

University of Southern Denmark, 6 October 2011:
Mediterranean Perspectives

Democracy in the Middle East vs. authoritarian
 resilience: Theoretical discussions and policy
 implications

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Student Presentation by Linda
 Upgrading authoritarianism – or why the Arab
 regimes seem(ed) to be so persistent

Associate Professor, PhD Peter Seeberg
 Centre for Contemporary Middle East Studies
 University of Southern Denmark

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Literature:

- Emerson, Michael (2009) The Long and Hazardous Route to Democracy: Introduction and Conclusions, in Emerson, Michael and Richard Youngs: *Democracy's Plight in the European Neighbourhood. Struggling Transitions and Proliferating Dynasties*, Brussels: CEPS, pp. 1-30.
- Hinnebusch, R. (2006) Authoritarian persistence, democratization theory and the Middle East: An overview and critique, *Democratization*, Vol. 13, No. 3, pp. 373-395.
- Steven Heydemann (2007) Upgrading Authoritarianism in the Arab World, *Saban Center Analysis Paper*, No. 13.

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Outline:

- Democracy and authoritarianism – introduction
- Freedom House – Map of Freedom, method and figures
- Measuring democracy, human rights, rule of law etc., relevant links
- Failure of democratization – success for authoritarianism...(as we used to describe the reality in the Middle East)
- Democratization in the European Neighbourhood – on its way?
- Authoritarian persistence and the possibilities of democratization
- Student presentation: Upgrading authoritarianism – or why the Arab regimes seem(ed) to be so persistent

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Democracy and authoritarianism – introduction

- What is democracy?
- Robert Dahl's criteria for democratic processes (in "*Democracy and its critics*", 1989):
 - 1. Effective participation - Citizens must have adequate and equal opportunities to form their preference and place questions on the public agenda and express reasons for one outcome over the other.
 - 2. Voting equality at the decisive stage - Each citizen must be assured his or her judgments will be counted as equal in weights to the judgments of others.
 - 3. Enlightened understanding - Citizens must enjoy ample and equal opportunities for discovering and affirming what choice would best serve their interests.
 - 4. Control of the agenda - Demos or people must have the opportunity to decide what political matters actually are and what should be brought up for deliberation.
 - 5. Inclusiveness - Equality must extend to all citizens within the state. Everyone has legitimate stake within the political process.

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Measuring democracy, human rights, rule of law etc., relevant links

- <http://www.freedomhouse.org>
 - <http://www.hrw.org/>
 - <http://www.amnesty.org/>
 - <http://www.un.org>
 - <http://www.euromedalex.org/Home/EN/Home.aspx>
 - <http://www.bertelsmann-transformation-index.de/en/>
- (...these homepages, by the way, might also be of interest in connection with your career planning considerations...)

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Freedom in the World 2011 Middle East and North Africa

Table of Independent Countries

| Country | Freedom Status | PR | CL | Trend Arrow |
|----------------------|----------------|----|----|-------------|
| Algeria | Not Free | 6 | 5 | |
| Bahrain | Not Free | 6 | 5 | ↓ |
| Egypt | Not Free | 6 | 5 | ↓ |
| Iran | Not Free | 6 | 6 | ↓ |
| Iraq | Not Free | 5 | 6 | |
| Israel* | Free | 1 | 2 | |
| Jordan | Not Free | 6 | 5 | |
| Kuwait | Partly Free | 4 | 5 | ▼ |
| Lebanon | Partly Free | 5 | 3 | |
| Libya | Not Free | 7 | 7 | |
| Morocco | Partly Free | 5 | 4 | |
| Oman | Not Free | 6 | 5 | |
| Qatar | Not Free | 6 | 5 | |
| Saudi Arabia | Not Free | 7 | 6 | |
| Syria | Not Free | 7 | 6 | |
| Tunisia | Not Free | 7 | 5 | |
| United Arab Emirates | Not Free | 6 | 5 | |
| Yemen | Not Free | 6 | 5 | |

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Failure of democratization – success for authoritarianism...

- * ...so far not much democracy or democratization in the Arab world – but maybe on its way...
- * Why? Is there a Middle Eastern exceptionalism preventing democracy? ...and on the other hand, if this is not the case: why has some political change then taken place?
- * Political liberalization and deliberalization are not linear processes, variations in timing and scope are significant and political liberalization and deliberalization are successfully employed by Arab regimes...
- * Probably the durability of political regimes is a function of repression and legitimacy – both may have oscillated, but still remained stable over time
- * Strategies of change for stability: Creating structures of legitimacy, elite change, institution building, co-optation, external influences...
- * Structures of legitimacy: External (global ideological paradigms, 'donor talk') and internal legitimacy (allocative power, religion, ideology, development strategies etc.)

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Failure of democratization – success for authoritarianism...

- * Elite change: Volker Perthes and the concept of 'politically relevant elites', (PRE – a large German research project), distinguishing between:
 - elite rotation as one practice, manipulating the elite
 - elite maintenance, buying off the elite (in rentier states...)
- * Institution building: establishing formal institutions without real power, 'facade' democratization...
- * Changing patterns of cooptation: example: the Islamists in Jordan & Egypt, the many GO-NGO's and DO-NGO's, secular opposition...
- * External influences – to turn constraints into opportunities
- * Conclusion(s):
 - What is important for the authoritarian regimes is to anticipate and prevent the emergence of autonomous social forces
 - Conclusion: what we see in the Middle East is not failure of democracy, but success of authoritarianism...

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Democratization in the European Neighbourhood – on its way?

- * The colour revolutions seemed promising (Georgia, Ukraine, Lebanon: the cedar revolution, Kyrgyzstan) – but might have been too optimistically assessed (considering the cedar revolution the complex history of Lebanon since 2005 should be mentioned...)
- * The (European) concept of democracy goes back to ancient Greece, and is in different "stages of development" spread out all over the world (Richard Rorty: the best we know of ...)
- * A number of states close to Europe are gradually becoming democratic – Michael Emerson mentions Bulgaria and Romania – and the fact that they were detached from the others who made it to the EU in 2004.
- * Serbia, Croatia and Turkey are on their way – heading for membership?
- * Of the 22 Arab states some, according to Emerson, have changed a bit recently. In different historical (and economical) contexts the following are often mentioned: Lebanon, Jordan, Morocco, Kuwait – of course with specific fluctuations, as pointed at by for instance Freedom House...
- * However, we know now that this view does no longer fit the realities...

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Democratization in the European Neighbourhood – on its way?

- Emerson analyses Morocco, Egypt and Algeria – Morocco being "awarded" the "top-of-the-class" ranking by the EU.
- A change from authoritarianism to semi-authoritarianism (or *smart authoritarianism*), due to new legislation in civil liberties, more open, competitive election procedures, the Islamist party (JDP) has obtained a large representation in parliament, only rare instances of open coercion or violent repression...
- Algeria: the 2009 election, strengthening Bouteflika, should not be seen as a democratic backlash – he has gradually gained the upper hand over the army...and is beginning to suggest reforms recently in order to tackle the popular pressure
- Egypt experienced a period of mobilization and diversification of political opposition in 2004-05 (both the Muslim Brotherhood and the Kifaya-movement). This however, is certainly not a general trend...
- Summing up: in recent years opposition groups and civil society have become a more vibrant factor in MENA leading to a growing pluralisation

Democratization in the European Neighbourhood – on its way?

- The leads Emerson to considering two concepts in order to grasp the reality in the Middle East as to democratic development (or lack of democratic development):
- Struggling transitions, examples in the Middle East: Lebanon and Palestine – worth mentioning maybe more for temporary democratic "experiments" rather than lasting tendencies...
- Proliferating dynasties, examples in the Middle East: Morocco, Jordan, Syria, Egypt, Libya, Algeria – all are countries in which the transition process more or less has withered away...
- Conclusion: "There is virtually no well functioning democracy in the neighbourhood of the EU, which now finds itself surrounded by states that fall broadly into either one of the two categories"
- The democracy promotion strategies by the EU need to be reconsidered – one of the measures might be to develop a "more open and constructive posture towards moderate and democratically inclined Islamist parties"...

Authoritarian persistence and the possibilities of democratization

- Hinnebusch' point: political liberalization and/or pluralization is a substitute for democratization rather than a stage on the way to it...and
- maybe the Bush adm. believed that if only authoritarian rulers are removed democratization will be the natural outcome, but this is not the case. Rather: the result seem to be anarchy (Lebanon, Somalia, Iraq...)
- Why did democratization not happen in the Middle East? ...why the Middle Eastern exceptionalism? The usual essentialist catalogue: Islam, 'Oriental despotism', patrimonialism, patriarchalism, 'small group politics', strong elites, mass passivity etc.
- Was the the Middle East rather on a path in 'transition to modernity'...despite the obstacles to democratization?
- A social structural analysis points to that democracy requires a balance between state/ruler and independent classes – and the social structural conditions do not seem to favour democratization in the MENA region

Authoritarian persistence and the possibilities of democratization

- ...quoting Heydemann: it is meaningful to distinguish between PA (populist authoritarian and BA (bureaucratic authoritarian) regimes. Examples of PA in the Middle East can be seen as successful authoritarianism in the sense that they constructed a durable regime, which managed to gain some popular support....
- We have also seen how a post-populist authoritarianism can lead to popular power, but without popular inclusion (via a higher score on the legitimacy-dimension...)
- The calculations of the elites include the democratization aspect, can be used and is used together with economic liberalisation – but do not necessarily lead to 'real' democratization, there is always the possibility of 'reform to preserve'...(Turkey and Lebanon as (democratic) exceptions?)
- Conclusion: An 'East Asia model' might take place, but seem implausible without a resolution of the different national problems. Democracy will only come after a long term evolution. A pathway from below is also possible...

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Supplementary literature

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- Rabil, R. G. (2006). *Syria, the United States, and the war on terror in the Middle East*. Westport, Conn., Praeger Security International.
- Schlumberger, O. (2006). *Dancing with Wolves. Dilemmas of Democracy Promotion in Authoritarian Contexts. Democratization and Development. New Political Strategies for the Middle East*. D. Jung, New York, Palgrave Macmillan.
- Seeberg, P. (2007). "Fragmented loyalties. Nation and Democracy in Lebanon after the Cedar Revolution" *Centre for Middle East Studies Working Paper Series* 8: 1-31.
- Volpi, F. (2006). "Algeria's pseudo-democratic politics: Lessons for democratization in the Middle East." *Democratization* 13(3): 442-455.
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