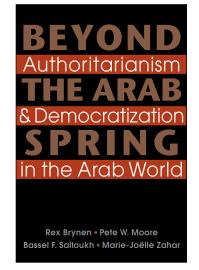# Beyond the Arab Spring:
Authoritarianism and Democratization in the Arab World

Rex Brynen,
Pete W. Moore,
Bassel F. Salloukh,
and Marie-Joëlle Zahar

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New Horizons in Arab Politics

For much of the past four decades, a central puzzle of Arab politics had been a striking persistence of authoritarianism. No other part of the world had proven quite so resistant to the so-called third wave of democratization, which transformed Latin America and Eastern Europe in the 1980s and 1990s and which also had significant effects in Asia and sub-Saharan Africa. In 2010, the advocacy organization Freedom House classified 59 percent of countries around the world as electoral democracies. Of these, not one was to be found in the Arab world.[1]

In 2011, however, the authoritarian status quo was shattered by the Arab Spring—a series of Arab uprisings that unseated long-standing dictators in Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, and Yemen, generated mass protests and countervailing repression in Bahrain and Syria, and affected almost every other regime in the region in some way.[2] Clearly something very important changed, with lasting repercussions for the politics of the region.

The Arab Spring will be the focus of a great deal of scholarly debate in the years to come, both because it emerged so suddenly out of a context of apparent authoritarian stability, and because of its widespread and lasting implications for Middle East politics. The affected societies will struggle with the challenges of transition to uncertain futures as contending political and social forces seek to influence the emerging political order. Some will undoubtedly prove difficult: democratic transitions do not always succeed, and violence often leaves legacies of continued civil strife. Some authoritarian regimes will weather the storm. Others may not. And still others, in adapting to the new regional environment, may change in significant ways.

This volume has emerged from a long-standing interest on the part of the authors in issues of authoritarianism and democratization in the Arab world, one that dates back to the early 1990s.[3] For reasons that will be explored later, we resist the temptation to treat the current wave of antiauthoritarian protest as disconnected from the dynamics of prior authoritarian maintenance, but instead treat them as fundamentally linked. Consequently this volume confronts two sets of questions. First, what have been the dy-

namics of authoritarian persistence in the region? Second, why did many of these systems so suddenly fail in 2011? In addition, we also identify some of the transitional challenges that newly emerging postauthoritarian regimes will face, although we do so only tentatively given the uncertainties of the current era.

Although we sometimes make reference to the broader Middle East, our focus is the Arab world.[4] In part this is because only so much can be dealt with in a single volume. More fundamentally however, it is because the existence of a common language, shared political narratives, and transnational Arabic media renders the Arab world especially permeable to transnational political influences, including the various demonstration and neighborhood effects associated with authoritarianism and democratization.[5] It was very much in this "public space" that the echoes of change reverberated so powerfully in 2011.[6]

In reflecting on these issues we are not inclined to offer any especially parsimonious theorizing about either the persistence or the collapse of Arab authoritarianism, and will similarly not offer a definitive account of the Arab Spring. For a start, we are far from convinced that there was or is a single Arab authoritarianism; rather, there is an array of political settings with histories, structural conditions, and dynamics that share both similar and strikingly dissimilar characteristics. The politics of Ben Ali's Tunisia were very different from those of Saleh's Yemen or the Khalifa monarchy in Bahrain, and nothing anywhere quite resembled Qaddafi's Libya. The dynamics of opposition and protest in those countries, although linked, have also been quite different.

We tend to the view that it was a complex multiplicity of factors (and interaction between them) that buttressed regimes and undermined them. We also believe that processes of change in the region have often been subtle and gradual, with pressures mounting until the point where new forms of politics suddenly become possible. As Ellen Lust has suggested, there is value in "shifting our focus from a search for immediate causal factors to a greater recognition of micro- and meso-level transitions—that is, gradual, interrelated changes in political, economic and social spheres that, like slowly moving tectonic plates, eventually create the conditions conducive to earth-shattering events."[7]

In doing so, our intellectual inspirations and methodological preferences are unabashedly eclectic. Too often scholars have, in their desire to set their work within a certain intellectual tradition, prioritized a focus on the Weberian state and its formal boundaries at the expense of the transnational, emphasized one set of causal factors to the exclusion of others, preoccupied themselves with formal politics at the expense of less formal processes, or looked for that which is quantifiable while ignoring the insights of qual-

itative research (or vice versa). While our eclecticism is probably more the result of personal orientation than anything else, we find some vindication in research that suggests that the predictive accuracy of political scientists is inversely proportional to their preoccupation with "one big idea."[8] We also recognize that, as Charles Kurzman has argued with regard to Iran, political upheaval is particularly resistant to theorizing. The collapse of the established and internalized rules of the game results in rapid and unpredictable shifts in political preference structures as individuals are suddenly called upon to respond to developments that once seemed almost unimaginable.[9] In the transition from authoritarian settings (where individuals have every reason to keep their political views private) to transitional ones (in which the individual risk of expressing dissent declines as increasing numbers of people do so), the character of public discourse and behavior can change quickly.[10] Perceptions of political opportunity structures change in unanticipated ways, and "informational cascades" reshape what people choose to do.[11]

Given this, and in light of the uncertainty in the region's political development, it seems wise for scholars to be appropriately humble about the analytical claims that they make. Instead, we should see the present moment as a historic opportunity for review, reflection, and critical dialogue about what the Arab Spring represents.[12] In this sense, we invite readers to disagree with us as well as agree, for it is such an intellectual and critical conversation that scholarship aims to develop. To the extent that this book reflects some of our own intellectual curiosity and excitement, we also hope to render the challenges of writing amid uncertain times into an asset rather than a liability.

From Authoritarian Persistence to Political Change in the Arab World

As noted earlier, the political history of the Middle East was hardly one of flourishing postcolonial democracy. Upon independence, those states that featured some form of elective, parliamentary, or quasi-democratic political system soon found these systems toppled by military coup (Syria, Egypt, Iraq, Sudan) or beset by civil war (Lebanon, Sudan). In others, independent states emerged firmly under the grip of authoritarian-constitutional monarchies (Jordan, Morocco, Kuwait, Bahrain) or absolutist monarchies (Saudi Arabia, Oman, Qatar, the United Arab Emirates). In still other cases, successful national liberation movements (Algeria, South Yemen) established single-party states in the aftermath of violent decolonization.

There was nothing particularly unusual in all of this. The decolonizations of the interwar and post–World War II years often resulted in authoritarian politics or produced the politics of fragility and internal violence—and in many cases a bit of both. What was somewhat striking, however, was how long it all lasted. Certainly, third wave democratization was far from universal, especially in Asia and Africa. Not all political transitions of the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s resulted in real democracies. In many cases, old authoritarianisms recycled themselves as quasi-democracies in hybrid regimes that combined the trappings of pluralism and electoral process with deep-seated centers of authoritarian power that remained beyond the reach of popular control.[13] Nonetheless, the era did mark an important change in modern politics.

But that important change largely bypassed the Arab world; or put another way, the so-called third wave of democracy never really reached Arab shores. Indeed, in contrast to the regime changes in many other parts of the world, the four decades after 1970 were the most stable in the modern Middle East. The persistence of Middle Eastern authoritarianisms was fully evident in data published by Freedom House, which each year rates countries' political and civil liberties on separate 7-point scales, with 1 indicating the greatest freedom and 7 indicating the least. By this measure, Africa's combined Freedom House rating (the sum of both political and civil liberty scores) improved from 11.9 in 1980 to a high of 8.2 in 2006, before deteriorating somewhat to 8.6 in 2010. Asia improved from 8.4 in 1980 to 6.8 in 2010. Because of the transformation of authoritarian regimes in Latin America, the Americas overall shifted from a rating of 6.8 in 1980 to 4.6 in 2010. But in the Middle East and North Africa as a whole, the Freedom House rating changed hardly at all, from 10.5 in 1980 to 10.6 in 2010, marking this region the most authoritarian in the world.[14]

This is not to say, however, that the underlying politics of the region were unchanging. Indeed, a strong argument can be made that authoritarian persistence in the region was not simply due to immobilism and political stasis, but was rather an adaptive process of "authoritarian upgrading" whereby regimes responded to social, economic, technological, and international changes by modifying their modalities of rule and configurations of power.[15] In some cases this involved partial or periodic political openings—a controlled degree of political liberalization and limited political pluralism that was intended by regimes as a substitute for, rather than a step toward, fuller democratization.[16]

Such limited reforms became increasingly common from the late 1980s onward. In Egypt and Tunisia, the Mubarak and Ben Ali regimes promised more liberal politics than those of their predecessors. Jordan renewed parliamentary elections in 1989, legalizing a return to multiparty

life soon thereafter. Algeria underwent a political opening too, one that commenced in November 1988 with the adoption of a number of political reforms that seemed to open the way for the dismantling of single-party rule. In Kuwait, parliament was reestablished after the Iraqi occupation ended in 1991, with some hope that this might encourage change elsewhere in the Gulf. A decade later, however, the limited nature of the reform processes had become clearly evident. Egypt's limited multipartyism remained tightly controlled. Tunisia soon clamped down against political opponents. Political opening in Jordan stalled, as it did in other countries, and then quickly eroded. Algeria had slipped into a decade of bloody civil war after the military aborted the electoral process. In Kuwait, limited parliamentarianism evolved slowly, but there was much less change elsewhere in the Gulf.

A second round of attention came in the aftermath of the September 2001 terrorist attacks and the subsequent wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. The Western world expressed a newfound interest in promoting democracy in the region. Thus in December 2002 the United States unveiled the US–Middle East Partnership Initiative, a series of programs intended to "support the expansion of political opportunity throughout the Middle East."[17] According to the George W. Bush administration, this—together with the overthrow of Saddam Hussein—would constitute part of a "forward strategy of freedom to promote democracy throughout the Middle East."[18] The European Union also placed greater emphasis on promoting political change in the region.[19] The June 2004 meeting of the Group of Eight (G8), the largest industrialized countries, saw the declaration of a common interest in reform in the Middle East. Greater funding also became available for research on the issue, and new research institutions and initiatives proliferated.

Sustained Western foreign policy emphasis on democratization of the Middle East would not last the decade, however. The importance of Arab cooperation in the global "war on terror" meant that Washington was reluctant to push its Middle Eastern allies too far or too fast. The Bush administration did little to protest fraud within the Egyptian government and its manipulation of the country's 2005 parliamentary elections—effectively, Egypt was deemed too important to alienate or risk instability, and there was little US or European desire to help the opposition Muslim Brotherhood, which likely would have been the biggest beneficiary of political reform. In the occupied Palestinian territories, the 2006 Palestinian Legislative Council elections led to the establishment of a Hamas-led cabinet. Almost immediately, Western donors, Israel, and the Fatah party (which had previously held a monopoly on power in the Palestinian Authority) worked to undermine the cabinet. In Iraq, the US invasion and occupation as well as subsequent gen-

eralized violence within the country hardly represented a shining example of the benefits of postauthoritarian politics.[20] Although a new US administration took to the world stage in 2009 without much of the regional baggage of its predecessor, it initially did little to highlight the issue of regional authoritarianism beyond offering a few rhetorical statements.[21] Up until the end of 2010, Barack Obama and his administration were largely silent on human rights abuses by Arab regimes. For example, when the November 2010 parliamentary elections in Egypt saw the ruling National Democratic Party strengthen its overwhelming majority through fraud and intimidation, Washington did little more than express dismay, calling it a "cause for concern."[22]

The ebbs and flows of the discourse on political reform in the Arab world were paralleled by similar shifts in the academic literature. Prior to the late 1980s, there was very little scholarly attention paid to the possibility of democratization in the Middle East. Scholars of the region tended to focus on other things, while scholars of democratic transition tended to ignore the region, or cast doubts on its potential for change.[23] Michael Hudson was among the first to suggest, in 1987, that state-society relations, political economy, and public attitudes were changing in a way that threatened to delegitimize authoritarian regimes and open up the possibility of eventual political transitions in the Middle East.[24] Thereafter, and especially following the 1990–1991 Gulf War, a growing number of scholars began to seriously examine the prospects for political liberalization and democratization.[25] This was paralleled, within the region itself, by increasing levels of political discourse framed in terms of human rights, political participation, civil society, and democracy.

Much of this literature quite explicitly hedged its bets, arguing that at best the prospects for democracy had entered the stage of "maybe" or "interesting possibilities" rather than representing an inexorable trend or an inevitable outcome. Nevertheless, by the end of the 1990s the failure of limited political reform to deliver much more than a reconfiguration of authoritarian power was generating ever-growing levels of analytical cynicism. Had scholars overreacted to the limited openings of the early 1990s? Had the attention to political liberalization and democratization been so much wishful thinking, underpinned by normative preferences? Or perhaps it had been driven by third wave "envy" of sorts, having more to do with academic fads than with real trends in the Arab world?

To take one example, Lisa Anderson suggested that scholars had been "searching where the light shines" in their treatment of the issue, driven more by the exigencies of US foreign policy and disciplinary preoccupations than by the actual content of politics in the region:

> There is an old joke that captures the dilemma confronting political scientists who studied the Middle East. One evening, a passer-by chances on a fellow searching for his lost house key under a streetlight. Hoping to be helpful, the spectator asks the searcher where he dropped the key. "Across the street," comes the reply. Then why is he searching on this side of the street? "The light is so much better over here."
>
> For more than fifty years, the policy and scholarly community of the United States looked for glimmers of democracy in the Middle East. And occasionally they found them—small traces of hope glinting in the bright light of US policy and American social science. . . .
>
> Political science's disciplinary bias toward democracy and American foreign policy's emphasis on democratization cast a bright light that confused and distorted the research agenda in the study of Middle East politics, thereby preventing it from contributing as much as it might to a genuinely comparative science of politics.[26]

Other scholars characterized earlier scholarship as a "demo-crazy" era of "democracy spotting," suggesting that analysis needed to adopt a "post-democratization" approach that would focus on the real dynamics of politics-as-it-is rather than speculation on the absence of politics-as-it-might-be.[27] Much of the scholarly attention thus shifted from trying to understand the potential sources of reform in the Middle East to trying to understand the roots of authoritarian persistence in the region. Accordingly, a special issue of the leading journal *Comparative Politics* on the topic in 2004 explicitly asked: "Why have the Middle East and North Africa remained so singularly resistant to democratization?"[28] Questions were raised about the sources of the Middle East's "democracy deficit" and the region's apparent political exceptionalism.

Such oscillation between the tentative, hopeful literature of the mid-1990s and the authoritarian persistence–centric focus of a decade later was both helpful and unhelpful in terms of its contribution to scholarly understanding of Arab politics. At its most useful, it represented a thoughtful debate over how analysts might best appreciate the inevitable struggle between those social, economic, and political forces that might hasten the pace of change, and those factors (both structural and adaptive) that might preserve the authoritarian status quo. As Steven Heydemann noted:

> Authoritarian upgrading consists, in other words, not in shutting down and closing off Arab societies from globalization and other forces of political, economic, and social change. Nor is it based simply on the willingness of Arab governments to repress their opponents. Instead, authoritarian upgrading involves reconfiguring authoritarian governance to accommodate and manage changing political, economic, and social conditions. It originated in no small part as a defensive response to challenges confronting Arab autocrats during the past two decades.[29]

In its more counterproductive form, however, this oscillation reflected the frequent tendency in academic debates to miscast and simplify earlier literatures so as to emphasize the newness and superiority of later accounts. After all, it was far from clear that a focus on the sources of political change in the Middle East necessarily came at the expense of understanding how those changes were managed, manipulated, controlled, or repressed. On the contrary, the two ought to have been intimately linked, and indeed they were in the work of a great many scholars.[30]

Consequently, instead of a sort of dialectic engagement of ideas that might have produced a superior analytical synthesis, the result was sometimes a firm attachment to the notion of authoritarian persistence that lost sight of the potential vulnerabilities and fragility of that construct. As Bahgat Korany presciently argued mere months before the Arab Spring erupted:

> Mainstream vision and analysis of the Middle East seem to disregard this dynamism and to insist that the region, one of the most internationally penetrated, does not change. Is this another case of the widely held belief in "Middle East exceptionalism"? On the surface, this static vision seems justified. . . .
>
> For some analysts, however, this overemphasis on continuity and the neglect of aspects of change are evidence of an inherently conservative bias in social analysis. Bias in favor of continuity also indicates an intellectual laziness, since it is easier to analyze the status quo than its counterpart, change and transformation.[31]

Part of the problem might also have been that scholars often lost sight of the role of politics at the level of citizens and potential protesters, or focused on the former without linking it to institutions and shifts in broader political economies. As Asef Bayat has shown, our understanding of politics needs to include the ways in which ordinary people make adjustments to their pattern of life that accommodate, challenge, or substitute for the power of the (authoritarian) state.[32] Ideational notions of legitimacy, which at one time had been central to many analyses of Arab politics, had fallen by the wayside, often reduced to more material incentives and disincentives.[33] Lisa Wedeen's focus on compliant, participatory, and identity-affirming acts at the individual and group level also pointed to the importance of everyday symbolic and ideational factors.[34] Such work has proven particularly significant in the light of Arab protest movements that started in large part from the bottom up and asserted the illegitimacy of authoritarian rule as a central part of their message, and in which symbols (such as atrocities or victories recorded by mobile phone, or the public mocking of authoritarian power) often proved important indeed.

Linking Past and Future: The Analytical Challenges

In the chapters that follow we are far more interested in the challenge of synthesis than in staking out a narrow postauthoritarian paradigm that would repeat some of the shortcomings of the earlier postdemocratization tendencies. Clearly authoritarianism flourished in the Arab world for decades, withstanding the effects of the third wave. Clearly many authoritarian regimes in the region continue to survive despite the tumultuous events of the Arab Spring. There is also the possibility that the difficult transitions under way in the region could in time become new authoritarianisms, whether populist, hybrid, Islamist, military, or nationalist. Understanding how Arab authoritarianism has functioned from both a regional perspective and a broader comparative perspective remains no less important despite the events of 2011. At the same time, the events of the Arab Spring ought to prompt reflection and indeed self-reflection, since clearly many analysts got many things wrong, the authors of this volume included. Clearly too, things have changed and new dynamics are being established across the region.

In Part 1 of the volume we examine the trajectories of authoritarianism and reform in the Arab world through a consideration of recent developments in selected countries in North Africa, the Mashreq, and the Arabian Peninsula. Our focus here is on social structures, elite and institutional structures, and immediate subregional settings. Institutions are particularly important because they reflect and embed social realities, as well as enabling and constraining the social and political choices that actors have within political systems. And because they differ from country to country, the precise dynamics of politics—while authoritarian—can vary in fundamentally important ways. To take but one of many possible examples, different institutional patterns and configurations of state security forces and civil-military relations proved to be of considerable importance in explaining the rather different trajectories of political developments in Tunisia and Egypt (where the military ultimately abandoned its president), Libya (where the military was weak, with part remaining loyal to the regime while others defected to the opposition), and Bahrain (where the security forces remained loyal and were buttressed by outside assistance from other Gulf states).[35]

In Part 2 of the book we turn our attention to key thematic and theoretical issues in the study of Arab authoritarianism, reform, democratization, and political transition. These are not necessarily exhaustive treatments of all potential topics, which would be far beyond the scope of a single volume. Rather they are framed more as a series of debates, inquiries, and conversations around our central questions of authoritarian stability and postau-

thoritarian change, aimed at teasing out what we feel are the most promis-
ing sets of explanations for the trajectories of contemporary Arab politics.
Specifically, we have chosen to focus on eight main areas: debates over the
relationship between culture and politics; the particular role that Islamist
movements might play in political liberalization and democratization;
processes of electoral politics; the particular dynamics of Middle Eastern
monarchies; the political effects of oil wealth in the rentier economies; the
effects of economic liberalization; the importance of satellite television and
other Arab media; and the regional and international context of Arab au-
thoritarianism and postauthoritarianism.

Finally, in Part 3 in our concluding chapter, we pull these various
threads together, highlighting the complex and multidimensional ways in
which various factors interacted to sustain Arab authoritarianisms in the
decades preceding the Arab Spring. We revisit the myriad ways in which
regimes used a range of institutionally embedded policy tools—from re-
pression to patronage, controlled electoral process, and cultural symbol-
ism—to foster social and political compliance, as well as the ways in which
this matrix of control weakened or collapsed with the onset of Arab popu-
lar uprisings in 2011. We offer a limited look ahead to the challenges faced
by transitional regimes, as well as to the social and political dynamics that
will shape them.

We are fully aware of the immense challenges that still face those Arab
populations still struggling to reform or end authoritarian regimes, for whom
an Arab Spring has not yet come. We are equally aware of the challenges
faced by postauthoritarian societies that must now construct new, and hope-
fully inclusive, political orders. It will undoubtedly be messy as contending
views clash, or seek mutual accommodation. In some cases it might even fail.

However, it was for precisely these very processes—the freedom to de-
bate, disagree, contend, compromise, and shape new futures—that so many
have mobilized in defiance of long-standing dictatorships. Herein we hope
to offer some insight into how this new historic juncture came to pass, and
to reflect on where it might be headed.

Notes

1. Freedom House, Freedom in the World 2011 (Washington, DC, 2011),
http://www.freedomhouse.org/template.cfm?page=594. While a number of issues can
be raised about the categorization and assessment of "electoral democracy," the obser-
vation nonetheless highlights the lack of meaningful democratic politics in the Arab
world at the time.
2. There has been considerable debate—both in general and among the authors of
this volume—as to what term best describes the Arab upheavals of 2011. Commentator
Rami Khouri, for example, has argued that "Arab Spring" underemphasizes the agency

of the protesters. He prefers "Arab revolution," noting that "revolution" (*thawra*) is the term that the protesters themselves have most often used. On the other hand, in many countries it is not clear that the events of 2011 have yet met the threshold of "revolution" in the way that many social scientists use the term. Other terms such as "Arab uprisings" and "Arab protests" are also inadequate for other reasons. Rather than impose the straightjacket of a single term, we have tended to use several (including "Arab Spring") depending on preference and context. Rami Khouri, "Spring or Revolution?" Agence Global, 17 August 2011, http://agenceglobal.com/article.asp?id=2618.

3. Rex Brynen, Bahgat Korany, and Paul Noble, eds., *Political Liberalization and Democratization in the Arab World, vol. 1, Theoretical Perspectives* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 1995); Bahgat Korany, Rex Brynen, and Paul Noble, eds., *Political Liberalization and Democratization in the Arab World, vol. 2, Comparative Experiences* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 1995).

4. Although part of the Arab world, this volume offers little attention to Sudan, where local political dynamics are deeply shaped by the secession of the south—an issue beyond the scope of our primary focus on authoritarianism and democratization. For reasons of space, we also devote little attention to Mauritania, and none to Arab League members Comoros (which really is not part of the political dynamics of the "Arab world") and Somalia (which is not "Arab" to begin with).

5. We have long emphasized the importance of political permeability in the region, and especially with regard to the Arab world. See, for example, many of the contributions in Bassel Salloukh and Rex Brynen, eds., *Persistent Permeability? Regionalism, Localism, and Globalization in the Middle East* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004).

6. For the role of satellite television in contributing to this Arab "public space," see Marc Lynch, *Voices of the New Arab Public: Iraq, Al-Jazeera, and Middle East Politics Today* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006).

7. Ellen Lust, "Why Now? Micro Transitions and the Arab Uprisings," The Monkey Cage blog, 24 October 2011, http://themonkeycage.org/blog/2011/10/24/why-now-micro-transitions-and-the-arab-uprisings.

8. Philip E. Tetlock, *Expert Political Judgment* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005).

9. Charles Kurzman, *The Unthinkable Revolution in Iran* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2004).

10. On the issue of "preference falsification" under authoritarianism (or other conditions) and the role that changes in this can play in rapid political change, see Timur Kuran, *Private Truths, Public Lies: The Social Consequences of Preference Falsification* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997).

11. On the concept of informational cascades, see Sushil Bikhchandani, David Hirshleifer, and Ivo Welch, "A Theory of Fads, Fashion, Custom, and Cultural Change as Informational Cascades," *Journal of Political Economy* 100, 5 (1992); Susanne Lohmann, "The Dynamics of Informational Cascades: The Monday Demonstrations in Leipzig, East Germany, 1989–91," *World Politics* 47, 1 (October 1994).

12. For other such efforts, see F. Gregory Gause III, "Why Middle East Studies Missed the Arab Spring: The Myth of Authoritarian Stability," *Foreign Affairs* 90, 4 (July–August 2011); Eva Bellin, "Reconsidering the Robustness of Authoritarianism in the Middle East," *Comparative Politics* 44, 2 (January 2012).

13. Larry Diamond, "Elections Without Democracy: Thinking About Hybrid Regimes," *Journal of Democracy* 13, 2 (April 2002); Steven Levitsky and Lucan Way, *Competitive Authoritarianism: Hybrid Regimes After the Cold War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010).

14. Calculated from Freedom House's "Freedom in the World Comparative and Historical Data," with civil and political rights combined. Excludes occupied Palestinian territories and the Western Sahara.

15. Steven Heydemann, *Upgrading Authoritarianism in the Arab World* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution, October 2007).

16. Elsewhere we have emphasized the important difference between political liberalization (understood as "the expansion of public space through recognition of civil and political liberties, particularly those bearing upon the ability of citizens to engage in free political discourse and to freely organize in pursuit of common interests") and political democratization (which entails "an expansion of political participation in such a way as to provide citizens with a degree of real and meaningful collective control over public policy"). Rex Brynen, Bahgat Korany, and Paul Noble, "Introduction: Theoretical Perspectives on Arab Liberalization and Democratization," in Brynen, Korany, and Noble, *Political Liberalization and Democratization in the Arab World, vol. 1*, p. 3.

17. US Department of State, fact sheet, US–Middle East Partnership Initiative, 18 June 2003. Reflecting the thrust of most post-9/11 Western democracy assistance, the initiative focused on liberal economic reform, support (liberal) for civil society, and promoting educational reform. Colin Powell, "The US-Middle East Partnership Initiative: Building Hope for the Years Ahead," speech to the Heritage Foundation, Washington, DC, 12 December 2002.

18. White House, Office of the Press Secretary, fact sheet, "President Bush Calls for a 'Forward Strategy of Freedom' to Promote Democracy in the Middle East," 6 November 2003. See also George W. Bush, "Remarks by the President at the 20th Anniversary of the National Endowment for Democracy," Washington, DC, 6 November 2003.

19. Richard Youngs, "The European Union and Democracy Promotion in the Mediterranean: A New or Disingenuous Strategy?" *Democratization* 9, 1 (2002).

20. On the negative effects of US intervention in Iraq on regional democratization, see Rex Brynen, "The Iraq War and (Non) Democratization in the Arab World," in Mokhtar Lamani and Bessma Momani, eds., *From Desolation to Reconstruction: Iraq's Troubled Journey* (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2010); Eric Davis, "History Matters: Past as Prologue in Building Democracy in Iraq," *Orbis* 49 (Spring 2005).

21. President Barack Obama, "Remarks by the President on a New Beginning," Cairo, 4 June 2009, http://www.whitehouse.gov/the_press_office/Remarks-by-the-President-at-Cairo-University-6-04-09.

22. US State Department, "State Department on Egypt's Parliamentary Elections," 29 November 2010, http://www.america.gov/st/texttrans-english/2010/November/20101130105621su0.6068951.html#ixzz1AZwx7m9c.

23. See, for example, Samuel Huntington, "Will More Countries Become Democratic?" *Political Science Quarterly* 99, 2 (Summer 1984), p. 216.

24. Michael Hudson, "Democratization and the Problem of Legitimacy in Middle East Politics," *MESA Bulletin* 22, 2 (December 1988).

25. See, for example, Michael Hudson, "After the Gulf War: Prospects for Democratization in the Arab World," *Middle East Journal* 45, 3 (Summer 1991); Ghassan Salamé, ed., *Democracy Without Democrats? The Renewal of Politics in the Muslim World* (London: Tauris, 1994); Augustus Richard Norton, *Civil Society in the Middle East, vols. 1–2* (Leiden: Brill, 1995); Brynen, Korany, and Noble, *Political Liberalization and Democratization in the Arab World, vol. 1, Theoretical Perspectives*; Korany, Brynen, and Noble, *Political Liberalization and Democratization in the Arab World, vol. 2, Comparative Experiences*.

26. Lisa Anderson, "Searching Where the Light Shines: Studying Democratization in the Middle East," *Annual Review of Political Science* 9 (2006), pp. 208–209.

27. Francesco Cavatorta, "The Convergence of Governance: Upgrading Authoritarianism in the Arab World, and Downgrading Democracy Elsewhere?" *Middle East Critique* 19, 3 (Fall 2010); Morten Valbjørn and André Bank, "Examining the 'Post' in Post-Democratization: the Future of Middle Eastern Political Rule Through Lenses of

the Past," *Middle East Critique* 19, 3 (Fall 2010). Some years earlier we had warned that "there is a danger that the democratic aspirations of scholars will lead them to read an unjustified democratic teleology into their subject matter, conceptualizing liberal democracy as a sort of natural 'endpoint' of political development rather than focusing on the underlying social struggles that comprise the real raw material of all politics." Rex Brynen, Bahgat Korany, and Paul Noble, "Trends, Trajectories, or Interesting Possibilities? Some Conclusions on Arab Democratization and Its Study," in Brynen, Korany, and Noble, *Political Liberalization and Democratization in the Arab World, vol. 1, Theoretical Perspectives,* p. 334.

28. Eva Bellin, "The Robustness of Authoritarianism in the Middle East: Exceptionalism in Comparative Perspective," *Comparative Politics* 36, 2 (January 2004), p. 139. Revised articles from this issue of *Comparative Politics*, together with other contributions, were later published as Marsha Pripstein Posusney and Michele Penner Angrist, eds., *Authoritarianism in the Middle East: Regimes and Resistance* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 2005).

29. Heydemann, *Upgrading Authoritarianism in the Arab World*, p. 1.

30. An example of this would be Richard Norton's pioneering work on the development of civil society in the Middle East. While some saw this as evidence of an excessive focus on the potential for change, Norton's project highlighted the interplay between both forces of social organization and the state's efforts to control, capture, and co-opt these. Martin Kramer, *Ivory Towers on Sand: The Failure of Middle Eastern Studies in America* (Washington, DC: Washington Institute for Near East Policy, 2001), pp. 66–70; Norton, *Civil Society in the Middle East,* vols. 1–2.

31. Bahgat Korany, introduction to Korany, ed., *The Changing Middle East: A New Look at Regional Dynamics* (Cairo: American University in Cairo Press, 2010), p. 1. The volume itself noted important changes in Arab civil society, the Arab media, and within previously radical Islamist groups—all of which would prove of importance in the events that followed.

32. Asef Bayat, *Life as Politics: How Ordinary People Change the Middle East* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009).

33. Larbi Sadiki emphasized the importance of examining the role of "anomie, social upheaval, and political protest" in the context of a collapsing social compact between regimes and citizens, which well-describes many of the contours of the Arab Spring a decade later. Larbi Sadiki, "Popular Uprisings and Arab Democratization," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 32, 1 (February 2000). The classic work on political legitimacy in Arab politics was Michael Hudson, *Arab Politics: The Search for Legitimacy* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1977); whether his arguments were negated by the decades of authoritarian stability that followed, or validated by the role that issues of legitimacy played in an Arab Spring, remains an open issue.

34. Lisa Wedeen, *Peripheral Visions: Publics, Power, and Performance in Yemen* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008). On the importance of symbolic displays of authoritarian power in social compliance, see also Lisa Wedeen, *Ambiguities of Domination: Politics, Rhetoric, and Symbols in Contemporary Syria* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999).

35. For discussion of the importance of this, see the roundtable discussion "Rethinking the Study of Arab Militaries," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 43, 3 (August 2011).