled and filled with the representatives of strategically important social groups. In countries such as Egypt, Jordan, Libya, Syria, Tunisia, or Yemen parliaments do represent society at large to some extent, but function essentially as indicators of public opinion. Without risking much, the regimes can assess whether specific policies face serious resistance among the social groups and segments that their power is based on. In such cases, parliaments might be allowed to question or even criticize the minister concerned. After the Egyptian national election of December 2000, the ruling National Democratic Party (NDP) managed to obtain a comfortable majority of seats only because numerous "independents" joined its ranks within days of the election. It was helpful for the regime in its strategies of power maintenance to realize that the ruling party alone was not able to mobilize enough voters to reach the majority it had had

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in the previous 1995 parliament - despite fraud, intimidation, and vote purchasing. A third way institutional change has been used to enhance legitimacy and thereby maintain power has been to create a semblance of competition, contestation, or autonomous societal organization by allowing NGOs and even new political parties to form. When Western observers emphasize the lack of full competition in comparison to democracies, they tend to forget that most of the Arab populations have never experienced greater possibilities for political articulation than during the 1990s. Imitative institution building has thus helped bolster internal legitimacy, but even more important is the external dimension, that is, the quest for legitimation abroad. This quest is pursued in both the economic and political spheres. On the political side, strategy focuses on the establishment of institutions with a democratic facade. In the economic arena, the state's goal is to overcome the image of a corrupt, overly bureaucratic, and statist regime, and to present an outward appearance of dynamic governmental agencies. In Jordan, for instance, the governmental body responsible for the promotion and follow-up of foreign direct investment was called the Jordan Investment Corporation. Since this sounded too bureaucratic, with all the negative connotations that that entails, the name was altered to the Jordan Investment Board. Even more tellingly, the Department for Economic Development in Dubai, which has a reputation of being the unannounced ministry of the economy for the United Arab Emirates and where much economic policy-making originates, has refrained from using the usual "gov.ae" of governmental institutions in its URL and instead presents itself as a dynamic "dot-com": www.dubaided.com. Such imitative institution building must not, however, be confused with a simultaneous process that could, in analogy, be called "autochthonous" or "authoritarian institution building." Both serve categorically different purposes: the former is a strategy of legitimation vis-à-vis the outside world and domestic societies, while the latter refers to institutions that are engaged in actual policy-making and thus reflect policy-induced necessities. Examples are the Moroccan practice of royally appointed "committees" that are more or less created in an ad hoc fashion for specific issue areas. These are staffed with appointed technocrats

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and act as a "shadow cabinet," often against the formal government. Their purpose, clearly, is not external legitimation and facilitating access to international funds. The Economic Consultative Council (ECC) that Jordan’s Abdallah II established in 1999 has served similar functions. Moreover, it has been a channel for elite recruitment through which the young king has paved the way for his own loyal clientele, many of whom later assumed ministerial posts. Such genuinely “authoritarian institution building” also mitigates the structural incongruity between formal and informal institutions because they are staffed with personnel that have actual decision-making competence for the respective issue area. That formal institutions in authoritarian polities do not match with the real power structures and assume functions that differ decisively from those in a democratic context is not new. However, there has been a renewed drive toward this imitative type of institution building since the 1990s. The specific functions such institutions take on in authoritarian polities enhance the persistence of authoritarian regimes. While informal rules, procedures, and decision-making structures remain mostly unaltered, formal institutions have gradually been changed to resemble what is expected internationally from Arab governments with respect to democracy and the market economy. We can thus state that there has been a successful adaptation of the appearance of most Arab regimes to international demands to an extent that has, at times, even altered the institutional face of the polities themselves.

CHANGING PATTERNS OF CO-OPTATION

Co-optation is a third important tool of power maintenance in the Arab world, particularly for the specific authoritarian regime type (often labeled populist, corporatist, or clientelist) prevailing in that region: "Populist authoritarian regimes sought to provide an alternative to the brutal bureaucratic authoritarianism characteristic of Latin America, or the repressive Marxist-Leninism of Eastern Europe". This populist authoritarian game was accomplished through a "social pact" between the ruler and the ruled, financed by the massive oil rents that flooded the region from the mid-1970s onward. We do not

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agree with the assumption that opportunities for co-optation have generally eroded with the fiscal crisis of the state and structural adjustment.\textsuperscript{95} What we observe instead is a change in the underlying logic of the co-optation mechanisms. During the rentier era that lasted until the late 1980s, co-optation was mainly based on the distribution of wealth. The regimes' allocative power has structurally decreased over the past 15 years because rent income has shrunk, populations have grown, and economies have liberalized. This is especially true of semi-rentier states such as Egypt, Yemen, or Tunisia that have always been restricted by the modesty of their oil revenues, but is also true (though to a lesser extent) of some bigger oil and gas producers with large populations, such as Algeria and Iraq. Here, the strong impact of one of our two aforementioned structural constraints (economic crisis) becomes evident. However, this is not equivalent to a breakdown of the opportunities for co-optation. With fewer financial resources, Arab regimes simply change their co-optative strategies: they shift from allocative to inclusionary co-optation.\textsuperscript{96} By "inclusionary," we mean the co-optation of social groups with the aim of either widening a regime's power base or directly controlling society. We can distinguish between the co-optation of economic and political actors. The former refers to the inclusion of business elites as a new pillar of the regime. In the political arena, co-optation is one of the core functions of imitative formal institutions (parliaments, new political parties, NGOs, and so on, as noted above) that have emerged in the context of political liberalization. Throughout the Arab world, such institutions serve as a tool for creating networks and loyalties and as channels for upward social mobility. Gaining a parliamentary seat means immunity, access to incumbents with decision-making power, the possibility of building up networks of loyalty, dependency, and patronage at the local level, and facilitated access to information that can be used for achieving material benefits. This holds true for the Syrian, Egyptian, Tunisian, and other parliaments. In turn, the individual parliamentarian becomes dependent on those who secured him or her a seat. Thus, parliaments are a prime instrument for co-optation, for buying opposition figures, and for rent allocation. Rather than being forums for competing programs or


ideas, most political parties (along with trade unions, professional syndicates, and chambers of commerce and industry) focus on access to decision-making power and resources. This also holds true for what is sometimes called the "loyal opposition," that is, for those parties that criticize individual policies, but do not challenge the regime leadership. Examples include the parties of the Syrian National Progressive Front, the Egyptian Neo-Waf'd and others, and some Algerian political parties, apart from the Front de Liberation National. Nongovernmental organizations as independent agents of the aggregation and articulation of societal interests have been transformed into tools of co-optative control. True, some nonprofit organizations have initially gone largely unnoticed both by Arab regimes and Western donors. Yet, as soon as such organizations try to aggregate and articulate interests autonomously, the regimes usually suppress or co-opt them and their leaders. States themselves establish parallel structures that resemble those of independent NGOs. Thus, "the dichotomy often portrayed in debates about civil society - of a state separated from and opposed to civil society - is falsely conceived." A case in point is Egypt, where NGOs are heavily restricted in their financing, activities, and legal status. Many of the roughly 16,000 registered NGOs in Egypt are, in fact, "GO-NGOs" (Government-Organized NGOs) or "DO-NGOs" (Donor-Organized NGOs). A good deal of the existing literature still considers NGOs to be "grassroots institutions" and part of civil societies that would somehow magically challenge authoritarian rulers and pressure for "change." While the increasing number of NGOs and

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97 Abukhalil, As'ad (1997). 'Change and Democratisation in the Arab World: The Role of Political Parties,' Third World Quarterly, Vol. 18, No. 1, p. 159 identifies a "credibility problem" regarding political parties because "regimes were able to focus on key individuals within parties to lure them with money and official posts."

98 The only social forces to have resisted the temptations of benefiting from this system of give and take (and then only in some countries) are radical Islamists such as al-Jihad al-Islami in Palestine, the Gama'a Islamiyya in Egypt, the Groupes Islamiques Armees (GIA) in Algeria, and the Tunisian Nahda. Other Islamists, such as the Jordanian Islamic Action Front and the Yemeni Islah party, have been successfully co-opted into the regime-controlled political sphere or, like the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood, have learned to play by rules that they do not set themselves. See Norton, Augustus R. (1998). 'Reflections on the Dilemma of Reform in the Middle East,' Critique, Vol. 13, pp. 63-6 for a discussion of the inclusion versus exclusion of Islamists.


100 Even the October 2002 law leaves NGOs under the supervision of the Ministry of Social Affairs, with important control mechanisms remaining in place (cf. Al-Ahram Weekly, 2002).

their widened activities do represent a change in themselves, they can hardly be considered as effective agents of change. Instead, by co-opting these institutions, states successfully undermine any possible trend toward "civility" and employ a strategy of soft repression. Inclusionary co-optation might be less obvious, but is not necessarily a less efficient tool for social control. It does not entail the high costs of allocative mechanisms and brings about more pluralism in the sense that it widens the elitist base of the state. Yet, this does not render the decision-making process more pluralist: political power remains excluded from contestation. Moreover, a more pluralist formation of heterogeneous and competing interests within the PRE matches perfectly with the core trait of patrimonialism: the strategy of "divide and rule" by which rulers balance competing elite factions. "Economic and political dissonance facilitates the juggling act that is central to regime survival. Rulers of liberalized autocracies strive to pit one group against another in ways that maximize the ruler's room for maneuver and restrict the opposition's capacity to work together." Strategic Response to External Influences

When studying exogenous factors possibly inducing political change in the Arab world, most scholars have focused on Western actors, and US administrations in particular. They tend to emphasize the vulnerability of Arab regimes to direct interventions or indirect pressure. But this view ignores that western interests and foreign policies have never been homogeneous. On the contrary, there are four decisive factors that influence Western foreign policy interests and these are, at least in part, mutually exclusive. First, powerful interest groups promote unquestioned support for the state of Israel, particularly in security issues (something especially true of US foreign policy). A second core interest is to maintain political stability, not only for Israel, but for the whole region, to secure the unrestrained flow of oil to the Western economies. Third, since the failure of statist

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development strategies, Western export-oriented economic players and international financial institutions (IMF and World Bank) have strongly advocated a liberalization of Arab economies. Last, since political liberalization was assumed to parallel economic openings, donors promoted the export of Western political values, namely democracy and human rights, to the region. To achieve these contradictory interests simultaneously is an attempt at squaring the circle. Several Arab world regimes have been able, on numerous occasions, to make use of inconsistent Western interests in their struggle for regime maintenance; they successfully turned constraints into opportunities. For instance, regimes have tried to minimize economic pressure through their foreign policies: Jordan's peace treaty with Israel in Oslo in 1993 was rewarded with a substantial peace dividend; Syria's siding with the US-led alliance during the Second Gulf War resulted in large-scale, unconditional Western aid; and Egypt has received massive US civil and military assistance ever since the Camp David accords. Another strategy for some Arab regimes was to emphasize their efforts regarding economic reforms, receive the support of international financial institutions, and thereby distract attention from the political arena. Such attempts have occurred in Egypt, Jordan, and Yemen, but Tunisia is the most obvious "success story" of structural adjustment occurring while the violation of human rights and suppression of opposition movements continued. Obviously, regimes that guarantee political stability receive tacit or explicit Western approval. Nothing demonstrates this more clearly than Western reactions to the Algerian military's prevention of an Islamist takeover in 1991.

The tenor of research on Arab world regime change has shifted: since political liberalization has not led to democratization, some have correctly demanded that Arab world studies enter a "post-democratization era". Here, we are trying to contribute to the study of the adaptation of authoritarian rule in the Middle East and North Africa. While there is a certain oscillation between political liberalization and deliberalization, this has almost exclusively been interpreted from a "when will democracy eventually arrive" perspective, leading students of Arab world regime change to inquire into what is absent

instead of what is present. Too many teleological dead ends made it virtually impossible to find a way to analyze change other than by examining the extent of permitted liberties. This approach has not only left us without answers to the questions of whether or when transitions occur, but such an exclusive focus has also retarded investigations into other important changes. Our aim here has been to undertake a first effort to examine such other changes at the subsystemic level, that is, below the level of changes in regime type and at the level of changes within a regime. Arab authoritarian incumbents suffer from an inherent lack of (democratic) legitimacy. In addition, they face a serious economic crisis and strong Western expectations of democratization and market-economic reforms. These two additional constraints have contributed to a structural crisis of legitimacy. Since regime durability is always a function of legitimacy and coercion, the only logically possible conclusions are the following: either Arab regimes have lost overall stability or they have somehow successfully compensated for this initial loss of legitimacy, given that the overall level of repression appears stable over the period examined. The first assumption can easily be falsified through empirical observation: Arab regimes are durable. Therefore, they must have regained legitimacy. Henceforward, we should examine dimensions that go "beyond coercion" \(^\text{105}\) in order to explain the durability of authoritarianism in the Arab world at times when democratization processes have occurred in every other region of the world. We have identified five core areas where such sub-systemic changes have occurred. In asking how change occurred, we analyzed each of these areas, finding that the regimes' strategies formed a resource pool for each of the Arab leaders, who, according to their own particular needs, handled them with enormous flexibility in order to overcome the structural crisis of legitimacy that they encountered in the late 1980s and early 1990s. Of course, engaging in this kind of research is like opening a Pandora's box: there might be more variables than the ones proposed here, \(^{106}\) and their impact on the polity as well as at the policy level is not easy to assess. Furthermore, it is difficult to measure the degree of legitimacy a certain policy


\(^{106}\) We concentrate here on politics proper and do not discuss authoritarian regime stability from a political economy point of view, which might open up yet another perspective on the issue. Economic interactions in authoritarian contexts are often embedded in variables of power maintenance, as proposed here, and are thus secondary in comparison to the factors discussed in this chapter.
brings about. It is difficult to generalize on when and to what degree which kinds of strategies are employed. We regard our findings more as preliminary hypotheses than as final results, even though we have tried to support our argument with empirical evidence. However, more empirical case studies are urgently needed in Arab world studies today. We must also allude to the fact that we did not conceptually distinguish between different regime types within the region, for instance, between revolutionary republics and traditional monarchies. This is not to neglect existing differences or to lump together countries which certainly do differ tremendously in economic, social, and also in political terms. Strikingly, however, the variables of authoritarian resilience discussed above can be found throughout the region. The differences in the timing, scope, and degree of the strategies employed by Arab regimes are manifold and will hopefully trigger further empirical and comparative research. These problems notwithstanding, we can state that the common denominator of all of these changes in the functional logic of these regimes is that they served to foreclose the emergence of autonomous social forces. The only such forces that exist in a number of Arab countries are militant Islamist, anti-systemic opposition groups that have resisted the temptation of co-optation. When this occurs, however, and co-optation ceases to be an option, the incumbents' only answer is repression. Apart from non-co-opted Islamist groups, there are absolutely no social forces with significant organizational capacities that could be said to be independent from their respective regimes in terms of finance, organization, and personnel. This is one decisive way in which the Arab world differs from other developing regions where democratization has occurred. The constellation of political actors is implicitly assumed by most theory concerned with transition to exist in every nation. However, such a constellation does not exist in the Arab world. In no other region have trade unions, syndicates, and professional associations been penetrated as deeply and profoundly by

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107 Przeworski, Adam (1986). 'Some Problems in the Study of Transition to Democracy,' in G. O'Donnell, P. Schmitter and L. Whitehead (eds), Transitions from Authoritarian Rule, Vol. 3. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press 50 ff., for instance, assumes not only "fissures within the ruling bloc," but also "radical" and "moderate" factions within the opposition. See also Przeworski, Adam (1992). Democracy and the Market: Political and Economic Reform in Eastern Europe and Latin America. Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press. The problem with regard to the Arab world is that hardly anything exists that could be termed an equivalent to what Przeworski conceives as "opposition" - except, as mentioned, militant Islamist groups, which are rigorously oppressed. See also Stepan, Alfred (1997). 'Democratic Opposition and Democratization Theory.' Government and Opposition, Vol. 32, No. 4, pp. 657-73.
authoritarian rule as in the Arab world. Whenever collective social actors seem to emerge in an autonomous fashion anywhere in the Arab world, regimes react immediately: depending on the perceived strength and importance of such actors as well as on the potential threat that they could pose, Arab regimes either co-opt or suppress them. This disproves the notion of non-democratic rule as "pre-modern" or "underdeveloped" when compared to democracy as it prevails in theoretical modernization types of analyses. Quite the contrary, Arab political rule has proven enormously complex and flexible in maintaining power. To speak of a "failure of democracy" is therefore a profound misconception of the working mechanisms of Arab politics and state-society relations. From our point of view, successful democratization would, rather, be the "failure of authoritarianism" - a failure that has been thoroughly avoided by Arab regimes. Recent developments in other world regions confirm two aspects. First, the Arab world is not located on "another planet"; developments elsewhere, too, demonstrate the resilience of non-democratic governance even when regime change has occurred. Tracing the refinement, the re-equilibration, and the adaptive capabilities of non-democratic political rule, and searching for commonalities and differences when comparing states or regions, will constitute the most challenging tasks in comparative politics and area studies for years to come.

Despite the differences and difficulties in defining minimally acceptable features of a democracy, one would agree on at least the following: none of the constituent states in the region has reached a level of democratization that would guarantee a path toward sustainable democracy and prevent a future return to non-democratic governance and de-secularization and deliberalization of the economy and society. Moreover, the absence of stable democracies increases actual and potential instability throughout the region. Repression of opposition forces and suppression of civil society development are but a few examples of the structural violence created by authoritarian or quasi-democratic regimes. Although many factors contribute to the propensity of nations to wage either

108 Brooker, Paul (2000), Non-Democratic Regimes: Theory, Government & Politics. New York: St. Martin's Press, p. 129 even argues that a regime of personalist rule signals the "degeneration" of authoritarianism, as "the regime loses some of its modern structure and some of the credibility of its distinctively modern claim to favor democracy."
war or peace against their own populations and their neighbors, socially, politically, and economically stable systems certainly raise the odds that peace prevails over war. We are undoubtedly many years away from reaping peace dividends from sustained democratization processes in the Arab world. In addition, most contributions to this volume show that, if anything, reform processes toward political, economic, and cultural liberalization have so far brought much instability and violence to the region, as traditional (often religious) values continue to clash with secular ethics, norms, and practices. Four issues are particularly important in preventing transitional violence and in neutralizing threats to nascent democratization processes. First, broad sectors of the population need to be familiar with, and ideally fully embrace, civic virtues and a democratic political culture, manifested through the presence of a healthy, functioning, and influential civil society. Second, political leaders must be fully committed to reform processes, to the extent that they are prepared to relinquish some of their own powers to strengthen democratic governance. Third, regional conditions must be favorable — including the resolution of grave problems that divide the region and pitch individual states or groups of states against each other (such as the Israeli–Palestinian conflict, the ongoing military campaign against Iraq, or the support by some, and objection by others, of America’s continued "war on terrorism"). Fourth, external conditions must be conducive to conflict resolution and peace, including the absence of manipulative external powers’ involvement in regional politics and the presence of international economic conditions that will allow Arab world countries to bear the cost of democratic governance and the provision of social and other services that are necessary to maintain popular support during the inevitable ups and downs of transition and reform periods. Transitions to democracy can be violent — more violent than the structural violence that is ever-present under authoritarian rule. On the one hand, democratization processes are stifled because of fears that an opening of the system might trigger the rise of democratically elected, but anti-democratically inclined, political parties and movements. On the other hand, commitment to democratization is necessary to establish, it is to be hoped at some not too distant point in the future, a more accountable, just, and transparent political order. Most contributors agree that, in order to push forward democratization processes while advancing internal and regional peace, reforms must be
gradual and monitored and controlled from the top, and they must be supplemented by a similarly gradual process toward the establishment of a broad-based and broadly supported civil society. Only such gradual reform processes will be successful in the end. Democratization is a "journey" that takes time to be completed, not an event that can be planned and executed at will.

The Arab world is not one monolithic entity. The domestic scene changes from one region to another, and in some instances the differences are quite fundamental. A brief comparative glimpse of the Kuwaiti scene and the Saudi scene, or the Jordanian and Algerian scenes, can easily illustrate the discrepancies. There are definitely Islamic parties that are fully engaged in the political, social and cultural debates throughout the Arab world, but the level of engagement is really determined by the varying domestic scenes, with foreign intervention a complicating factor. Mainstream Muslim Brotherhood organizations do not enjoy the same treatment or status everywhere. They occasionally act as moderating forces within civil society, ready to engage politically when the conditions allow it. Jordan is an example of such a scenario. It is essential that political organizations including Islamists agree to the basic concept of rotation of power. Equally important is for the players to agree on legislation that calls for cultural pluralism, tolerance and gender equality. Here, reformers within the region believe that outside allies can be of crucial help. Unfortunately, the gap between US action and attitude is a complicating factor, especially in relation to Muslim groups like Hizbollah in Lebanon and Hamas and Islamic Jihad in Palestine. These organizations are considered terrorist by the US and some of its allies, while the majorities not only of the people of Lebanon and Palestine but the region as a whole do not share the US categorization. The use of violence by these organizations, although morally debatable, is a collective reaction to foreign interference and occupation. But, if we address the core issue, the transformation of these organizations into full-fledged political parties is possible. Unfortunately, some of the western powers for the most part are ideologically driven, while the Arab world is reform driven.
Mustafa Hamarneh and his pro-democracy compatriots in the Arab world are “reform driven”, not “ideologically driven”. The complex issue of reform tops the domestic agenda in almost all Arab societies today. This in itself is a very significant development. However, the public debates on the various issues unified under the theme of reform have thus far not been enriching. The neo-liberals’ inability to widen and deepen the process of democratization, coupled with the popular perception that they openly embrace unpopular American policies in the region, has limited their ability to mobilize the embryonic, progressive political forces in support of a genuine process of reform. Hence the neo-liberals in power must democratize the system, the pro-democracy activists must not throw the baby out with the bathwater, and America must be more evenhanded with the region. If these conditions are met, one can look forward to a healthier debate on reform and ultimately the implantation of a process of political and economic reform that addresses local needs in the Arab world.

According to Alex MacGillivray, senior partner at AccountAbility, one of the co-authors of a new report entitled Responsible Competitiveness in the Arab World 2009, the Arab World wants to be innovative and is looking to develop education in the region, but it’s not going to be easy “to really scale this up.” Civil society is regarded as a really important driver of responsible competitiveness and this is now acknowledged in the Arab world. “Top of the Arab Responsible Competitiveness Index is Kuwait followed by Saudi Arabia, asserts MacGillivray. According to AccountAbility, in terms of policy drivers, Saudi Arabia is taking a lead in reforming policies and enforcing regulation. The report singles out seven key responsible competitiveness drivers in the Arab World. These are responsible business climate, environmental policy, labour policy, governance, product and service innovation, talent and engaged stakeholders.109

109 The report contains analysis of Arab issues and opportunities, as well as essays on pressing challenges from seven sustainability leaders. AccountAbility, a non-profit global think-tank, argues that evidence from more than 100 countries indicates that successful economies are those in which competitiveness, sustainability and business responsibility go hand in hand. The report, Responsible Competitiveness in the Arab World 2009, was led by Alex MacGillivray and Simon Zadek at AccountAbility and Darin Rovere at Sustainability Excellent Arabia. The foreword to the report is by Queen Rania Al Abdullah of Jordan. The report was supported by the Arab Sustainability Leadership Group and sponsors included Abraaj, Aramex, JorAmCo and HBS. http://knowledge.insead.edu/ExaminingresponsiblecompetitivenessintheArabWorld090605.cfm