

## THE POLITICAL ECONOMY OF ARAB PRESIDENTS FOR LIFE — AND AFTER\*

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The system of personalized Arab presidential power based on a strong security state had its origins in the assertion of national sovereignty in the dangerous post-independence world of the 1950s and 1960s. and then becoming more monarchical in character over time, including the attempt to perpetuate itself by passing power on to the ruler's son. Key to this development was the appearance around each ruler of a small group of crony-capitalists who used their privileged access to secure state monopolies which they then schemed to protect after the ruler's death. Both developments, that of family dictatorships, as well as their associated corruption and cronyism, can then be used to account in large measure with the uprisings associated with the Arab 'Spring'.

*Keywords:* Personalized power; authoritarianism; crony capitalism; coup-proof; kleptocracy; succession; Arab middle class; Arab Spring.

### 1. Introduction

The overthrow of a series of long-term dictatorships was clearly the major aim of the revolutionaries of the so-called 'Arab Spring'. And remarkably successful they were. In a relatively short period of time, three republican presidents for life (Zine El Abidine Ben Ali, Hosni Mubarak, and Muammar Qaddafi) have been deposed, two others (Bashar Hafez al-Assad and Ali Abdullah Saleh) have been forced into the fight of their lives to defend themselves, and two others again (Abdelaziz Bouteflika and Omar al-Bashir) much weakened, although by a variety of forces not all directly connected with an active youth rebellion. If we add the Anglo-American overthrow of President Saddam Hussein of Iraq in 2003, the only republic that did not experience some major upheaval was that of Lebanon where its tradition of a weak Christian presidency has long been constrained by institutions and popular forces from all of the sectarian communities.

\*I have drawn largely on material to be found in Owen, R. 2012. *The Rise and Fall of Arab Presidents for Life*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press. Special thanks to Malika Zeghal and Dirk Vandewalle for information provided.

In what follows, I will examine the trajectory of the post-independence Arab presidencies as they mutated from presidencies for life into something more monarchical, given the increasing desire of rulers and regimes to perpetuate themselves, usually by selecting a son or other relative to act as the president's successor. I will then look at the reasons for the widespread opposition these presidential regimes aroused, the attempts to replace them with a new political order by means of new constitutions and newly elected parliaments, and finally, the problems encountered in dealing with the members of the old dictatorial regimes along with their legacy of pervasive security apparatuses and crony-capitalist monopolies, not strictly limited to the Egyptian case, of a well-entrenched military establishment. In so doing I will deal with examples from all the Arab republican presidencies, from Iraq and Yemen in the east, to Algeria in the west, noting that not only did the Arab Spring bring the Arab states together in a way they had rarely been before, but that it also provided examples and warnings which were rapidly passed from one state to another across North Africa and the rest of the Middle East.

## 2. The Establishment of Authoritarian Presidencies for Life

Following independence sometime after the Second World War, many of the Arab states established strong, centralized republican presidencies, either by getting rid of an existing monarchical structure (Egypt, Libya, Iraq, Tunisia, Yemen) or by a series of military coups (Algeria, Sudan, Syria).<sup>a</sup>

Given the fact that similar processes took place elsewhere in the post-colonial world, it is reasonable to suppose — with Mohamed Ayoob — that this was the result of more general global processes concerning the protection of newly-gained sovereignty and the desire to promote unity (of language, education, culture, etc.), modernization, and development via popular mobilization, as well as by measures to redistribute income such as land reform and state-lead industrialization.<sup>b</sup> But there were also significant Arab features of this process as well, notably the demonstration effect of the type of state-building efforts pursued by President Nasser in Egypt followed by the policy of partial economic liberalization begun by his successor, President Sadat.

Central to such a system of control was an emphasis on regime security based on some combination of the army, the police, and often competing internal security organizations. Important too was the creation of a large state bureaucracy consisting of separate bureaucratic fiefdoms run by men close to the President but not necessarily under his direct control, like Nasser's friend and Minister of War, Abdel-Hakim Amer.

Nevertheless, there were also some significant differences in the actual conduct of affairs between the various regime, best understood under three general headings.

- (i) The presidents of states with a long tradition of centralized power (Algeria, Tunisia, Egypt, Iraq, and Syria) were able to rule more or less by decree, while

<sup>a</sup>Note that Qaddafi never actually called himself 'President' preferring titles like that of 'Brother Leader'.

<sup>b</sup>Ayoob, 1995. *The Third World Security Predicament: State Making, Regional Conflict and the International System*, p. 4. Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner.

those with more extensive and unruly domains (Libya, Sudan, and Yemen) were forced to continue the more traditional methods of negotiating with local power-brokers while practicing a loose policy of divide and rule.

- (ii) Over time, reliance on the army as the main prop of the regime gave way in Egypt in particular to that of the police and the intelligence services which turned them into more obviously police states.
- (iii) There was also a tendency for regimes which had originally sought a multi-class base to rely on a more Middle Class one as statist development policies could not longer be afforded. This base also began to be replaced by those of a mixed public/private type, making the main sources of tension exist between the Middle class and regime cronies on one hand, and the Middle Class and the police, on the other.

Over time, such dictatorial regimes attracted the label of ‘authoritarian’ — a form of government first identified by scholars working on Latin America, which assumed the creation of a single center of power that controlled every aspect of political, economic, social, and cultural life, including state-ownership of the country’s major means of production. In many cases this definition was supported by a second assumption, that of the crushing of anything that might be called ‘civil society’, a notion much in vogue after Poland and the other eastern states began to free themselves from Soviet rule at the end of the 1980s. But note too, that with respect to both definitions, recent research has begun to question the comprehensiveness of state control over every aspect of political, economic and social life, preferring to stress the existence of pockets of opposition within groups such as organized labor, as well as in geographical regions where the exercise of state power was limited by the existence of quasi-independent communities such as rural villages and loosely-organized tribes. In Egypt, Libya, and Tunisia, it was such entities which were often in the forefront of opposition to the dictatorial regimes and which formed important political constituencies to be competed over by the various parties that stepped into the electoral arena after the Arab Spring.

### **3. Republican Presidents Become More Monarchical**

Once established in power, and no longer subject to the threat either of foreign intervention or military coup, presidents like Gamal Abdel Nasser of Egypt, Habib Bourguiba in Tunisia and Houari Boumedienne in Algeria, seem to have assumed that they would remain as presidents for life without this ever being recognized as part of actual constitutional practice. To start with, they were content to live and work in quite humble circumstances. But, beginning at least as early as the 1970s in the case of President Sadat of Egypt, there was an observed tendency to flaunt their power, to live in palaces, and again in the case of Sadat, to promote his wife to a kind of equivalent of America’s ‘First Lady’.

Other pressures were at work in the case of Syria where President Hafiz al-Assad’s grave illness in 1983/4 appears to have prompted senior members of the minority

Alawi community to place the protection of their communal interests in the Assad family's hands. And others again in those countries which undertook the internationally-promoted process of building up the private sector in the early 1990s via policies of privatization and the encouragement of foreign capital with often the further effect of placing vast wealth in the hands of crony-capitalists of an oligarchic, monopolistic type, some of them either related to the president's family or able to marry into it.

The result, in all cases, was a situation in which presidents, their families, their cronies, and many of the oligarchs shared a vested interest in ensuring the permanence of the regime as the best way to preserve their own privileged positions. They had to protect their positions not only against possible future change but also against other would-be monopolists within their own society who might press to share some of the spoils. This was of particular importance to those who had either obtained former state-monopolies — steel, the manufacture of cars or chemicals, etc. — or the monopoly right to import certain scarce commodities, not to speak of access to cheap credit from state banks, privileges which they needed the state to protect. Indeed, so tight was the connection between private monopoly and state power that it is possible to imagine a direct correlation between the number of major inner-circle crony capitalists and the size of the economy at large, perhaps 25 or so in Egypt, and perhaps 15 in Syria.

For most rulers and most regimes, the most obvious way to secure its permanence was to ensure that dictator fathers were succeeded by their sons, a practice begun in Syria in the 1990s and then putatively extended to Egypt with the grooming of Gamal Mubarak beginning in the late 1990s; Libya, with the return of Saif al-Qaddafi from London in 2008 and Yemen. More problematic was the situation in states like Tunisia, where the president had only a very young son born in 2006, and in Algeria and Sudan where the President had no son at all.

Just as problematic, as it soon turned out, was the situation in Libya and Yemen, where the presidents' several sons were often at odds with each other over control of state resources. But, whatever the case, the whole question was rendered moot by the overthrow of some of the dictatorial families in 2011 after which, as the Secretary General of the United Nations, Ban Ki-Moon noted, it seemed most unlikely that even those who manage to survive will attempt to adopt this particular, and now almost wholly discredited, solution to the problem of succession.<sup>c</sup>

#### **4. Pressures Within the Dictatorial Regimes that Account for Their Overthrow**

For a period in the 1990s and early part of the twenty-first century it seemed to most observers, whether inside or outside the Middle East, that the Arab authoritarian

<sup>c</sup>Karam, 2012. "Ban Ki-Moon: Syria violence must end." *Huffington Post World*. January 15.

presidencies had found a winning formula for survival based on making themselves coup-proof and then relying on a combination of surveillance, control and fear, tempered by occasional elections. This formula was tested and further sustained in states like Algeria, Tunisia, Egypt, and Syria where there were constant reminders that the ruler alone stood between society and either chaos or government by religious extremists. Indeed, in the case of many, the monarchical presidents seemed to become even stronger over time thanks to the obvious support they received from the United States and its allies as a result of their role in the ‘war on terror’, announced by President Bush shortly after the 9/11 attacks. Though notionally committed to the idea of their transition towards popular democracy, successive visitors to Cairo and elsewhere like Bush’s Secretary of State, Condoleezza Rice, were content to give the presidents only the slightest tap on the wrist concerning their anti-democratic practices.

True, there were signs of some small signs of middle class opposition, for example, Egypt’s Kifaya (“Enough”) movement launched in what seemed like a vain hope to prevent the succession of Gamal Mubarak. But such was the confidence that each president seemed to display, and such was the secrecy that enveloped actual regime practice, that most of the warning signs were missed. These included significant splits with the elite itself, for example, military opposition to Gamal Mubarak based on his perceived weakness in dealing with the Muslim Brotherhood. They also included the increasing influence of more basic social trends such as the progressive impoverishment of the middle class relative to the top one or two percent of the population, and the growing impact of what demographers call the ‘youth bulge’ by which the numbers of young persons in the Arab world between 15 and 35 more or less doubled from 1980 to 2010.<sup>d</sup>

In any case, it was a tiny spark that led first to the rapid overthrow of the Ben Ali regime in Tunisia in January 2011, and then to the huge demonstrations in Cairo’s Maidan Tahrir later the same month which revealed just how weak and unprepared most regimes were for the popular uprisings that either overthrew them or, when they encountered armed resistance, catapulted their countries into a species of civil war. Although many millions are so aggrieved, it is impossible to isolate just one or two of the factors which led to the pan-Arab uprisings. They would seem to have had most to do with each kleptocratic regime’s desire to perpetuate itself; the sense of hopelessness that this engendered, combined with the regimes’ inability to satisfy the economic needs of a rapidly-growing population left each regime almost completely bereft of mobilizable popular support once the uprisings began. The once formidable military proved unwilling or unable to put them down by sheer brute force.

<sup>d</sup>Fargues, 2012. “Demography, migration and revolt in the Southern Mediterranean.” Figures 1–4. In *Arab Society in Revolt: The West’s Mediterranean Challenge*, Merlini C. and Roy O., eds., p. 29. Washington D.C.: Brookings Institute Press.

## 5. Major Political and Administrative Problems Involved in the Development of New Structures and a New Arab Order

As world history is witness, major revolutionary events take years, sometimes decades to unfold before a stable new political structure has been built. In the Arab Middle East, as with everywhere else, the building blocks were supposed to be a combination of popular elections and a constitution to be legitimated by its general acceptance as an emanation of the people's will. But if the practice of electoral democracy and constitution-building was not difficult enough, there were other problems which were to prove in some ways almost as complex and divisive, notably the proper punishment of members of the deposed regimes, the transfer of their wealth and of the structures that sustained it back into state hands. Another problem was the wholesale reform of regime institutions such as the police, the judiciary, and the system of education including the eradication of what Middle Easterners, following Turkish practice implementing a 'deep state'.

Writing as of late January 2013, two years after the revolutionary processes began, progress towards a new constitutional order had proceeded furthest in the three North African states of Tunisia, Libya, and Egypt. Given the many problems involved, a commendable attempt by the new governments to associate the 'people' at large in the drafting process via elections, which were almost inevitably won by the better organized religious parties and movements, is a notable achievement owing much to a general wish to adhere to the timetable drawn up immediately after the revolutions. But it has also had the effect of producing deep nation-wide divisions concerning some of the basic articles in the new constitutions which are complicating the attempt to address the major economic and educational problems each country faces after so many years of dictatorial mis-management and neglect.

Note too, that elsewhere in North Africa, little institutional change has taken place in republican Algeria apart from a general weakening of President Boutiflika's position at the hands of the group of Army Generals known locally — in French — as '*Le pouvoir*'. And even less in Sudan where President Bashir clings to power in the face of the fall-out from the armed up-rising in Dhafur, and the division of his country into two.

Turning now to the Arab East, the Syrian regime instinctively dug in its heels in the face of unarmed demonstrations that, in its complete isolation from the ordinary people, it chose to regard as the work of deranged agents of foreign powers. If there was any rationale to this heavy-handed military response it can be derived from a habit of mind that believed it was necessary to reestablish the usual state of fear before contemplating the offer of any meaningful concessions from a position of strength. The result, as is well known, is that what used to be regarded as a relatively cohesive society has begun to come apart in ever more destructive and violent ways, making future prospects for government, let alone institutional development, almost impossible to imagine.

As for Yemen, the stalemate between the regime and various types of armed and unarmed (mostly student) opposition created in the summer of 2011 has been managed by outside forces, notably the United States and Saudi Arabia. Central to this process was a special election in February 2012 that led to the replacement of President Ali Abdullah Saleh by the country's vice-president who was then charged with the task of writing a new constitution followed by overseeing new elections for both president and parliament in 2014.

Nevertheless, considerable tensions persist including a military standoff between those parts of the army controlled by Saleh's sons and those by an opposition. This has been further exacerbated by the fact that, as a result of a deal brokered by the GCC, the ex-president was able to obtain an amnesty for himself after returning from hospital in Saudi Arabia, leaving the new government unable to question him about the size and the whereabouts of his private assets tentatively valued at some US\$25 billion, the ill-gotten fruits of his nearly 40 years in power.<sup>e</sup>

## **6. Economic and Legal Problems: Tunisia, Egypt, and Libya**

Two years into the Arab Spring, the only countries where reforms have gone far enough to confront the major problems involved in both disposing of the old structures and trying to establish new ones, are the adjoining states of Tunisia, Libya, and Egypt. I will deal with these problems under three headings: trial and punishment of the leaders of the old regime and members of their families, the restructuring of the crony-capitalist economic order, and the longer-term reform of the such basic institutions as the police, the educational and legal systems and, in Egypt, the anomalous role of the military.

### **6.1. *The trial and punishment of the leaders of the old regime***

In only one of the three revolutions under consideration did the former president for life, Husni Mubarak, stay in his Palace until he was arrested with his two sons. Of the others, one, Ben Ali, fled to Saudi Arabia with his wife, while the second, Qaddafi, was killed by his own people along with several of his sons, leaving just one son, Saif, to be captured and held hostage by the angry people of the town of Zintan.

Then came what proved to be the very difficult question of for what exactly those who remained should be put on tried. One possibility, advocated by the International Court of Justice at The Hague, was for 'crimes against humanity', an interesting notion from an international perspective but one that found little favor in Libya as it would have meant surrendering Saif al-Qaddafi to what was regarded as a foreign judicial process. As of January 2013 the question remained on hold subject to prior reform of what passes as the Libyan legal system.

A second, chosen in Egypt, was to legitimize the whole process, not by some concept of revolutionary justice but by trying Mubarak for two crimes already on the

<sup>e</sup>Ali Abdullah Saleh's Salary. 2012. "Yemeni Government Grants President Ali Abdullah Saleh, His Kids and Staff Total Immunity". *Now Morocco Blog*. January, 9.

statute book: murder and corruption; in one case, for giving orders to the police to shoot demonstrators, and in the other, for conniving with a crony-businessmen to sell Egypt's natural gas to Israel at lower than world market prices. Neither charge could be made to stick, leaving the former president under arrest but in a kind of legal limbo.

There is an important lesson here, just as there is in Tunisia where the new regime also decided to try Ben Ali in a military court, albeit in absentia, on charges of both the theft of state assets, and of ordering the deaths of protestors. While it possible to understand the logic of trying former presidents for crimes already on the statute book like murder, there is a strong case for Mohamed Hassanein Heikal's argument in the Egyptian newspaper, *Al-Ahram* to the effect that, as Mubarak's crimes were essentially political (rather than legal), the matter should be left to the elected representatives of the people to decide.<sup>f</sup>

Whether members of a popular assembly would actually want to take responsibility for so serious a task is another matter. But it would certainly have the advantage of encouraging a debate as to what, precisely, the former dictator should be held accountable for in terms of the harm he committed against, not just the lives of several generations of his people but also their legitimate expectations, including all the things they might have done if they had not been prevented from doing so.

## 6.2. *The restructuring of the old crony-capitalist economic order*

Though there can be no doubt that the crony-capitalist economic order established in Egypt, Libya, and Tunisia was bad for the economy in general, as well as for the health of state and private enterprise at all levels of activity, there is a great deal about its history and operations which still remains unknown for many obvious reasons. For one thing, the vast sell-off of state enterprises in the 1990s was conducted very largely in secret, with no public tenders and no way of knowing how bids were financed. For another, both the dictators and their crony-capitalist allies took good care to ensure that as little as possible was known about both the monopoly profits which the process allowed and the way some of these were used to support dubious regime projects like managed elections. Then there is the question of the present whereabouts of the billions and billions of dollars of ill-gotten gains — estimated at some US\$11 billion in the case of Ben Ali and his family — much of which, it seems, may never be recovered in spite of the best efforts to bankers and the financial authorities in the US, Europe and elsewhere.<sup>g</sup>

Turning now to the domestic assets of the ex-dictators, their families and their crony associated, information about their fate is also extremely difficult to come by. Anti-corruption commissions have been formed and great efforts made both to identify such assets and then to subject them to official confiscation. The result, it seems, has generally been their return to state hands. Only a few were then privatized, for example Buraq Airways, once owned by one of Qaddafi's wives, although

<sup>f</sup>Mohamed Hassenein, 2011. *Al-Ahram Weekly*, May 19–25.

<sup>g</sup>Byrne, 2012. "Ben Ali's family and friends." *The Guardian* (London), January 13.

on what terms with regard to its future organization — for example, to maintaining the same labor forces, the same levels of activities — is difficult to discover.<sup>h</sup>

For the rest, and particularly in cases where the enterprise has been reasonably well-run — for example, Ahmed Ezz's Iron and Steel Company in Egypt — one can only suppose that they are now being run by state officials, although details are again very hard to come by — certainly no transparency here.

Lastly, there is the question of the remaining state banks, used more or less as cash cows by the cronies and then, after the fall of the dictators, left full of non-performing loans which they had given, often after the most cursory examination and almost all without any tangible security. Here privatization was a difficult option given the adverse nature of their balance sheets; so a long process of internal restructuring is necessary before there can be any hope of sale.

As for the creation of a new economic order to replace the old, progress has been bogged down in Egypt and Tunisia by political disagreements, notably those between populist politicians anxious to promote some species of planned development and the neo-liberal technocrats like the ex-head of Tunisia's National Bank, Mustafa Nabli, concerned with promoting investment by policies of cutting state subsidies, privatization, and balancing budget. Where such policies have also been embraced, *faute de mieux*, by a religious party containing powerful business businessmen but without a clear economic vision of its own, the ability to satisfy the demands of the unemployed by creating new state sectors is limited and, in the case of Tunisia, the cause of considerable social unrest.

Further problems have arisen from the climate of uncertainty created by the fierce determination of Egypt's prosecutors in their pursuit of cronies associated with the Mubarak regime and by the fact that the new draft constitution contains nothing about the rights of private ownership and questions concerning the use of water and the protection of the environment, making potential investors wary of committing themselves before a predictable legal structure is properly in place.

### ***6.3. Longer-term reform of basic institutions and their relationship with the state***

For the young revolutionaries of Tahrir and elsewhere, one of their basic aims was the root-and-branch reform of most basic institutions of the ancient regime states: the police, the educational and legal systems for example, as well as the introduction of huge projects concerned to deal with damage being done to the environment by pollution, over-use of water and so on. Unfortunately, not only would such schemes take decades to be completed but they would also cost very large sums of money, considerations that clearly make them immediately unattractive to politicians concerned with short-term electoral considerations. To make matters worse, many of these reforms are also opposed by powerful vested interests, for example, the army, the security services, and the judges in Egypt, the trade unions in Tunisia.

<sup>h</sup>Information privately supplied by Dirk Vandewalle.

Hence it is no surprise that so far, there has not been a purge of the Egyptian police while, at least until President Morsi's 'coup' against the military's high command in August 2012. Many of Husni Mubarak's top officials remained in place, including judges who supervised the first popular elections, and many members of the old regime who stood for office, for example, Mubarak's last prime minister, Ahmed Shafik, obtained nearly as many votes as Morsi for president. Then there is the army which still, however cowed by the 'coup', has a huge set of its own interests to preserve, not just its institutional independence but also its control over sizable economic assets, the management of which might well be at risk if they were either properly accounted for or even worse, thrown open to the winds of international competition.

Matters have proceeded further in Tunisia where aspects of the 'deep state' proved more easy to root out. There, 40 of Ben Ali's senior officials have been put on trial and sentenced to 20 years imprisonment, including his Chief of Presidential Security Ministry and Minister of the Interior. Furthermore, an edict was passed banning senior member's of his party (the RCD) from standing in elections if they had any involvement in politics over the last 10 years.

As for Libya, there the problem of what to do with members of the Qaddafi regime has, paradoxically, been both the greatest — there being few Libyans who were not complicit with it in one way or another including the new president himself — and yet one where the purge has gone deepest. A year and half after the old regime fell, many of Qaddafi's close associates were in prison waiting for trial with lower-ranking suspects held in military detention centers as they waited for a new court system to be put in place. Nevertheless, only one person had actually been brought to trial so far, Qaddafi's former chief of external intelligence, and he still not received a sentence.

## 7. Some Lessons Learnt so Far

Whether they characterize the so-called 'Arab Spring' as a revolutionary process or something less comprehensive and disturbing of the old order, most observers, for example, Mustafa Abdul-Jalil, the head of Libya's National Transitional Council, believe that it will take years to overcome what he calls 'heavy heritage of corruption and distrust'.<sup>1</sup> For another, as is well known, the system of constitutional democracy which is being attempted in Egypt, Iraq, Libya, and Tunisia, and which may yet be attempted in Syria and Sudan, takes many years of institutionalized accommodation supported by a wise and understanding judiciary before it can be said to achieved its aim.

Hence, the first and most significant lesson to be learn so far is certainly the importance of an agreed timetable towards the creation of a popular democracy, encouraged and supported, where possible either by the international community as represented by the United Nations, the IMF and the World Bank, the Arab League,

<sup>1</sup>Michael, 2012. "Militias stymie Libya's leaders." *The Boston Globe*, February 22.

or the European Economic Community, or, in the case of Egypt, heavily dependent on American economic and military aid, by the United States. Moreover, such support needs to be exercised with skill and careful diplomacy with due attention to both the stick and the carrots of recognition and future rewards. So far, the Obama administration in particular has managed the process very well, preferring to give private advice to Egypt's generals rather than public admonition and making the principled decision of not threatening to cut military aid. This was perhaps inspired by historical memories of the disastrous consequences of the Eisenhower administration's decision to withdraw its promise of funding for the Aswan Dam in 1955.

Two other lessons concern the problems associated with the novel practice of a strong parliamentary democracy in which the person who controls the most seats after an election becomes the prime minister, and then the developing relationship between the prime minister, the president (as head of state) and, in Egypt, the head of the armed forces. All this is complicated enough at the best of times, for example in Lebanon, relying as it does on a mix of practice, experience and judicious accommodation. But, starting from scratch, as the Egyptians, Libyan and Tunisians have decided to do, makes it doubly complex, with the rules and relationships between the major political, as well as judicial, actors still very much a work in progress. In Tunisia and Libya, instance, there is the emergence of what looks like a Lebanese power triangle involving president, prime minister and speaker of the national assembly. And everywhere we can observe the practice of appointing a-political technocrats to key ministries like finance and education.

## **8. A Final Question: What has been the Effect of the Spring on the Arab Monarchies and the Gulf States?**

Much the same wave of excitement that toppled the North Africa dictatorship was also experienced in the two monarchical state of Morocco and Jordan, and for many of the same reasons — economic distress, unemployment, and falling Middle Class incomes — yet with many fewer calls for their overthrow due to the strong social base among tribal and other rural communities. Hence, by a combination of the employment of much the same security measures as failed in the republics allied to the sacking of scapegoat ministers and the promise of greater monarchical accountability, they were able to survive, even though huge economic problems remained.

As for the family monarchies in and around the Arabian peninsula, they too were briefly shaken by demonstrations of popular discontent but were generally able to weather their smaller storms by some exemplary punishments allied to large cash and other handouts from their oil-fuelled reserves, as well as promoting some steps designed to increase greater popular representation at the advisory level in Saudi Arabia, Qatar, and the minority Sunni population of Bahrain. Equally worthy of note was talk, but only talk, of moving towards the more stripped-down form of

monarchy found in Jordan and Morocco with succession proceeding not through the eldest fit male relative of a deceased ruler but to his eldest son.

## 9. By Way of a Conclusion: Looking to the Future

Much has happened in the two years since the outbreak of the Arab revolts and yet in none of the states most directly involved, has anything like a working and popularly legitimate political and administrative system been created to replace the old ones. In fact, there has only been any significant process of transition in three — Egypt, Libya and Tunisia — not forgetting the gains made after the overthrow of Saddam Hussein in Iraq. Meanwhile, a number of new problems have arisen with the arrival of members of religious parties in government, the uncertainty surrounding presidential powers and pressures felt by secular liberals, women and, in Egypt, minorities, not to speak of the development of new forms of economic warfare against the state by small but intransigent groups Salafis and Jihadis.

Beyond this, certain new patterns of economic behavior can be discerned. First and foremost, the Arab Spring has been an ‘Arab’ economic moment in the sense of mobilizing financial resources from the rich Gulf state to provide financial assistance, under IMF guidance, to Egypt and to a lesser extent, Tunisia. It also offers more limited possibilities for greater Arab economic unity, not necessarily of the formal kind but for exploiting new forms of economic exchange as well as the type of cooperation that comes from geographical proximity such as the shared transport and electricity grids, joint steps to promote tourism and so forth. Some of these exchanges could be extended to regional or sub-regional plans to deal with the major challenges posed by declining rainfall, and diminishing food production desertification.

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