Monarchical Authoritarianism: Survival and Political Liberalization in a Middle Eastern Regime Type

Author(s): Russell E. Lucas

Source: *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, Vol. 36, No. 1 (Feb., 2004), pp. 103-119
Published by: Cambridge University Press
Stable URL: http://www.jstor.org/stable/3880140

Int. J. Middle East Stud. **36** (2004), 103–119. *Printed in the United States of America*
DOI: 10.1017.S0020743804361064

Russell E. Lucas

MONARCHICAL AUTHORITARIANISM: SURVIVAL AND POLITICAL LIBERALIZATION IN A MIDDLE EASTERN REGIME TYPE

MAMOUN FANDY, *Saudi Arabia and the Politics of Dissent* (New York: Palgrave, 1999).

MICHAEL HERB, *All in the Family: Absolutism, Revolution, and Democracy in the Middle Eastern Monarchies* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1999).

JOSEPH A. KECHICHIAN, *Succession in Saudi Arabia* (New York: Palgrave, 2001).

JOSEPH KOSTINER, ed., *Middle East Monarchies: The Challenge of Modernity* (Boulder, Colo.: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2000).

JOSEPH A. MASSAD, *Colonial Effects: The Making of National Identity in Jordan* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001).

MARY ANN TÉTREAULT, *Stories of Democracy: Politics and Society in Contemporary Kuwait* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000).

Thirty years ago, a group of six books on ruling monarchies would have been considered the last testaments of an endangered anachronism. Faced with the "king's dilemma" of maintaining traditional rule in the face of modern political demands, many Middle Eastern monarchs lost their thrones to populist nationalist movements.[1] Yet in the 21st century, a handful of monarchies remain and thrive. Because all of the major surviving monarchies are in the Middle East, many writers point to traditional Islamic rule as the key to the survival of these regimes.[2]

However, is tradition the best explanation for survival or failure of monarchical regimes in the Middle East? Each of these six books in some way addresses the issue of the survival of monarchies in the Middle East. These books explain the longevity of monarchical rule in the Middle East as something more than the persistence of traditional Islam. As a group, these six books draw the Middle East back into a debate within the social sciences about the legacies of political institutions and regime types. Among Middle Eastern monarchies, regime-led state formation and nation building have produced a flexible form of rule that has survived the challenges of rapid development and international

Russell E. Lucas is an Assistant Professor of Political Science and International and Area Studies, University of Oklahoma, Norman, Okla, 73072, USA; e-mail: relucas@ou.edu.

conflict. Many of the authors under review in this article also evaluate the promise of political liberalization and democratization in Middle Eastern monarchies. Explanations for regime survival and the prospects for liberalization and democratization, however, all rest on how these authors characterize monarchical regimes.

SULTANS VERSUS AUTHORITARIANS

In eight countries—Bahrain, Jordan, Kuwait, Morocco, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates—monarchs remain in power. These monarchs not only reign but rule, as well. In all of the world's countries, possibly only in Bhutan and Swaziland do monarchs still hold the same degree of power. In contrast, monarchs in the neighboring Middle Eastern countries of Egypt, Iraq, Yemen, Libya, and Iran all fell from power. What characterizes the surviving maliks, amirs, and sultans?

Perhaps, the "sultanistic" regime type, as explained by H. E. Chehabi and Juan Linz, would provide an appropriate linkage.[3] Jason Brownlee makes this case.[4] However, the application of the sultanistic regime type to most contemporary Arab monarchies would confuse more than it enlightens—despite the presence of "sultan" among the titles of ruling monarchs in the Arab world. Instead, this article argues, Middle Eastern monarchies belong to a particular subtype of authoritarian rule.

Chehabi and Linz define a sultanistic regime as a regime characterized by personal rule unchecked by restraints, norms, or ideology. "Corruption reigns supreme at all levels of society" under a sultanistic ruler; the distinction between the state and the regime becomes "blurred."[5] In a sultanistic regime, thus, the ruler has an enormous degree of discretionary power, despite the narrow social base of the regime. In contrast, Linz defines an authoritarian regime in this manner:

> [a]uthoritarian regimes are political systems with limited, not responsible, political pluralism: without elaborate and guiding ideology (but with distinctive mentalities); without intensive nor extensive political mobilization (except some points in their development); and in which a leader (or occasionally a small group) exercises power within formally ill-defined limits but actually quite predictable ones.[6]

One can contrast authoritarianism and sultanism along four issues. First, an authoritarian regime permits—or, at least, tolerates—pluralism among social groups. This pluralism may have a meaningful impact on government policies. Under a sultanistic regime, in contrast, corruption and personalism atomize social groups even within the regime. Second, although neither an authoritarian nor a sultanistic regime derives legitimacy and motivation from ideological sources, a "mentality" may drive an authoritarian regime's policies. This does not compare to the drive for a "cult of personality" of a sultanistic regime. Third, although neither type of regime is afraid to repress dissent, an authoritarian regime aims for general political apathy that may be selectively mobilized from time to time. If a sultanistic regime attempts to mobilize society, it is only for the glorification of the ruler's ego or his personality cult. Finally, while an authoritarian regime has predictable boundaries to the power of the government, a sultanistic regime offers near-complete discretion to the leader on the limits of his power.

In addition, the size of the social base of an authoritarian regime may vary among subtypes of authoritarian rule. Populist authoritarian regimes may mobilize a large number

of social actors, whereas in bureaucratic authoritarian regimes, a narrow regime coalition represses society to stay in power. In sultanistic rule, however, the regime stands on a very narrow social base—often restricted to its clients. The ruler generally buys only the loyalty of these clients, who are generally without distinct social characteristics.

Where do Arab monarchies fit into these two contrasting regime types? Mary Ann Tétreault's discussion of politics in Kuwait demonstrates that Middle Eastern monarchies are a subtype of authoritarian rule rather than examples of sultanistic regimes. Tétreault describes the main contours of Kuwaiti politics in the 20th century with special attention to the 1990s. According to Tétreault, the "main event" of 20th-century Kuwaiti politics has been the "repeated clashes between would-be citizens demanding civil and political rights and what has become over the period a deeply entrenched albeit variably autocratic 'traditional' regime" (p. 2). Citizens are in conflict with the regime in Kuwait to expand political pluralism while limiting the rulers' prerogatives. It is not a fight to control a lone dictator—the amirs of Kuwait are thus not "sultans."

Tétreault's discussion shows that, based on each of the distinctions between sultanistic and authoritarian regimes, the regime in Kuwait should be classified with the latter. Although the Kuwaiti amirs have dynastic and autocratic tendencies, they hold no cult of personality, and limits exist to the ruler's political discretion. The boundaries to the amir's power come from within the regime, from constitutional norms, and from action by citizens. Political mobilization is limited in Kuwait. The regime, however, attempts to mobilize marginal social groups (such as the bedouins) to support the regime in its struggles with the opposition. There is a distinctly "traditional" (or, more correctly, "traditionalist") mentality guiding the regime, as shown by periodic calls for "Islamic" values and support for studies of tribal *turath* (heritage). And political pluralism is present and meaningful in politics. Thus, one should identify the regime in Kuwait as a particular type of authoritarian regime.

WHY CONFUSION IN REGIME-TYPING ARAB MONARCHIES?

Confusion in properly categorizing Middle Eastern monarchies stems from two features of these regimes: dynasticism and the appearance of traditional rule.[7] A defining characteristic of monarchies is hereditary succession. In sultanistic regimes, leadership is often inherited, which may not be a remarkable fact except that many of the states are nominal republics. Of course, political dynasties can, and often do, appear even in democratic regimes. Thus, the inheritance of leadership from a family member in monarchies is not unique among the various types of regimes.

Moreover, personal rule in Middle Eastern monarchies is not always the norm. In many Arab monarchies, which Michael Herb labels "dynastic monarchies," the ruling family acts as a corporate unit. The king or amir is *primus inter pares* of the family, not a lone dictator. Familial rule can be seen as keeping with Arab political norms because of the view that these monarchies are expressions of traditional political legitimacy. Bernard Lewis supports this interpretation by arguing that "the dynastic principle and the practice of hereditary succession remained powerful, deep-rooted, and virtually universal in the Islamic Middle East."[8] Lewis thus traces an unbroken line from pre–Islamic types of rule to the second half of the 20th century. Despite the modern threats to the principle of dynasticism, the tradition is "alive and well."[9] For Joseph Kechichian, the Saudi kings,

"In keeping with a traditional monarchy—in which the ruler remains supreme religious leader—the custodianship of the holy mosques at Mecca and Medina confer on the Saudi ruler an unparalleled degree of legitimacy" (p. 3). Yet reliance on such a simplistic view of political culture ignores the enormous discontinuities wrought by Western imperialism and rapid economic development during the past two centuries.

Most other authors of the books under review take a more complex view toward the installation and maintenance of monarchical rule in the Middle East. For Ami Ayalon, the preference for monarchy as a regime type among the successors of the Ottoman Empire should not be surprising; after all, it was a "familiar" type of government. However, Ayalon also points to the example of powerful Western monarchies, especially Great Britain, in providing models for emulation to the new states.[10] Some states, such as Egypt and Iraq, imported monarchy and parliamentary institutions in their quest for modernization. Others, mainly in the Gulf, looked inward toward shaykhly institutions rather than emulating the West. The question of why monarchies survived in the states of the latter group is a chief question of many of the books under review.

STATE AND NATION BUILDING IN MIDDLE EASTERN MONARCHIES

Thus, when trying to categorize Middle Eastern monarchies to an appropriate regime type, it is important to note the processes of regime building, state formation, and nation crafting. In contrast to European states, but much like cases from Africa and Asia, the regime generally pre-dates the state and the nation in Middle Eastern monarchies. In Jordan and Iraq, the British introduced members of the Hashemite family to rule previously non-existent states. Imperial powers recruited and manipulated the ruling families of Egypt, Kuwait, and Morocco to provide local administration for colonial rule. In Saudi Arabia, a tribal alliance conquered territory and began building a state with British and U.S. assistance. In all of these cases, the monarchy appeared before the apparatus of the modern state. Western powers generally supplied the machinery of the state as well as the borders of these new countries. Moreover, the national identity and group feeling associated with these states is an even more recent phenomenon. This pattern of regime-led state building is present not only in Middle Eastern monarchies, but also in most states of the Middle East. One can easily confuse this pattern with the sultanistic regime type's "blurred line" between regime and state. The monarchical regime, however, built a new state around itself rather than deconstructing an already existing state into the toy of a sultanistic ruler.

In her contribution to Kostiner's volume, Lisa Anderson reviews her earlier argument that monarchies, as a regime type, are compatible with the state-formation project.[11] Anderson argues that monarchies are particularly adept at statecraft because of the "association of military virtues with other desirable qualities—compassion, piety, learning—in the person and the office of the king."[12] As in Europe, the monarchs of the Middle East created centralized and repressive states to achieve tremendous social, political, and economic transformations in a short period of time. Anderson had earlier argued that "the reliance on personal relationship, on friends and family, which is so often noted in politics in the Middle East, is less a reflection of tradition than it is a result of the novelty and instability of formal, impersonal institutions and relations."[13]

But for Anderson, monarchies serve a function not just for the necessities of building states, but for constructing nations, as well. Monarchies have taken a lead in molding national identities to fit their states' colonially drawn boundaries. Middle Eastern monarchies "thrive on multiplicity and avail themselves of considerable ambiguity and nuance in defining the members of their realm."[14] Monarchs in the Middle East, like their earlier European counterparts, have focused on claming a "traditional" if not divine, right to rule. By building their rule on the twin bases of kinship and hierarchy, Middle Eastern monarchs delimit their domains while maintaining ambiguity and pluralism among their subjects. Rulers encourage pluralism among social groups, because "monarchies are better able to serve as the central focus in balancing, manipulating, and controlling societies characterized by such vertical cleavages, particularly when those are reinforced by 'antiquity of blood.'"[15] Thus, monarchs can stand above tribal, religious, ethnic, and regional divisions by acting as the linchpin of the political system. These potentially conflicting identities can then be subsumed under the monarch's benevolent patronage. The monarchy becomes the unifying symbol of the (newly created) nation. This tendency of local nationalism, or *wataniyya*, contrasts with the Arab nationalism, or *qawmiyya*, of the 1950s and 1960s. The construction of local nationalisms melds recent trends in social historiography with the monarchies' emphasis on kinship and local—especially Islamic—traditions.[16]

Middle Eastern monarchies have used local nationalist "traditions" to imagine both the regime and the state into the past to solidify their rule. Their success can be measured by the degree that some analysts, such as Lewis and Kechichian, see these regimes as expressions of "tradition." In contrast, authors such as Tétreault and Joseph A. Massad see the use of the past as a tool in contemporary political struggles. Massad takes this argument a step further to argue that the Jordanian regime has used institutions—in his study, the law and the military—not only to repress but also to produce a new national identity. Law and the military construct national identity because they

> come to constitute and produce the subjects and the categories they seek to discipline and/or repress. Moreover, the strategies through which these subjects are produced generate a range of processes outside the realm of the military and the law, which carry their production to the realm of national culture [p. 5].

Massad follows these processes from the colonial period into the post-independence era, noting the continuities in the productive project of national identity creation. Massad could see Lewis and Kechichian falling into the same trap that anti-colonial nationalists fell into. "Instead of understanding their anticolonial nationalism as a *strategic* essentialism to fight colonial power, anticolonial nationalists mistook their nationalism for an absolute essence" (p. 277).[17] Tétreault (p. 219) also reminds us that the Kuwaiti regime is not alone in using the past as a political tool. Both the regime and the opposition in Kuwait have bitterly contested the grand narratives of politics. Both wish to orient politics toward their desired future via a selective appropriation and interpretation of the past.

Thus, the state- and nation-building projects serve Middle Eastern monarchies as distinctive guiding mentalities—if not ideologies—as compared with the cults of personality of sultanistic regimes. One can clearly categorize Middle Eastern monarchies

as a subtype of authoritarianism based on their political pluralism, limited political mobilization, predictable limits on the power of rulers, and regime mentalities.

MIDDLE EASTERN MONARCHIES AS A SUBTYPE OF AUTHORITARIAN RULE

If one considers Middle Eastern monarchies to be a subtype of authoritarian rule, then how would they be characterized? Monarchical authoritarian regimes generally share the following attributes. The monarch is a personalistic ruler; however, he does not rule alone. The king (or amir) stands at the center of a regime coalition that may be diverse and can include a broad social base. A degree of political pluralism is allowed—if not encouraged—both within the regime coalition and the legal opposition. The mass population generally remains politically quiescent or may be mobilized along communal or clientelistic lines. The monarchy is generally constitutionally organized and legitimized, but the constitution formally grants the monarchy unchecked power. Nevertheless, these monarchs do thrive on the ambiguous nature of their source of sovereignty—the person of the monarch, divine right, or "the people." Informal constraints on the monarch's power, however, come from social norms and protected spaces, such as the home and the mosque. Finally, a mentality (not quite an ideology) of the regime may be based on anti-colonial leadership, religious prestige, or "traditional" privilege.

Within this general subtype of monarchical authoritarianism, two further surviving variants of the regime can be specified. Although Fred Halliday identifies more subtypes, Michael Herb highlights the distinction between "dynastic" monarchies and others.[18] Herb defines dynastic monarchies as regimes in which the ruling family monopolizes the highest state offices, controls the institutions of the state by distributing family members throughout the bureaucracy, and has developed mechanisms for settling family disputes—especially over succession (p. 8). Kuwait and Saudi Arabia stand as the paradigmatic examples of this variant of monarchical authoritarianism. Herb underdefines a second variant, but we can identify the traits of what one can call "linchpin" monarchies. In this variant of monarchical authoritarianism, the ruling family generally participates only in the political institutions of the monarchy—not in the state bureaucracy (the military excepted). The linchpin monarch stands above and away from routine politics to a greater degree than the dynastic monarch. Finally, linchpin monarchies encourage social pluralism and mobilize it along vertical lines to participate in the governing of the state, underneath the leadership of the monarchy. Jordan and Morocco serve as the prime examples of the linchpin variant of monarchical authoritarianism.

SURVIVAL OF AUTHORITARIAN MONARCHIES

From the vantage point of three decades ago, monarchies were an endangered species. Monarchies had been recently overthrown and replaced by republics in Egypt, Iraq, Yemen, and Libya. In other countries, incessant coup attempts (Morocco), civil war (Oman), or both (Jordan) threatened the regime. One of the main concerns of the books under review is to explain the survival of monarchies in the Middle East during the second half of the 20th century. However, we can split this question into two: What

brought about the fall of so many monarchies from 1950 to 1980, and why did the other monarchies survive?

Bruce Maddy-Weitzman addresses the first question. He finds that, "given the existing combination of internal and external factors," the overthrow of the monarchies in Egypt and Iraq, as well as possibly Libya and Yemen, was pretty much unavoidable.[19] All of these countries lacked the means to legitimize the monarchy through parliamentary institutions. Structural economic and social change, brought about by "modernization," had weakened state capabilities to address crises in both economic development and foreign policy (especially the establishment of the State of Israel). Weak monarchs and their supporters could not accommodate the rise of the new middle class, especially in the military. Thus, Maddy-Weitzman argues, structural factors may have made the situation in Egypt and Iraq ripe for revolution, an argument that could be applied to republican Syria at the time. Thus, the incompetence of the monarchs of the *ancien* regimes in managing socio-economic change led to their downfall.

In contrast, Anderson argues that monarchy has survived in the Middle East because it is a regime type that is well suited to the demands of state and nation building. She argues that monarchies hold an "elective affinity" for the demands of state-formation. "Clearly the institutional flexibility and inclusiveness of monarchy is an important element of its remarkable resilience in the Middle East."[20] But the functionalist explanation answers the question only of the survival of monarchies, whereas Maddy-Weitzman answers only the question of why monarchies fell.

Herb tries to incorporate both questions into his investigation of dynastic monarchy. He also makes the most explicit argument that regime type explains the failure or survival of monarchies in the Middle East. He argues,

> No dynastic monarchy has fallen to revolution, while all of the monarchies in which the constitution prohibits royal participation in the cabinet have collapsed. Three monarchies have survived in which members of the ruling family are allowed, by the constitution, to occupy high posts but do not monopolize them [p. 9].

For Herb, self-interested competition inside the ruling families of the Gulf has brought about the phenomenon of dynastic monarchy. The royal family's domination of the state allows this narrow regime coalition to channel family disputes into patterns of constructive competition. Herb contributes to our understanding of the role power struggles play within ruling families—especially in Kuwait and Saudi Arabia—in solidifying these regimes.

In Herb's argument, the regime type of dynastic monarchy trumps all other explanations of the survival and fall of monarchies in the Middle East. He dismisses a common competing explanation of the survival of Gulf monarchies: oil and the rentier state. In Kostiner's volume, Onn Winckler discusses the economic difficulties of rentier states in nationalizing the labor forces of Gulf monarchies.[21] The rentier-state, as a political argument, however, explains the lack of democracy in oil-producing states (or other states with significant rents) because the state does not need to tax the production of wealth. Rather, the rentier state's main goal is to distribute resources. Thus, "no taxation" means "no representation." For Herb, however, the rentier-state argument explains only that oil monarchies will not democratize, not that they will be resilient (p. 257). The rentier-state explanation, as well as Herb's critique of it, could benefit from a dialogue with

Juan Linz and Alfred Stepan's or Stephen Haggard and Robert Kaufman's investigation of the relationship between economic crises and regime transitions.[22] If economic crises *do* provide a key cause in bringing about the downfall of authoritarian regimes, then the impact of oil rents in providing a cushion of state fiscal resources could help explain the survival of regimes in rentier states. Tétreault, for example, argues that the opposite tendency of economic crises and rising national debt has offered the Kuwaiti opposition grounds to question the performance of the ruling family.

Other explanations for the failure and survival of monarchies in the Middle East deserve more attention than Herb offers them. F. Gregory Gause argues that "the success and failure of monarchy in the Arabian Peninsula in the twentieth century had more to do with the position of Arabian countries in the regional security picture and the international political economy than with their particular domestic characteristics."[23] Although Gause's critique of cultural factors as the explanatory factor behind the success or failure of monarchies in the region is welcome, domestic factors—especially the structure of the regime—deserve more credit than he gives. The failure of the Shah of Iran, a non–Arab monarchy across the Gulf from the Arabian Peninsula, can show that despite enormous amounts of both superpower support and fiscal resources, leadership failures can compound the deficiencies of a regime without a social base.

Unfortunately, David Menashri's chapter in Kostiner's volume does not really investigate the fall of the Shah by addressing these issues.[24] Rather, he studies the thought and legacies of Ayatollah Khomeini. The regime of Mohamed Reza Shah approaches the sultanistic regime type much more closely than any of the other monarchy in the Middle East. Homa Katouzian contributes a chapter to Chehabi and Linz's volume on sultanistic regimes. Katouzian explains that the regime of the Pahlavi Shah rested on a very narrow social base. Thus, the medical, mental, and political deterioration of the Shah in the late 1970s resulted in his overthrow by a social revolution.[25]

"Leadership" as a variable in explaining the failure and survival of monarchies also deserves attention. The lack of leadership, in the cases of monarchies in Iran and Egypt, proved fatal for the regimes. Kechichian, in contrast, takes the strength and future directions of leaders as the starting point for *Succession in Saudi Arabia*. The Saudis have "ruled with savvy, tackling many difficult challenges to their authority" (p. 149). Kechichian, through numerous interviews, provides profiles of potential future rulers of Saudi Arabia. He describes their role and place in future succession battles as well as their attitudes toward major economic and security policy issues. In Kechichian's analysis, political Islam, in the form of internal opposition groups, provides a major challenge for current and future Saudi rulers.

Mamoun Fandy investigates these opposition groups in more detail by profiling the personalities and goals of some of Saudi Arabia's major anti-regime figures. In *Saudi Arabia and the Politics of Dissent*, Fandy finds that "Islam is the only ground on which the opposition can attack the regime and have any significant following within the country, and yet it is a contest that the opposition cannot win" (p. 241). The opposition instead reinforces the regime's mentality of "traditional" Islam. Moreover, the opposition leaders that Fandy investigates, including Osama bin Laden, all lack resources in the "political economy of signs" of Saudi Arabia. In a post-modern blending of Weber's concept of status and Ibn Khaldoun's *'assabiyya*, Fandy argues that familialism and social status matter more than economic ties and social class in Saudi social discourse. Because the

major opposition figures he investigates all come from a peripheral background in this social context, they lack the social base required for proposing a credible alternative to the Saudi regime.

Fandy's investigation of the opposition to the Saudi monarchy points to the usefulness of investigating the opposition and alternatives to monarchical rule in the Middle East. Gurdun Krämer's study of Islamist opposition movements in Saudi Arabia, Jordan, and Morocco finds that these groups generally do not seek to overthrow the monarchies. Rather, the Islamists call "for basic reform and renewal of the state and society" to improve government performance.[26] Thus, one can see opposition groups in today's Middle Eastern monarchies as mainly reformist rather than revolutionary, another factor in promoting the regimes' stability.

Thus, the structure of the type of regime—the breadth and depth of its supporters in the regime coalition, its rules for succession, the degree of social pluralism, and its distinctive mentalities—can incorporate many of these competing explanations for the failure and survival of monarchies in the Middle East. The monarchies that failed to survive could not incorporate the growth of the new middle class. In other words, they succumbed to what Samuel Huntington labeled the "king's dilemma." The fact that these regimes narrowed the regime coalition too far proves more important than Herb's explanation that the failed monarchies barred the royal family from holding cabinet posts. By becoming landowning aristocrats, catering to narrow elite interests, and relying on external support, the Egyptian and Iraqi monarchs "failed to establish their legitimacy among their 'people.'"[27] One should not be surprised that the successors to the Egyptian and Iraqi monarchies were populist republics that attempted to incorporate many sectors of society into the new regime and stood opposed to the Western powers.[28] In contrast, linchpin monarchies have survived because of their broad, inclusive, and pluralistic regime coalitions.

However, a broad regime coalition is not necessary for the survival of monarchies. Dynastic monarchies stand on a narrower societal base. However, their rule has been lubricated by oil wealth. The fact that all dynastic monarchies also qualify as rentier states helps one to conclude that perhaps Herb abandons the rentier framework too quickly. The amount and type of resources—political, economic, and social—provides a key for regime survival. But how a regime uses its resources is an important variable, as the spectacular failure of the Shah demonstrates. How resources are used, however, is also a factor of the type of regime. Both dynastic and linchpin monarchies enrich themselves, but they also try to spread some state wealth to a wide range of societal allies—if not to the population of the country at large—to reinforce their rule. Aristocratic or "sultanistic" monarchs do not. The first set of regimes is still in power; the latter set is not.

Yet one factor that the authors of the books under review do not address—the demographic factor—may offer a competing structural explanation. Why monarchs in Egypt and Iraq could not accommodate the rise of the new middle class, whereas those in Jordan and Kuwait could, may be a function of population. At the time of the 1958 Iraqi revolution, more people resided in Baghdad than the total of current citizens of the State of Kuwait. The argument that "small is pluralistic" may offer a facilitating factor for building a durable regime.[29] After all, the two largest surviving monarchies, Morocco and Saudi Arabia, each have populations of fewer than 30 million. The ability of regimes to control smaller populations better deserves to be further explored in relation to the survival of authoritarian monarchies.

POLITICAL LIBERALIZATION AS A PATH TOWARD DEMOCRATIZATION?

"Want Democracy? Get A King" is the title of a recent article in *Middle East Quarterly*.[30] This is the case, of course, if you take the statements by the leaders of the concerned Middle Eastern countries at face value. However, none of the monarchies of the Middle East meets the minimal procedural requirements of democracy on which most social scientists agree. Distinguishing between "political liberalization" as the granting of greater rights and freedoms and "democratization" as the incorporating of more sectors of the public into the decision-making process provides a good starting place to avoid such overstatements. More serious scholarly treatment of the issue has concluded that there is little difference between Middle Eastern republics and monarchies on the issue of democratization. Democratization is not significantly occurring in either type of regime.[31] When it comes to political liberalization, however, Rex Brynen, Bahgat Korany, and Paule Noble conclude that

> in the medium term, however, Jordan, Kuwait, and Morocco represent an interesting set of cases in which incremental political change may, to some degree, be facilitated by the coexistence of pluralism, monarchical institutions, and some tradition of constitutionalism.[32]

Why are monarchies more successful at carrying policies of political liberalization? Features of the monarchical authoritarian regime type help facilitate the success of political liberalization. In monarchies, the mobilization of *ta'addudiyya* (social pluralism)—or, at least, the tolerance of it—dramatically differs from nationalist mobilization (of various sorts) in most republics in the Middle East. Anderson, for example, contrasts the language policies of Morocco and Algeria, two countries with significant Francophone elites and Berber-speaking minorities. Linguistic difference in Algeria was to be eradicated by nationalist fiat, while language diversity in Morocco was tolerated and fudged. In Algeria, the policy prompted a Berber backlash; in Morocco, the monarchy kept both Arabs and Berbers supportive of the crown.[33] Monarchs often present themselves as the defenders of their kingdoms' minorities (Christians, Berbers, etc.) and of tribal pluralism. Monarchies have generally encouraged multiple identities among their subjects, while nationalist republics have demanded uniformity among the citizens of the nation.

If the regime needs or desires a political opening, however, this degree of *ta'addudiyya* dramatically affects the probability of success of political liberalization. Political liberalizations often result in a "resurgence of civil society."[34] In a nationalist republic, the growth of pluralism challenges the state's ideology and monopoly over corporatist organizations. Thus, when Algeria and Egypt politically liberalized in the 1980s and 1990s, Islamist organizations mobilized and challenged the political monopoly of the official nationalist ruling parties. This challenge resulted in a backlash, with the regime defending itself through wide-scale repression and a reversal of political liberalization.

In contrast, when a monarchy undertakes a policy of political liberalization, it generally only reinforces the pre-existing social divisions. Thus, when Jordan or Kuwait held elections for reinvigorated parliaments in the late 1980s and early 1990s, Islamists legally mobilized and succeed in obtaining large pluralities of seats in both legislatures. The regime allowed Islamists to do so because they were the largest group, but not the only group elected to Parliament. Other social groups—for example, tribes, nationalists,

and businessmen—also gained representation. The key for inclusion by opposition groups, as Herb puts it, is that such groups must merely be "reconciled, resigned, or even moderately opposed, to the presence of the monarch" (p. 263). This is the case because elections are not for the leadership of the government—as they can be in republics—but rather for a Parliament with constitutional power that is usually subsidiary to that of the monarch. Moreover, a survey of constitutions of Middle Eastern monarchies will show that executive power—in the form of the cabinet—is always responsible to the king but is much less frequently responsible to a legislative power. Thus, kings are less frightened than presidents to open political liberalization in the Middle East because the mobilization of *taʿaddudiyya* can be accommodated under the existing political system with minimal discontinuities.

Monarchical regimes are thus more willing and able to use political liberalization as a survival strategy. They are more likely to opt for the "democratic bargain" when faced with political crises than their republican neighbors.[35] Political opening gives monarchies a number of benefits that outweigh the potential drawbacks of political liberalization. Political liberalization, by allowing the mobilization of civil society, provides an opportunity for a monarchical regime to activate "divide-and-rule" policies and re-calibrate social balances of power. The regime can use both of these processes to gain public support for—or, at least, general acquiescence in—unpopular government policies.

When a monarchical authoritarian regime opens political space for social mobilization by instigating a political opening, the regime may be either pre-empting or responding to opposition demands. However, the mobilization of political pluralism and civil society during periods of political liberalization aids the regime in balancing the regime coalition against the opposition forces in the country. The opposition becomes just one among many social groups participating in politics. This allows the regime to pick and choose its partners from the diverse social field. Thus, in Morocco, as explained by Remy Leveau in Kostiner's volume, the leftist and nationalist opposition can be more easily brought into cohabitation with royalist parties.[36] As Asher Susser (also in Kostiner) notes, Islamists in Jordan, by accepting the rule of the limited political liberalization game, have preferred to "enhance their public posture and influence without engaging the regime in a head-on confrontation that they were bound to lose."[37] And Tétreault explains that Kuwait's ruling family has worked, often successfully, to balance nationalists and Islamists in the National Assembly against each other. In each of these cases, the cost to the monarch of his favor diminishes with increased demand from a more diversified political field. Potential opponents of the regime can be turned into mere opponents of the government of the day—not of the monarch—when the regime allows greater political liberalization.

Monarchical authoritarian regimes can also use political liberalization to recalibrate the balance of power within the regime coalition. Monarchs may have grown divorced from their populations during long periods of political repression or bans on political activity that have characterized the history of many of Middle Eastern countries. They may have become less attuned not only to the strength of various political and social groups in the opposition but also to currents within the regime itself. Thus, for example, many see the Jordanian elections of 1989 as testing the waters to gauge the level of popular support for various political trends in the emerging post–Cold War era. Also, the Palestinian-led private sector in Jordan may benefit from economic structural-adjustment policies resulting from the greater need for state economic austerity. Thus, the Jordanian

regime has given East Bank elites greater license for political activities to offer rewards to all sectors of the regime coalition.[38]

But for authoritarian monarchs, the most useful aspect of political liberalization is its ability to provide a "democratic bargain" in return for unpopular policies. With economic structural-adjustment policies becoming necessary even for the rich oil-exporting economies of the Middle East, providing a political outlet may help relieve tension that painful economic reforms often entail. Thus, in Morocco and Jordan political openings followed riots related to the economic reforms. Even in Saudi Arabia, as both Kechichian and Fandy note, the 1992 formation of a *Majlis al-Shura* (Consultative Council) arose from dissent in the middle classes from the fall-out of the Gulf War and the end of the oil boom. Political liberalization also allows the regime to spread blame for the discontent caused by unpopular policies. A main task of Jordan's Parliament in the 1990s was to pass laws implementing the International Monetary Fund's structural-adjustment program, thus ensuring that a wide political spectrum would be responsible for the reforms—and accept the blame.

There may, however, be drawbacks for monarchies when implementing political liberalization. Greater freedoms may grant critics of unpopular policies a voice to chastise the regime. Moreover, critics may gain an institutional platform to ask questions that may make many in the regime uncomfortable. Tétreault describes such a process at work with the suspension of Kuwait's National Assembly in 1986, and its near-suspension again in 1995, over the right of the Parliament to interpellate ministers (pp. 67, 168). In Jordan, the Parliament has allowed opponents of the peace process with Israel to join together, despite their ideological divisions.[39]

One of the advantages of political-liberalization policies for monarchies, however, is that they can be easily manipulated, if not reversed. Thus, monarchs can suspend Parliaments if their inconvenience outweighs their benefits, as they did in Kuwait and Jordan. Or more commonly in recent years, the monarchical regime will keep the veneer of political liberalization. However, it will empty the content of political liberalization through the manipulation of political institutions. Thus, changes in the constitution in Morocco, and changes of election laws in Kuwait and Jordan can act as survival strategies. The regime institutionally channels political mobilization without compromising government policies and regime stability while still granting regime-coalition members the rewards of political liberalization.

PATHS TOWARD DEMOCRATIZATION FROM MONARCHICAL AUTHORITARIAN REGIMES

In Latin America, authoritarian regimes used political liberalization as a strategy to shore up their sagging rule. However, instead of reinforcing the regime's legitimacy, political liberalization often provided the first step in a transition to democracy.[40] Linz and Stepan identify this trajectory of *reforma–pactada* as one of many paths toward democratic transition.[41] Yet if authoritarian monarchies can square the circle of "inherently unstable" political liberalization into a true regime-survival strategy, then can we see hope for real democratization in the monarchies of the Middle East?

The conditions for transitions to democracy are very difficult among Middle Eastern monarchies—at least, in the short run. The factors that scholars commonly identify as

leading to transitions to democracy—a resurgence of civil society brought about by political liberalization; a "reformist pact," and splits within the regime between soft- and hard-liners—are all less likely to occur in Middle Eastern monarchies. The institutional flexibility of the monarchical regime and the social pluralism that it has encouraged combine to make numerous tasks for a democratic transition from monarchical authoritarianism.

The structure of a monarchical regime generally precludes a split between regime soft-liners and hard-liners over policies and strategies—a commonly cited reason for the fall of bureaucratic authoritarian regimes in Latin America.[42] In dynastic monarchies, with their narrow regime coalitions, politics generally stays within the ruling family. Herb spends a great deal of time discussing the family splits over policies and succession. However, he argues that the regime structure of the dynastic monarchy makes even dissenters in the ruling family's "bandwagon" join with their successful relatives in maintaining the prerogatives of the regime (pp. 47–48).

One would expect that linchpin monarchies, with their broad-based regime coalitions, would be more likely candidates for regime splits. However, the fact that the monarch stands both at the center and above the competing factions of the regime coalition allows the monarch to hold a veto over any policy. Different sectors of the regime coalition compete with one another for the monarch's attention and favor. Thus, most splits within the regime coalition are centripetal and reinforce the stability of the monarch. Frequent rotation of policy-making elites among the constituents of the regime coalition also avoids consistent losses by any of his major supporters. Thus, monarchs can smooth over regime splits or even use pluralism creatively to maintain its rule.

Another major path of democratic transitions is the revolt or mobilization of social forces—especially in civil society—against the regime. This leads to the regime's collapse or replacement through a coup. Monarchical regimes, as discussed earlier, have encouraged the mobilization of difference among social groups. Multiple and pluralistic groups, however, find it difficult to organize and unify their interests against the monarchy. Groups generally direct competition against their lateral partners. They express positive attention vertically up toward the monarchy. This allows the monarch to pick his policy-making partners from the regime coalition—to divide and rule.

Rather than allowing for an upsurge of civil society that unites against the regime, political liberalization merely creates more potential partners for the regime and greater competition for social groups in gaining the favor the monarch. Moreover, the open and flexible mentality of the regime can allow for more dramatic policy shifts than post-totalitarian regimes that are still locked into an (outdated) ideology or than bureaucratic authoritarian regimes that are committed to crushing social obstacles to capitalist accumulation. Thus, monarchical authoritarian regimes can use political liberalization—as well as its reverse—to reinforce the stability of the monarchy. Regimes can manage economic and international crises through the resourceful choosing of partners from the regime's social base. Thus, the monarchy maintains social insulation against popular protest.

Another common path of transitions to democracy—via military coup—has been survived by most of the remaining Middle Eastern monarchies. If credible threats from the military exist today, they will also most likely not be of the democratizing variety. Potential coups plotters would either tend toward the Islamist, as in Egypt, or the rabidly

anti–Islamist, as in Algeria. However, civilian control over the military is clear-cut in nearly all of the monarchical regimes. Moreover, members of the royal families fill key positions in most militaries, as Kechichian's profiles of prominent members of the Saudi royal family attest. Massad also finds the military as a key in Jordanian nation building. Jordan's King Abdullah II formerly led the kingdom's special forces. Thus, after facing down threats from within the military from the 1950s to the 1970s, most monarchies have minimized the current threat of military coups.

Western—especially American—support has also served to block other transition paths. The United States has seen that if its monarchical Middle Eastern allies are defeated in war, the status quo ante is quickly restored, unlike in the transitions to democracy in Japan and Argentina. The embarrassment of the Kuwaiti regime could have led to wide-ranging changes after the reversal of the Iraqi invasion. However, as Tétreault describes, Kuwaiti democrats received only a return of the National Assembly and a light dose of political liberalization from the Gulf War. Despite the Sabahs' embarrassing defeat at the hands of the Iraqis, the regime regained control after the war with the assistance of the United States. Other potential victors in military conflicts with Middle Eastern monarchies are not likely to support democratization, especially Israel. With U.S. backing, the security threats to monarchies are unlikely to lead toward a path of democratization.

American support also has fostered opposition to Middle Eastern monarchies that is generally anti-democratic. Thus, Western backing may not aid the monarchy or prospects for democratization in the event of a collapse of the regime. Such ties even help foster an opposition that sees Western democracies as self-serving in their support of non-democratic monarchs. The case of Iran clearly demonstrates this possibility of a transition path to a non-democratic, non-monarchical regime. Fandy outlines the role of anti–American attitudes in the ideologies of some of the current Saudi opposition figures. However, in dynastic—and, to a lesser extent, linchpin—monarchies, the flexible regime structure has reduced the likelihood of collapse.

Succession crises can provide a possible path toward democratization from authoritarian monarchies. A new monarch may find that democratizing supports his claim to rule. This is the assumption of Owen Kirby's enthusiastic endorsement of monarchy in the Middle East in "Want Democracy? Get a King." However, historical practice has shown that, although some fresh young monarchs are willing to offer *taʿaddudiyya* to their subjects, none is willing to follow Spain's Juan Carlos and offer a full, immediate transition to democracy. Hard-line factions of the regime coalition, moreover, do not generally pass with the old king. Reading Kechichian, one comes to understand that, no matter how "populist" Crown Prince Abdullah has become in Saudi Arabia, the confidence of his family trumps that of the public (pp. 61–65). It is doubtful that any of the new Middle Eastern monarchs, or any potential future aspirants, will offer a transition to democracy. The privileges of the throne offer too attractive a prize. In fact, the stability of their monarchical neighbors has helped lead republican regimes in Syria (and almost in Iraq) to implement dynastic rule—albeit more along the lines of a sultanistic regime type.

Thus, short-run prospects are dim for major democratic transitions among the monarchical regimes of the Middle East. However, as a number of authors of the books under review note, the longer-run prospects may be brighter. First, as compared with the constitutional hypocrisy of sultanistic regimes, Middle Eastern monarchical regimes for the

most part have engaged in manipulative strategies under a constitutional rule of law while ensuring their own survival. Yet the reference to a rule of law exists—in theory, if not in practice. The use of constitutional rules, however, does not have to be a one-sided equation. Opposition forces in Kuwait and Morocco—and, to a lesser extent, in Jordan and Qatar—have also tried to use and expand the powers given to parliaments and power-sharing agreements to expand public input into the policy-making process. Even Saudi Arabia has created consultative institutions. In most Middle Eastern monarchies, representative institutions exist in some sort of constitutional formulation.

The evolution of greater power and responsibility of representative institutions is a distinct possibility. Middle Eastern monarchies will not follow the same path toward constitutional monarchy as did their European neighbors. However, if representative institutions win political battles in shaping policies, over time inertia for their greater power may emerge. Norms of political practice and inclusion have emerged in Kuwait, as Tétreault's analysis shows. The future of democratization in most Middle Eastern monarchies lies not in spectacular regime collapses or social revolutions. Rather, budget debates, confidence votes of cabinets, and the questioning of ministers are the likely paths toward the evolution of greater democratization in monarchical authoritarian regimes.

CONCLUSION

These six books incorporate Middle Eastern monarchies into our understanding of non-democratic regimes in new and interesting ways. The political, social, economic, and institutional factors that have aided in their survival provide points of comparison with other cases of enduring autocracy. Middle Eastern monarchies have a number of common features. As a subtype of authoritarian regimes, they generally tolerate a degree of political pluralism in society. The regime may even encourage the mobilization of social pluralism. Most of these monarchies also share a general mentality of preserving social and cultural "traditions" while encouraging economic "development." Frequently "predictable limits" to the monarchical regime's power also exist. The regime respects social "protected spaces," and obeys constitutional norms.

The eight Middle Eastern monarchies, however, vary in terms of the relationship between the regime coalition and society. Dynastic monarchies rest on a narrower social base, but with oil rents enabling the regime to buy social support. The ruling family, however, has greater autonomy and corporate identity in this type of monarchical regime. Linchpin monarchies—generally lacking such significant rents—rely on a wider social base of support.

From this set of recent books, one also learns that the survival of both types of monarchical regimes can be traced not to "tradition" but to institutional flexibility in attentive management of the regime's coalition of supporters and society at large. Monarchs that ruled alone or with a narrow aristocratic social base did not survive the 20th century. In some Middle Eastern cases, oil rents or superpower support (or both) granted the regime greater flexibility. However, economic and external assets could not save regimes that were entirely divorced from a social base.

Looking to the future, the prospects for political liberalization may be better than those for democratization. Political liberalization can be a useful survival strategy for authoritarian monarchies. Liberalization allows the mobilization of existing social pluralism

without the fear of a resurgence of civil society that may sweep away the regime. Rather, political liberalization allows the regime to choose its partners better for governing from an expanded regime coalition—the politics of divide and rule. Political liberalization can help authoritarian monarchies weather economic and political storms. Thus, prospects for a pacted transition in the Latin American style remain limited. Other common paths toward a transition to democracy also appear unlikely because of the flexibility of the regime in maintaining the support of the regime coalition. Western superpower desires for insuring a stable status quo also can prevent a potentially "destabilizing" democratic turn.

However, the authors in the six books under review point to the possibilities for gradual, long-term evolution of authoritarian monarchies toward constitutional monarchy not only in name, but also in form. Regardless, these six books point to the importance of re-integrating studies of politics and history in the Middle East with comparative studies of democracy and authoritarianism.

NOTES

[1]Samuel Huntington, *Political Order in Changing Societies* (New Haven, Conn: Yale University Press, 1968).

[2]Idem, *The Third Wave: Democratization in the Late Twentieth Century* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1991).

[3]H. E. Chehabi and Juan J. Linz, ed., *Sultanistic Regimes* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998).

[4]Jason Brownlee, "Low Tide after the Third Wave: Exploring Politics under Authoritarianism," *Comparative Politics* 34 (2002): 477–99.

[5]Chehabi and Linz, *Sultanistic Regimes*, 7–10.

[6]Juan J. Linz, "An Authoritarian Regime: Spain," in *Mass Politics: Studies in Political Sociology*, ed. Erik Allardt and Stein Rokkan (New York: Free Press, 1970), 255.

[7]A third possible factor—linguistic—may also be applicable. Chehabi and Linz use Weber's concept of sultanism as an extreme form of personalized neo-patrimonialism. Weber's concept was drawn from his studies of the Islamic world, especially the Ottoman Empire. However, some scholars of the Middle East point to Weber's Orientalist understanding of Islam and the region: see Bryan Turner, *Weber and Islam* (London: Routledge, 1974). Chehabi and Linz reject the association of sultanism with its Orientalist baggage, although this defense is not necessarily convincing in light of arguments such as Turner's.

[8]Bernard Lewis, "Monarchy in the Middle East," in *Middle East Monarchies*, 19.

[9]Ibid., 21.

[10]Ami Ayalon, "Post-Ottoman Arab Monarchies: Old Bottles, New Labels?" in *Middle East Monarchies*, 23–24.

[11]Lisa Anderson, "Dynasts and Nationalists: Why Monarchies Survive," in ibid., 55–56; idem, "Absolutism and the Resilience of Monarchy in the Middle East," *Political Science Quarterly* 106 (1991): 1–15.

[12]Anderson, "Dynasts," 55.

[13]Anderson, "Absolutism," 12–13.

[14]Anderson, "Dynasts," 56.

[15]Ibid., 60.

[16]Ibid., 65.

[17]Emphasis in the original.

[18]Fred Halliday, "Monarchies in the Middle East: A Concluding Appraisal," in *Middle East Monarchies*, 296.

[19]Bruce Maddy-Weitzman, "Why Did Arab Monarchies Fall? An Analysis of Old and New Explanations," in *Middle East Monarchies*, 48.

[20]Anderson, "Dynasts," 55.

[21]Onn Winckler, "Gulf Monarchies as Rentier States: The Nationalization Policies of the Labor Force," in *Middle East Monarchies*, 237–56.

[22]Juan J. Linz and Alfred Stepan, *Problems of Democratic Transition and Consolidation: Southern Europe, South America, and Post-Communist Europe* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996); Stephen Haggard and Robert R. Kaufman, *The Political Economy of Democratic Transitions* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1995).

[23]F. Gregory Gause, "The Persistence of Monarchy in the Arabian Peninsula: A Comparative Analysis," in *Middle East Monarchies*, 168.

[24]David Menashri, "The Persian Monarchy and the Islamic Republic," in ibid., 213–35.

[25]Homa Katouzian, "The Pahlavi Regime in Iran," in *Sultanistic Regimes*, 182–205.

[26]Gurdun Krämer, "Good Counsel to the King: The Islamist Opposition in Saudi Arabia, Jordan, and Morocco," in *Middle East Monarchies*, 257–88.

[27]Joseph Kostiner, "Introduction," in *Middle East Monarchies*, 7.

[28]Their success in that project is a different story.

[29]Ghassan Salamé, "Small Is Pluralistic," in *Democracy without Democrats? The Renewal of Politics in the Muslim World*, ed. Ghassan Salamé (London: I. B. Tauris, 1994), 84–111.

[30]Owen H. Kirby, "Want Democracy? Get a King," *Middle East Quarterly* (2000): 3–12.

[31]Rex Brynen, Bahgat Korany, and Paule Noble, "Trends, Trajectories or Interesting Possibilities? Some Conclusions on Arab Democratization and Its Study," in *Political Liberalization and Democratization in the Arab World, Volume 1: Theoretical Perspectives*, ed. Rex Brynen, Bahgat Korany, and Paule Noble (Boulder, Colo.: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1995), 336–37.

[32]Idem, "Conclusion: Liberalization, Democratization, and Arab Experiences," in ibid., 276.

[33]Anderson, "Dynasts," 60–61.

[34]Guillermo O'Donnell and Philippe C. Schmitter, *Transitions from Authoritarian Rule: Tentative Conclusions about Uncertain Democracies* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1991).

[35]Daniel Brumberg, "Authoritarian Legacies and Reform Strategies in the Arab World," in *Political Liberalization*, 229–60.

[36]Remy Leveau, "The Moroccan Monarchy: A Political System in Quest of a New Equilibrium," in *Middle East Monarchies*, 117–30.

[37]Asher Susser, "The Jordanian Monarchy: The Hashemite Success Story," in ibid., 109.

[38]Ibid., 111.

[39]Ibid., 111–12.

[40]Adam Przeworski, *Democracy and the Market: Political and Economic Reforms in Eastern Europe and Latin America* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991).

[41]Linz and Stepan, *Problems*, 56.

[42]O'Donnell and Schmitter, *Transitions*.