



Review: Authoritarianism and Its Adversaries in the Arab World

Reviewed Work(s):

Arab Voices: The Human Rights Debate in the Middle East. by Kevin Dwyer

Authoritarian Power and State Formation in Ba'thist Syria: Army, Party, and Peasant. by Raymond A. Hinnebusch

The Republic of Fear: The Politics of Modern Iraq. by Samir al-Khalil

Bahrain: The Modernization of Autocracy. by Fred H. Lawson

Islam and Human Rights: Tradition and Politics. by Ann Elizabeth Mayer

Society and State in the Gulf and Arab Peninsula: A Different Perspective. by Khaldoun al-Naqeeb

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World Politics, Vol. 46, No. 2. (Jan., 1994), pp. 262-289.

Stable URL:

<http://links.jstor.org/sici?sici=0043-8871%28199401%2946%3A2%3C262%3AAAIAIT%3E2.0.CO%3B2-8>

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AUTHORITARIANISM AND ITS ADVERSARIES IN THE ARAB WORLD

By JILL CRYSTAL*

- Kevin Dwyer. *Arab Voices: The Human Rights Debate in the Middle East*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991, 245 pp.
- Raymond A. Hinnebusch. *Authoritarian Power and State Formation in Ba'hist Syria: Army, Party, and Peasant*. Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1990, 350 pp.
- Samir al-Khalil. *The Republic of Fear: The Politics of Modern Iraq*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989, 310 pp.
- Fred H. Lawson. *Bahrain: The Modernization of Autocracy*. Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1989, 142 pp.
- Ann Elizabeth Mayer. *Islam and Human Rights: Tradition and Politics*. Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1991, 243 pp.
- Khaldoun al-Naqeeb. *Society and State in the Gulf and Arab Peninsula: A Different Perspective*. London: Routledge, 1990, 206 pp.

INTRODUCTION

MOST Americans know little more about the Middle East than that it is largely Islamic and vaguely nondemocratic. Indeed, most popular and unfortunately even some scholarly thinking on the region links these two pieces of received wisdom, tracing political forms to cultural templates. Scholars of other regions of the world may therefore be surprised to learn that those who study the Arab world do not approach the issue of authoritarianism in that way. Rather, the latter eschew explanations based on religious doctrine or family structure and instead ground their work in political economy, the historical evolution of the state, and patterns of state-society interactions.

Recent scholarship on domestic politics in the Arab world has focused primarily on democratization, reflecting the broader emerging international literature and its emphasis on transitions away from authoritarian rule. The tendency is to collapse into the term authoritarianism all regimes that are not, or are not yet, democratic.¹ Democratization is, of

* I would like to thank F. Gregory Gause, Lisa Anderson, and Matthew Evangelista for their comments on earlier versions of this article. This piece and the larger project of which it is a part have been supported by grants from the American Council of Learned Societies, the World Society Foundation, and the United States Institute of Peace.

¹ Democratization has shaped recent scholarship on the Middle East, although this work

course, an important topic, indeed one that can be enriched by a study of authoritarianism. But authoritarianism also merits study in its own right. More than just the absence of democracy, it is very much its own presence: of police, jails, fear. It is this presence that the authors reviewed here seek to explain on the basis of their particular case studies. And in so doing, each must confront a core set of popular misconceptions: that all of Middle Eastern politics is authoritarian and violent and that these features spring from deep within society—from Islam (where everything Arab originates) or from the same dark source from which Islam itself sprang. These books make the convincing case that the impulse toward authoritarianism lies not in something primordial in Arab culture but instead in a more complex dynamic involving economic growth and stagnation, social-structural transformation, state formation and institutional inertia, and ideological transformation.

Four central themes recur in these books—two explicitly, two more implicitly. The first is the relationship between economic change and patterns of state control. The early modernization literature suggested an almost inevitably inverse relationship between economic development and repression, misreading state violence as a traditional form of authority that would give way to democracy in response to economic development. For the most part, however, these writers ground at least their historical analysis in dependency theory. They typically link the appearance of authoritarianism to ties to the world economy forged under colonialism; and they suggest further that economic changes more commonly associated with the emergence of democratic trends may, in states with a colonial history, actually prompt the emergence of authoritarian regimes.

The second theme is the relationship between social-structural diversity and level of state control. Outside observers (and not just of the Middle East) often attribute state violence either to the weakness of civil society or to the unchecked strength of primordial (ethnic, sectarian) identities (a reversion to some natural state). The authors here draw attention to the many and complex forms of social stratification in the region, to the importance of classes and class coalitions in determining a

is more recent and less widely known than scholarship on other regions. For an overview of work under way, see Louis Cantori, "Democratization in the Middle East: Report, American Political Science Association," *American-Arab Affairs* 36 (Spring 1991), which summarizes papers from the 1990 San Francisco APSA meeting; Michael Hudson, "After the Gulf War: Prospects for Democratization in the Arab World," *Middle East Journal* 45 (Summer 1991); Muhammad Muslih and Augustus Richard Norton, "The Need for Arab Democracy," *Foreign Policy* 83 (Summer 1991); the special issue of *Middle East Report* 174 (January 1992) on democracy in the Arab world; and Ellis Goldberg, Resat Kasaba, and Joel Migdal, eds., *Rules and Rights in the Middle East* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, forthcoming).

state's predisposition to violence, and to the interactive and often synergistic (rather than antagonistic) relationship between class and communal identification. To understand authoritarian outcomes, all look to social actors, to the importance of organized social groups, to the role of state efforts to contain them in shaping political outcomes, and to the repressive institutions that sometimes arise from this process.

These books raise a third theme, although they do not explore it fully: the importance of institutions of repression in sustaining state violence. Only al-Khalil focuses directly on security institutions; the others suggest indirectly, however, that repressive institutions, once established, can be remarkably resilient and play an independent role in sustaining authoritarianism.

Finally, all of these books indirectly raise the theme of the role of ideological appeals in sustaining authoritarianism. Taking the books together, one sees that leaders' appeals to tradition or to Arab nationalism to justify state violence may not be the expressions of long-standing cultural norms that they at first appear to be. Rather, they are better seen as deliberate and careful attempts by rulers to deal with a crisis of legitimacy either by invoking a carefully crafted, selective, and often inaccurate past or by offering promises, perhaps willfully false, of future material gain—an appeal to developmentalism—in order to fragment the opposition. Although the regimes' justifications appear in local dress, unveiled they bear a strong family resemblance to appeals to tradition and progress made by rulers throughout the Third World. The ideological assertions of the rulers, thus recast, allow us to reexamine Arab culture in a more nuanced way—not as an unchanging force that impinges inexorably on politics, but rather as the basic material that both regime and opposition manipulate. This less static view of ideology and culture opens the way for a consideration of the alternatives to authoritarianism that might be built from this same cultural base.

Taken together, these books allow us, first, to identify a wider range of factors that increase or decrease the likelihood of a state's resorting to violence: economic (the level and strategy of development), social-structural (the nature of communal and class divisions), institutional (the historical mix of repressive and representative institutions), and ideological (orientation of regime and opposition). Second, they allow us to unpack the phenomenon of authoritarianism itself. To that end, we can organize these authors' ideas around three different sets of forces: those that precipitate authoritarianism, those that sustain it, and those that resist it. This approach fosters a clearer understanding of the conditions

under which authoritarianism flourishes and, perhaps, those in which it may one day wither.

Each book addresses these issues differently. Khaldoun al-Naqeeb offers a historical economic analysis of Saudi Arabia and the smaller Gulf states. Hinnebusch and Lawson take a more social-structural approach to explaining authoritarianism in Syria and Bahrain. Al-Khalil traces Iraqi authoritarianism to Baathist ideology. Dwyer and Mayer are concerned more with alternatives to authoritarianism; both lay out, but assess very differently, the democratic and antidemocratic elements and prospects of existing opposition forces. Taken together, these works contribute to an explanation of authoritarianism in the Arab world that is applicable to the broader dynamics of authoritarianism anywhere.

THE ORIGINS OF AUTHORITARIANISM

POINTS OF DEPARTURE

These writers join, although they do not invoke, a larger, older tradition that takes the presence of state violence as its point of departure. Although recent writing on authoritarianism seems primarily concerned with its breakdown, this was not always the case.² Writers like Perlmutter, Linz, and Huntington have focused directly on authoritarianism, as did earlier writers like Hannah Arendt or Carl Friedrich.³ Now that the topic can be pried from the grip of cold war-era debates that characterized many earlier efforts, it is time for scholars to revisit the question.

Historically, scholars have approached the topic of authoritarianism in

² E.g., Lucian Pye, "Political Science and the Crisis of Authoritarianism," *American Political Science Review* 84 (March 1990), concerned primarily with postauthoritarian systems; or Guillermo O'Donnell et al., *Transitions from Authoritarian Rule* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986).

³ Amos Perlmutter, *Modern Authoritarianism: A Comparative Institutional Analysis* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981); Juan Linz, "Totalitarian and Authoritarian Regimes," in Fred Greenstein and Nelson Polsby, eds., *Handbook of Political Science*, vol. 3, *Macropolitical Theory* (Reading, Mass.: Addison-Wesley, 1975); idem, *The Breakdown of Democratic Regimes: Crisis, Breakdown, and Reequilibration* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978); and Samuel P. Huntington and Clement Moore, eds., *Authoritarian Politics in Modern Society* (New York: Basic Books, 1970). There is also the voluminous literature on bureaucratic-authoritarianism, e.g., David Collier, ed., *The New Authoritarianism in Latin America* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979); Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1968); Carl Friedrich, *Totalitarianism* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1954); and Carl Friedrich and Zbigniew Brzezinski, *The Permanent Purge* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1955). In the 1980s only a handful of new writers revisited the topic, e.g., Michael Stohl and George Lopez, eds., *Government Violence and Repression: An Agenda for Research* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1986); Stohl and Lopez, eds., *The State as Terrorist: The Dynamics of Governmental Violence and Repression* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1984).

the Arab world primarily through the study of the military in politics.⁴ This literature has fewer analogues in more recent writings on the Arab world. Although the *mukhabarat*, or intelligence state, is frequently mentioned in passing and its misuse as a caricature of Arab politics is frequently, and appropriately, decried, actual state violence has received less systematic attention in recent scholarship.

This neglect, not wholly peculiar to the Arab world, has several causes. One is the very success of the regimes under scrutiny. The vast majority seem well entrenched, with the same coalition, often the same ruler (Assad, Hussein, Qaddafi), in charge for decades. Furthermore, no postauthoritarian democratically elected regimes have cleaned house by opening these windows.⁵ Another is that the internal dynamics of working repressive institutions are difficult to study. Data on indicators of state violence are notoriously poor,⁶ as governments do not release them. (Human rights groups have only recently begun to collect any documentation on the area.) For obvious reasons, few scholars willingly risk participant-observation: those who try to collect data too often become data, as did al-Naqeeb, who was imprisoned for publishing this book.⁷ In much of the Third World research on authoritarianism is a personal as well as professional undertaking. While this engagement with the material brings a unique richness, one unfortunate consequence is to reinforce parochialism, as writers focus on the immediate, pressing problems of their particular region to the exclusion of others. Thus, although scholars everywhere struggle with the same issue of authoritarianism, their work is rarely read by those of other regions—to the detriment of scholarship.

These books do not grow out of a school of literature on repression; indeed, they are largely inattentive to the early scholarship on the topic in the region. Rather, they come to many of the same concerns from very different directions. Consequently, they lack a coherent shared definition

⁴ E.g., J. C. Hurewitz, *Middle East Politics: The Military Dimension* (New York: Praeger, 1969); Eliezer Be'eri, *Arab Officers in Arab Politics and Society* (New York: Praeger, 1970); George Haddad, *Revolution and Military Rule in the Middle East: The Arab States* (New York: Robert Speller, 1971, 1973); Sydney Fisher, *The Military in the Middle East* (Columbus: Ohio University Press, 1963). Clement Moore's treatment of Tunisia in Huntington and Moore (fn. 3) takes on authoritarianism directly, as does Manfred Halpern, *The Politics of Social Change in the Middle East and North Africa* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1963), who devotes a chapter each to "neo-Islamic totalitarianism" and "communist totalitarianism."

⁵ The few exceptions suggest what rich material might be available if they did, e.g., Hanna Batatu's use of the pre-1958 Iraqi police files in *The Old Social Classes and the Revolutionary Movements of Iraq* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1978); or the unpublished records of state security forces in Kurdish Iraq presently in the hands of Middle East Watch.

⁶ See Robert Goldstein, "The Limitations of Using Quantitative Data in Studying Human Rights Abuses," *Human Rights Quarterly* 8 (November 1986).

⁷ Or Kanan Makiya, who originally published *Republic of Fear* pseudonymously.

of authoritarianism (for example, nondemocratic regimes) of the sort that Linz and others employ.⁸ They do, however, have a number of features in common. Their authors are interested in regimes that rule through a sustained pattern of force and fear: by the infliction of bodily harm and through the immobilizing threat of violence. This shared concern with force and fear has the advantage of directing one's attention to attributes regimes possess (violence) rather than lack (political pluralism), and it leaves open the question of the role of ideology or state institutions in sustaining that violence and fear.

Political violence, then, is central to the longevity of these regimes. On this the authors agree. It is the explanation for this violence and fear that varies.

ECONOMICS

Of these authors, al-Naqeeb, writing from a dependency perspective, most clearly explains authoritarian outcomes in terms of economic causes. Like many other writers from the region,⁹ he grounds his explanation for authoritarianism, especially for the preoil period, in the economic and, to him, consequent political processes accompanying colonialism. State violence is a function of state position in the world economy; authoritarianism is the culmination of a centuries-long economic transformation. Although oil states (the focus of this book) have their own peculiarities, al-Naqeeb believes some form of authoritarianism is the inevitable outcome of what he terms the bureaucratized dependent capitalism that is spawned by integration into the world economy.

Al-Naqeeb argues that each historical period of economic activity generates a particular political form. Unlike many authors whose histories of the area begin with oil (a point of great concern to Gulf writers who frequently feel they must explain that the area even had a preoil past),¹⁰ al-Naqeeb's analysis links pre- and postoil politics. Three periods are important to him. The first, lasting until the seventeenth century, was a flourishing economy based on speculative trade that linked coastal cities to interior tribes and to larger trade networks outside the Gulf. This trade carried Islam abroad, creating a unified culture. With the Ottoman

⁸ Linz deals with the definitional problem by focusing on what authoritarian regimes are not, defining these political systems as "nondemocratic," in Linz (fn. 3, 1975), 177. He thus examines the degree to which political pluralism and political activism are absent (pp. 179–80).

⁹ Notably Samir Amin, e.g., *The Arab Nation* (London: Zed Press, 1978).

¹⁰ E.g., Muhammad al-Rumaihi, *Beyond Oil: Unity and Development in the Gulf* (London: Al Saqi, 1983).

state a weak central political power, trade was able to thrive unstifled. Locally, desert and settled urban tribal leaders ruled in alliance, balanced against urban merchants. That this period was better fundamentally than the second period, that of British domination, is clear from the moral authority vested in the natural state, the term he uses to describe it. This economy was destroyed in the imperial era when Britain, in the guise of eliminating piracy and the slave and arms trade, replaced regional trade networks with a pearl-based European trade that Britain could control. The political counterpart of this new economy was the fragmentation of the region into small units dominated by increasingly dynastic, familial leaders kept in place by treaties, by force, and by a new political instrument—borders—that linked sovereignty to places, not people. The coastal cities lost power to the tribal hinterlands, where colonial penetration was weaker. Resistance to the new system flowed first from this hinterland (the Wahhabi movement) and later from the cities as Arab nationalism, which Britain manipulated by creating borders, limiting the free movement of dissidents, historically an important check on ruling authority.

The third period, giving rise to contemporary authoritarianism, began with oil. Oil revenues concentrated power in the state. Initially this state was benignly bureaucratic, but as it expanded, absorbing independent social institutions, it created opposition among remnants of the old labor force, bedouins, and pearl divers who had become educated middle-class bureaucrats in “air-conditioned ghettos.” At first the state tried to depoliticize these groups by buying them off. When these efforts failed, rulers increasingly resorted to terror, perhaps because owing to oil revenues, they had never been forced to develop other, more nuanced ways of dealing with opposition. Although oil revenues can postpone the day of reckoning, al-Naqeeb believes that the limits inherent in dependent state capitalism and the necessarily stifling and wasteful bureaucratic control that dependency creates ultimately absorb even these massive oil revenues and inhibit growth. The exhaustion of oil revenues ushers in a new phase of limited growth, which in turn generates new political pressures. The regimes contain this new pressure with more violence, for in essence they are now fighting history itself. Terror then leaves them more dependent on the West—the source of their instruments of terror.

Where earlier writers like Rostow saw a linear relationship between economic growth and democratization (and even later refinements on the argument, notably Huntington’s, saw the relationship as at least curvilinear), al-Naqeeb suggests the reverse.¹¹ If wealth led in any simple

¹¹ Walt W. Rostow, *The Stages of Economic Growth: A Non-Communist Manifesto* (Cam-

way to a decline in state violence, we would see this in the Gulf. Instead, we see more violence.

To al-Naqeeb, Gulf authoritarianism belongs to a family of authoritarian outcomes produced by colonialism; however, the particular state violence that emerges in the Gulf is also particularly characteristic of oil economies. With this last observation he links the older dependency-based writing to the new and growing body of literature on the *rentier* state, a literature which argues that oil, by freeing rulers from their dependence on domestic revenue sources, frees them from the demands for democratic participation that accompany the provision of taxes.¹² The result is a movement away from democracy: no taxation, hence no representation.

Al-Naqeeb and the *rentier* literature explain why the democratic impulse seems weak in oil states (arguably in all oil states, not just Arab ones). They do not explain why the impulse toward the violence and terror of authoritarianism would be any stronger. After all, oil states do not need to drive out opposition; they can *buy* it out, through social services, employment programs, and targeted handouts. Al-Naqeeb's argument concludes with a picture of authoritarianism painted in particularly dark, monochromatic hues. But whereas many regimes are undemocratic, they are not equally violent. Whether the state buys or beats one into silence matters to its citizens. The distinction between undemocratic and antidemocratic regimes, between those who silence the population with benign materialism and those who cow it with torture and murder, is deeply important to those living under such regimes. If oil-producing states are so inexorably hostile to political opposition, how can we account for variation, for example, the emergence and successes of the prodemocracy movement in Kuwait in the late 1980s and the more limited political openings in Saudi Arabia, Oman, Bahrain?

SOCIAL STRUCTURE

To answer this question, one must reexamine the social mechanisms that mediate economic change. One type of conventional wisdom on the social-structural determinants of state violence holds that repression is the state's natural (even understandable) response to the persistence of traditional, perhaps violently irrational ascriptive identifications with sect or clan, especially in the absence of such moderating modern identifications as a prodemocratic middle class rooted in the private sector.

bridge: Cambridge University Press, 1967); Samuel P. Huntington, *Political Order in Changing Societies* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1968).

¹² I develop this argument at length in Crystal, *Oil and Politics in the Gulf: Rulers and Merchants in Kuwait and Qatar* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990).

According to this thinking, then, state violence is the result of both an absence (the middle class) and a presence (ascriptive ties) in civil society.

Is there something about the prevailing social structures in the Arab world that somehow facilitates authoritarianism? On this, al-Naqeeb follows some of the conventional thinking. He believes that virtually no independent social groups exist in the Gulf anymore, having all been absorbed by the expanding authoritarian state. Al-Khalil paints an even darker picture of Iraq, where "party, state, and even civil society [merged] into a single, great, formless mass" (p. 41); in that world ubiquitous police informers undermine the solidarity critical to the preservation of old groups or the formation of new ones.

While it is true that independent groups are often banned and certainly hounded, other writers draw a more nuanced picture of Gulf society. Several scholars have challenged the received wisdom that civil society in the Arab world either generally or in particular states is remarkably weak.¹³ Their studies suggest that there is throughout the region a resilient civil society with a thriving associational life independent of effective state control. In Lawson's Bahrain, one finds flourishing sports clubs, cultural clubs, trade unions, chambers of commerce, and mourning houses. Kuwait, too, as other writers attest, has long had its clubs and professional associations, *diwaniyyahs* (the weekly meetings of circles of family and friends), religious study groups, its powerful chamber of commerce.¹⁴ The Iraqi occupation certainly demonstrated the vitality of civil society in Kuwait; mosques and elected food cooperatives easily transformed themselves into underground opposition organizations. Indeed, if these states are as authoritarian as al-Naqeeb and al-Khalil argue, then more groups may well exist—but underground or in hibernation, unknown to both the government and outside observers.

If it is not the general weakness of civil society, then perhaps it is the absence of key groups such as an organized middle class that explains

¹³ See Augustus Richard Norton, "The Future of Civil Society in the Middle East," *Middle East Journal* 47 (Spring 1993), and the other pieces in this special issue on civil society edited by Norton. In the pipeline are other articles from Norton's civil society project, a rumored forthcoming issue on the topic in *Middle East Report*, and possibly an edited volume on the same by Roger Owen and Tim Mitchell. For some of Owen's preliminary thoughts, see Owen, "State and Society in the Middle East," *Items* 44 (March 1990). See also Robert Bianchi, *Unruly Corporatism: Associational Life in Twentieth-Century Egypt* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989).

¹⁴ Fuad Khuri and Emile Nakhleh likewise demonstrate the rich associational life in Bahrain. See Khuri, *Tribe and State in Bahrain* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980); and Nakhleh, *Bahrain* (Lexington, Mass.: Lexington Books, 1976). On Kuwait, see Crystal (fn. 12); idem, *Kuwait: The Transformation of an Oil State* (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1992); and Shafeeq Ghabra, "Voluntary Associations in Kuwait: The Foundation of a New System?" *Middle East Journal* 45 (1991).

authoritarian outcomes. Authors who have looked at this question through the lens of the democratization literature have often suggested that authoritarianism grows from the absence in particular of a middle class, which, either because of its interests or its values, is supposed to be the natural ally of democracy.

The regional evidence on this is ambiguous, however. As in much of the Third World, there is a small middle class with private sector business interest; but its support for democracy is mixed. Alan Richards and John Waterbury in their recent survey of the region note the political ambivalence of the middle class: although its members sometimes pursue political liberalization, they can just as comfortably live with other choices and willingly embrace even authoritarianism "as long as they have a meaningful role in it."¹⁵ Kuwait's merchants have largely eschewed formal politics. Lawson shows that in Bahrain the merchants have sided with the ruling family. In Syria, according to Hinnebusch, they have devoted what oppositional energy they have to Islamist causes. In al-Khalil's Iraq they are silent.

Why is the middle class sometimes comprised of such reluctant democrats? One reason may be that its members want money even more than they want political participation. If they find nondemocratic ways to protect economic interests, they can live with that. In the oil states a trade of wealth for formal power is easier to achieve. The rulers may even aggressively promote it, as in Kuwait (as I have argued elsewhere). In Bahrain as well, Lawson argues, the wealthier traders acquiesced in autocracy both because they were frightened by the labor uprising of the 1950s and because the regime continued to protect their economic interests.

The dynamic is a little different in the poorer states. From Egypt's *infatih* to Iraq's more cautious opening, every Arab state experimented with economic liberalization in the 1980s, whether in response to economic crises generated by external changes in the international economy or to the parallel internal exhaustion of state-planning efforts that followed the Second World War. This liberalization generated everywhere a substantial group of people with shared wealth and private sector interests. As in the wealthier states, this group is not always at the forefront of the prodemocracy movements. Two recent studies of Egypt suggest an explanation. Joel Migdal, looking at Nasser's Egypt, argues that coercion occurs as a by-product of developmental breakdown.¹⁶ Migdal is interested in variations in state capacity and the prevalence of weak

¹⁵ Richards and Waterbury, *A Political Economy of the Middle East* (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1990), 437.

¹⁶ Migdal, *Strong Societies and Weak States* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988).

Third World states, weak in terms of the state's (in)ability to penetrate society, to extract (financial and other) resources, and to use those resources to implement policy as formulated. To the extent such states can regulate social relationships, they will do so. Migdal argues that the weakness is the result of colonialism, which crippled society but left in place local leaders who could challenge the state for social control in the village, where policies were actually implemented. These provincially based strongmen were more able than distant bureaucrats to meet the daily needs (from jobs to housing) of the rural poor and could not only ignore central authority but also manipulate state bureaucracies to enhance their local power—thereby further undermining state leaders. To accomplish anything, leaders had to turn to these middlemen to deliver the countryside. The power of entrenched local elites forced Nasser to retreat from his initial ambitious development plans into a politics of survival: preemptively reshuffling officials, favoring patronage over merit, and engaging in torture and murder when these efforts failed. Leaders, Migdal argues, resort to repression because they cannot exact compliance through old institutions and cannot create effective new ones. With the old rules unbearable and the new rules unenforceable, they abandon rules. Migdal's explanation does not account for the institution of the political police—Nasser established the repressive apparatus very early in his rule, before the development plans had a chance to fail—but it does tell us something about why that apparatus came to have so vast an authority in later years.

Yahya Sadowski makes a parallel argument about contemporary Egypt, arguing that businessmen, interested primarily in profit, are far more concerned with a regime's effectiveness than with its openness: they want a state weak enough to loot but strong enough to be worth looting.¹⁷ Sadowski wonders why Egyptian leaders, well-intentioned and relatively well-endowed, are so unable to implement policy, especially agricultural policies. His explanation lies not in political will, but rather in the weakness of the Egyptian state (its administrative inertia), in societal strength (the ability of social groups to organize and resist informally), in the nature of the links between the two, and in a set of inappropriately promarket policies forced on Egypt by Western creditors. Because businessmen profit more from lobbying the state than from competing in the market, they divert both entrepreneurial and financial resources from productive investment to rent seeking, that is, building political influence for economic profit. Eventually, they are so successful

¹⁷ Sadowski, *Political Vegetables? Businessman and Bureaucrat in the Development of Egyptian Agriculture* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution, 1991).

that they sabotage state policies. At that point desperate leaders resort to force, sending police into villages in a futile attempt to enforce rice quotas that its agricultural agents cannot.

Authoritarianism, then, is in part the result of both the kind of (state-led) economic development that occurred in the postwar era and of the resilience of old classes, the adaptability of the new, and their consequent ability to thwart state policy. Authoritarianism is not the result of successful efforts at economic development, but of partially successful (there must be a state development authority worth bleeding) but ultimately unsuccessful efforts. It emerges from economic crises as an unintended by-product of economic breakdown. It is not that authoritarian leaders are better able to handle such crises (indeed, many argue they are not) but rather that they are desperately attempting to regain control over policy implementation. Hence, the absence of a commercial elite does not account for authoritarianism any more than its presence necessarily checks it. Business owners are uninterested in launching a frontal pro-democratic attack on the regime because they fare far better subverting it: why fight for formal representation in a state they are successfully ransacking? But as private sector interests loot the state, they deprive it of funds critical for even the most basic development tasks, enfeebling it so thoroughly that state leaders see no alternative to force in their bid for compliance. The poorer the state and the more resilient and resourceful the commercial interests, the sooner the money runs out. The consequent developmental breakdown prompts economic liberalization, but political liberalization does not necessarily follow. When the public treasury is finally so thoroughly looted that economic development halts, private sector interests might rethink their support for the incumbent regime. At this juncture, they *might* support democracy in order to check immobilizing corruption—but they may find repression equally attractive. As Hinnebusch argues in the Syrian case, once state-led development fails, a limited move toward the market will occur and state elites may approach remnants of the old commercial class. Together they may pursue limited political liberalization, but because other classes will resist the new policy, the state will continue to use force against these new targets. Just as there is no direct connection between economic growth and democratization, there is no easy leap from economic to political liberalization. At this point these debates intersect with debates throughout the Third World on the nature of the relationship between economic and political liberalization.¹⁸

¹⁸ Three recent books take up the issue of economic liberalization in the region: Henri Barkey, ed., *Economic Crisis and Policy Response: The Politics of Economic Reform in the Middle*

The desperation of rulers in the face of social opposition is not the only social-structural explanation for authoritarianism. In his work on Syria, for example, Hinnebusch looks at the social bases of the regime. He argues that class divisions and conflict played the pivotal role in the rise of Baathist authoritarianism there. He is interested not only in the groups that might or might not support democratic regimes but also, and primarily, in those groups that sustain authoritarian ones.

Hinnebusch, like al-Naqeeb, roots his explanation in colonialism: integration into the world economy, he argues, first created a particularly hierarchical class structure and then prompted an agrarian crisis that deepened class conflict. After infiltrating the military, the Baath came to power as the voice of the rural poor, who had been impoverished by absentee landlords unwilling to concede any social reform; the Baath then linked these grievances to the concerns of newly politicized bureaucrats and commercial elites and, on taking power, consolidated its hold on the state by mobilizing these class forces. The regime rests on a village base; its programs still represent rural interests.

No regime rules through coercion alone. The authoritarianism Hinnebusch seeks to explain is populist, inclusionary, and participatory. The regime, he argues, responds to its core constituency, the rural peasantry, without formal representation. The state, although repressive, targets not the rural poor but the urban middle class, filling its jails with members who have organized into an Islamist movement. Brutal though it is, the Baath rules with a substantial social base, a constituency that supports the regime's economic and social policies and so tolerates, albeit reluctantly, the accompanying violence. If Hinnebusch is right, Syria may be more representative of many Third World regimes rooted in rural classes than observers who limit themselves to the cities would have us believe.

To Hinnebusch, states are captured by social groups, most importantly classes, that then use state resources to further their corporate interests and react, sometimes violently, against groups they cannot eliminate and will not accommodate. Hinnebusch's work demonstrates that today's popular wisdom—that tribe, sect, and family form the hard core of Arab

East (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1992); Tim Niblock and Emma Murphy, eds., *Economic Liberalization in the Middle East* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1993); and Iliya Harik and Denis J. Sullivan, eds., *Privatization and Liberalization in the Middle East* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1992). Steven Heydemann's work on the Syrian case very nicely sustains his conclusion that "economic liberalization can be, and frequently is, pursued without recourse to political liberalization. Syria's experience . . . calls into question the underlying assumption that economic and political reform are necessarily linked." See Heydemann, "Taxation without Representation: Authoritarianism and Economic Liberalization in Syria," in Goldberg, Kasaba, and Migdal (fn.1). See also his piece in Barkey.

culture—is as silly as the older notion that these traditional identities would collapse under the onslaught of modernization. Hinnebusch argues for the centrality of class even in a mosaic society. The Middle East has politics of interest as well as identity.

Hinnebusch does not, however, see communalism as simply class in disguise, nor does he see the two identities as exclusive. In this he follows the classic work of Hanna Batatu, whose class-driven argument is nonetheless highly sensitive to sect and ethnicity. "Power," Hinnebusch writes, "probably cannot be built without some recourse to the basic associative tissue of the culture. In a mosaic society, resort to such a strategy is certain to translate into the use of communalism to cement an elite core" (p. 10). The overlap of class and communal identities, coupled with the overarching Baathist ideology, which masks the communal (Alawite) origins of its adherents, allowed minorities to appear disproportionately at the head of a class-based movement. On attaining power, the group's identity can surface and its members can then use political power to exclude other communal groups, thus prompting communal revival.

Al-Naqeeb would agree. Even in the oil-producing states, where foreign labor inhibits the formation of a working class among nationals (united primarily by economic *in*activity), al-Naqeeb observes that some classes, notably merchants, retain their identity. While asserting that the underlying antagonism to imperialism was economic nationalism, he points out that it consistently took sectarian form (Ibadi, Zaidi, Wahhabi). Gulf rulers have always used communalism to inhibit class identification. Preoil patron-client ties between merchants and crews undercut class conflict and strengthened the leading families. The British tried to break Arab economic nationalism by encouraging new national identities. Today's authoritarian state rules by swallowing, but not digesting, communal groups (tribe, sect, family), leaving them intact but powerless. By incorporating social groups directly into the state, they strengthen their communal identifications. It is not the inherent strength of communal identities so much as their malleability and their intertwined relationship with class and other identities that makes them so resilient.

To Lawson, Bahrain's autocracy is also based on an antidemocratic coalition cobbled from diverse social elements. Like al-Naqeeb, Lawson grants a key role to integration into the world economy. Oil generated new classes, notably a well-organized and articulate working class, whose activism frightened the old merchant class into joining the ruling alliance. But Lawson extends al-Naqeeb's analysis by weighing the bureaucratic as well as economic transformations catalyzed by colonialism. Britain's preference for indirect rule led it to consolidate the power of

the Al Khalifah ruling family. British administrative reforms generated a new group of bureaucrats, which the family drew into the ruling coalition (prompting economic interests to coalesce around sector as well as class). Finally, the Al Khalifah added their tribal retainers to this mix of merchant elites and state bureaucrats. The resulting coalition was thus structured along both old and new forms of stratification: it was rooted in the social organization of the preoil era as well as in the transformations (economic and political) catalyzed by the oil industry. While economic interests, notably class, are critical to understanding the composition of the ruling coalition, it seems in Bahrain as in Syria that class interests are necessarily expressed through existing communal organizations which in the process change both kinds of identification. Thus, when the class-based labor movement of the 1950s broke down as a result of external police pressure, it fissured along sectarian lines. After that, opposition continued to assume sectarian form and adopt religious language. As in Syria, the regime does not hesitate to use force, even as it also manipulates sectarian rivalry, tribal authority, and bureaucratic control, as well as economic interest.

So the persistence of ascriptive categories does not account for authoritarianism. Indeed, although none of the authors suggests this directly, ascriptive identities may even provide one of the few checks on authoritarianism. If the key element of repression is unchecked authority—if the mark of a nonauthoritarian state is not merely whether the police can jail innocents but, more importantly, whether a phone call will release them—then these identities offer one of the few avenues of recourse. Affective ties may not be as effective as formal systems of recourse—appeal procedures, an independent judiciary—but they are far better than nothing: if you can't call a lawyer, you can still call your cousin. These informal ties that bypass the state and link individuals directly to the political elite are tempering. They also explain, in part, why authoritarianism seems more pronounced among communally different populations and, especially, when it is directed against communal minorities: call all his cousins, a Kurd still won't find one high in the Interior Ministry—but his Sunni classmate might.

Neither the absence of modern social structures nor the presence of traditional ones accounts for authoritarian outcomes. Rather, the answer is located partly in the form of economic development: these authors agree that state-led development prompts inevitable failure. Authoritarianism also arises from the groups that integration into the world economy generates or reinvigorates, and from the mosaic ruling coalition leaders forge from these diverse elements as they emerge. The social

dynamics behind authoritarianism are real but more complex than they first appear: it is not so much the weakness of civil society or of any one key group but rather the existence of very complicated social cleavages that explains authoritarian outcomes. Neither the basic forces that prompt authoritarianism nor the consequent degree of authoritarianism that emerges is peculiar to the Arab world.

THE PERSISTENCE OF AUTHORITARIANISM

IDEAS

Thus far, state violence has been explained largely as a by-product of economic and social-structural transformations. These writers largely agree that rulers resort to violence, at least initially, in an effort to sustain a form of economic development and to retain the support of key coalition members; they are not acting in the name of any larger vision.

Indeed, it almost seems that these leaders have no larger idea; nor do they seek to legitimize their rule by invoking one. They plant one simple thought firmly in the public consciousness: a fear that is as important as the violence itself. And it can be induced quite crudely, even by people who share, literally, no common language. To coerce, you need not convince. Indeed, one of the attractions of repression is that violence needs no justification to be effective: fear is reason enough. A key element of this fear is its arbitrariness. Uncertainty helps create the ambient terror, the immobilizing culture of fear, that depoliticizes. It is a temporary phenomenon: caught in the headlights of the state, the eyes eventually adjust (though not always in time). But at first it is quite powerful. These rulers have, after all, survived far longer than anyone (Western observers and Arab) predicted. Perhaps it is better to be feared than loved.

Al-Naqeeb takes this position furthest: Gulf rulers are so ruthless, he suggests, because they are morally bankrupt. They have no compelling ideas, only fear and materialism. But others *do* have ideas, whether in his opinion good (Arab nationalist, prodemocratic) or bad (Islamist). To al-Naqeeb, states move from demobilizing but otherwise benign authority to authoritarianism, in part in reaction to opposition ideas, which, beginning with Arab nationalism, simply fill the moral void left by the regimes.

But central as fear is, even the most violent, unpopular regimes sustain authority through some popular appeal. What sorts of ideas are most effective? Before we can tackle that question, we must debunk the received wisdom: that authoritarianism is the necessary outgrowth of Arab

or Islamic traditions.¹⁹ Some of the shriller pieces linking authoritarianism to unchanging Arab and Islamic cultural norms can simply be dismissed.²⁰ But even sympathetic writers like Hisham Sharabi, who links authoritarianism to (what he terms) broader neopatriarchal cultural values, fall into this trap of accepting the ruler's reading of tradition as genuine.²¹

It is certainly true that rulers have long invoked tradition to justify repression. (That, at least, is a tradition, but not a particularly local one.) It is also true that Western governments have been quick to accept "this is the way of our people" arguments, especially from strategic allies. But as Mayer points out, tradition enforces itself through moral, not physical, sanction. If you must beat people to make them comply, then it is certainly not a valued tradition they are complying with. To Mayer, the invocation of Islam, in particular, in defense of authoritarianism is a cynical appeal to religious sentiment by rulers trying with the help of conservative clerics to legitimize deeply unpopular rule. That it is unconvincing is suggested by the many Muslims imprisoned for expressing disagreement and by the fact that the dominant regional language of opposition is Islam.

Of these authors, only Samir al-Khalil assigns centrality to the ideas that sustain the authoritarian state. He locates Iraqi authoritarianism squarely in Baathist teachings, secondarily in the institutional inertia of security forces. Economic transformations do not explain it, he argues. Other regimes used oil revenues to support different choices: development and/or conspicuous consumption. Nor do social-structural factors explain the regime's endurance, since the regime has devastated civil society rather than built a base there.

The fault lies primarily in Baathism and in its core elements of Arab unity, freedom, and socialism. The central emphasis on a parochial *Arab* nationalism has two dangerous consequences. First, it encourages people to see the outside world, which will never be Arab, as an inevitably and implacably hostile force, an idea reinforced by the Baathist stress on freedom (from imperialism). Vigilance thus becomes a central and permanent part of Baathism. Second, more implicitly, the stress on the Arab element of Baathism renders universal ideas irrelevant. People are to take their bearings from Baathist ideologues who seek to remake soci-

¹⁹ This line of thought runs through many, many books on the region. For a recent example, see Elie Kedourie, *Politics in the Middle East* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992).

²⁰ E.g., David Pryce-Jones, *The Closed Circle* (New York: Harper and Row, 1989).

²¹ Sharabi, *Neopatriarchy: A Theory of Distorted Change in Arab Society* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988).

ety—completely and continually. The Baathists set out to change attitudes, not merely behavior, and create new people—hence their emphasis on education and youth (in fact many Baathists—Aflaq, Bitar—were educators). To change people they sought to isolate them, initially through fear, from traditional attachments of sect or family (women from husbands, children from fathers) and then reassemble them into new relationships under party tutelage. Unlike Sharabi, who sees the family structure as a pillar of authoritarianism, Baathists saw it as an obstacle to be undermined.

Fear plays an important role in this process and more than as a substitute for consent. People comply out of fear initially, but compliance breeds complicity. And from that complicity and attendant guilt grows an identification with the regime that confers on it a kind of legitimacy forged of grudging respect for power and guilty acquiescence in its expression. This legitimacy is important to the Baathists: a regime that bothers to pass public laws permitting it to pass secret laws (al-Khalil, 145) is deeply concerned with propriety! Finally, the regime consolidates support by relying on a widespread almost political stupidity: people do not think either very much or too clearly, because they are afraid to and because they have forgotten how. Baathist bombardments—years of misinformation, isolation, and lack of practice in political thinking—have left them too disoriented to trust their own moral instincts.

Al-Khalil's argument helps explain the depth of political acquiescence. It reminds us that even the most fearful regimes do not rely solely on force. Nonetheless, the argument leaves troubling questions unanswered. Why did Baathism, in the air throughout the Arab world, take root so well in Iraq? Why did its more compassionate elements not prevail? To answer these questions, one might profitably look to the region's other authoritarian Baathist state, and to the social forces that Hinnebusch uses to explain both the enthusiastic adoption of Baathism in Syria and the more grudging toleration for its excesses. Perhaps, as Hinnebusch demonstrates for Syria, there are in Iraq as well groups for whom the regime is if not wholly legitimate at least not unpopular. Certainly, as Batatu has ably demonstrated for an earlier period in Iraq, class and sectarian identity go far in explaining the embrace of communism and royalism in various quarters; why not Baathism?

To Hinnebusch, Baathism was useful primarily because it provided a cover. Class and sectarian interests hid behind its veil until they were sufficiently organized to emerge openly, at which time the regime could essentially abandon Baathism as a doctrine while retaining its shell. This view helps explain the gradual evisceration of Baathism over the decades

in a way that al-Khalil does not, although even he acknowledges the pervasive depoliticization: “A polity whose self-definition is that ‘everything is political’ today comprises one of the most apolitical populations around” (p. 61). Thus, the factors identified by Hinnebusch go a long way toward explaining the decline of Baathism in both states, from a set of lively ideas to slogans and propaganda.

By contrast, in the non-Baathist oil-producing states even the slogans and propaganda are absent. It would seem, as al-Naqeeb suggests, that the rulers have tried to discourage ideological politics and have *not* tried to develop an elaborate ideological justification of their rule, a set of anti-democratic ideas. Something ideological is going on, however, but it is deliberately subtle.

Two very different kinds of ideas, I think, sustain authoritarianism, in the Gulf especially but throughout the rest of the region as well. Neither developmentalism nor neotraditionalism is exclusive to the Middle East, but each assumes a local form there. Other ideas as well are sometimes invoked in defense of force—national security, even democracy (Algeria)—but these two are the most recurrent and powerful.

Developmentalism is the belief (an act of faith, not an empirical finding) that the state must play the central role in promoting economic growth and that, to that end, individuals and social organizations must relinquish power to it, allowing it the routine if temporary use of force against enemies. At the heart of developmentalism is the idea that the deprivation of certain political rights is both necessary and temporary and that only a coercive state can promote the economic growth that will eventually sustain political freedom or render it unimportant. While it would be unfair to dismiss the massive postwar efforts at economic planning and social reform, it would be equally foolish to take announced state goals at face value, especially given the track records. It is more useful to think of these development plans as intentionally depoliticizing promises. In the Middle East developmentalism has found its primary historical expression in Arab socialism—of which Baathism is one strand. It is this element of Baathism that explains both the depoliticization, which at first seems inconsistent with the ideological zeal that al-Khalil describes, and the regime’s obsession with maintaining a high standard of living, even through the first years of the Iran-Iraq War. Even al-Khalil concedes that the republic of fear oversaw one of the most dramatic improvements in living standards in Iraq’s history. In the end Iraq, despite Baathism, differs remarkably little from the materialistic depoliticization al-Naqeeb describes.

Rulers in the wealthiest states offer an upscale variant of developmen-

talism. Celebrating materialism and the regime's ability to realize its subjects' wildest shopping fantasy, these rulers work to move people from the marketplace of ideas to the marketplace. This government-sponsored orgy of consumption has indeed been largely embraced by the national populations of the oil-producing states, to the great and continuing consternation of their own social critics.

Alongside developmentalism one finds neotraditionalism as the second recurring ideological element of authoritarianism. Rulers throughout the region invoke tradition selectively, using whatever construction suits their present political needs (and often such constructions bear little resemblance to any actual historical experience). Each state celebrates a few Islamic traditions: those not cornered by the opposition, particularly those emphasizing political acquiescence rather than rebellion. As Mayer points out, of the many possible interpretations of rights consistent with Islamic teaching, rulers privilege those that grant the state the most unrestricted authority. These traditions are distributed through state-appointed imams in state mosques. Neotraditionalism is particularly evident in the Gulf, where tribalism is celebrated (although not all tribal identifications, nor the tribal norms of egalitarianism or the traditional bedouin disrespect for sovereign borders) and where rulers have created a monarchical memory where such a tradition never existed.

Both sets of ideas, developmentalism and neotraditionalism, aim simultaneously to legitimize and demobilize. They are deliberately diffuse because regimes are reluctant to set too clear a standard on which they can be judged for fear they will be. That these ideological appeals do not solve the crisis of legitimacy, however, is evident from the substantial force rulers must use alongside them. Developmentalist and especially neotraditionalist appeals fool many outsiders, unversed in the region's history and inexplicably more trusting of the public statements of other people's rulers than they are of their own, but it does not fool many within. Islamist groups across the region have won widespread public support for their challenge to rulers' readings of tradition, a point to which we shall return. Still, developmentalism and neotraditionalism do give rulers sufficient acquiescence to target their force more narrowly.

INSTITUTIONS

The nature of the institutions that apply force is the final factor to consider in explaining the endurance of authoritarianism. Al-Naqeeb and Hinnebusch begin with a view of states as being fundamentally shaped, if not captured, by social forces. Once captured, however, the dynamic changes, and regimes begin to use state institutions to restructure society.

Al-Naqeeb argues that in the Gulf the state grew by assuming new economic functions and extending its bureaucratic apparatus into once-independent social institutions and corporatizing them. After that, it relied on bureaucratic terror. Hinnebusch argues that although social forces brought the Baath to power, only state institutions—the party, the bureaucracy, and the army—keep it in power. The Baath used these institutions first to control and then to remobilize the rural population. Lawson notes the independent and new controlling function of the state administration that regulates labor unions, clubs, and religious groups.

These authors describe the workings of various parts of state bureaucracies but pay relatively little attention to the internal security forces, even while conceding them a pivotal role. Like many authors sensitive to stereotypes about the region, Hinnebusch is at pains to show that Syrian politics, although it involves force, also involves far more than force, and so he does not dwell directly on that element. Likewise, al-Naqeeb wishes to demonstrate that authoritarianism emerges from a complex economic and political dynamic, not from the soul of Arab culture.

It has been demonstrated that coercive institutions are not cultural artifacts, that they arise from economic and social conditions; nonetheless, once established these institutions may assume an independent internal dynamic. In some cases that dynamic is rooted in the origins of modern political police forces. Lawson links today's coercive apparatus to its colonial construction. He describes the emergence under British tutelage of a modern police force, largely manned by foreigners, and specifically the emergence of political police and of a special and particularly ruthless antiriot police comprised of tribal retainers. In other cases, the coercive state apparatus emerged in conscious rejection of its colonial predecessors. Al-Khalil demonstrates how the Iraqi police force, the creation of the Baath Party, was originally independent of the state. On taking power, Baathists restructured the security apparatus, staffing it with ideologues. Saddam Hussein personally oversaw the restructuring of the secret police in the 1970s. Consequently a different security service emerged: explicitly political and ideological.

Whatever their origins, once in place these institutions seem to develop their own momentum. Once force is used regularly, huge if mundane new bureaucracies of terror emerge to sustain it: political police, intelligence officers, censors, thugs. This apparatus has grown in recent decades with advances in technology: improved instruments of torture (a point to which al-Naqeeb alone is presciently sensitive) and the improved ability of the state to monitor and sanction a population increas-

ingly in its direct employ.²² Once established, these institutions seem remarkably durable, almost self-sustaining. Al-Khalil's picture of the Iraqi state in action suggests an Interior Ministry propelled by just this mechanical energy. Most of the Iraqi institutions organized around torture appeared *after* political opposition had been largely eliminated; the police simply created new enemies for them to target. Planned or not, a relentless state arises and simply will not stop. To a certain extent, repression is just a by-product of such institutional inertia. This is not unique to Iraq: rulers of all persuasions quickly recognize the advantages of an internal security force. Whatever its origins, the internal police is today a formidable presence in its own right.

The internal momentum of this security force is important though usually overlooked. To the extent that the security apparatus is driven by an independent, internal logic, then limited liberalization introduced by a repressive regime is likely to be a tactical maneuver to avoid rather than abet democracy and therefore unlikely to proceed very far. It would thus be wrong to view political liberalization in the conventional way—as a step, however small, toward democracy. To the contrary, political openings may have a very different meaning in regimes characterized by violence than in more benignly exclusive regimes and may indeed serve to shore up such regimes.

ALTERNATIVES TO AUTHORITARIANISM

HUMAN RIGHTS GROUPS

What alternatives are there to these regimes? The writers under review here suggest two: human rights groups and Islamist groups. Too often misunderstood as the younger sister of the prodemocracy movement, the human rights movement has a slightly different focus: to stop state violence. Dwyer's book is devoted to human rights activism in the region, specifically in Egypt, Morocco, and Tunisia. The work is organized around three themes: the public world of religion and social identity, the private world of the individual and personal liberty, and the connective space of private actors and groups working for public ends. Dwyer is especially interested in the cultural space between the family and state, and the ways in which intellectuals and activists concerned with human rights articulate issues of political entitlement within it. His optimism flows from what he sees as the emergence of human rights as a new

²² A point made by F. Gregory Gause III, "Sovereignty, Statecraft and Stability in the Middle East," *Journal of International Affairs* 45 (Winter 1992).

symbol with which individuals and groups increasingly transform their personal lives into political lives. In quoting extensively from intellectuals in the region, and allowing them to speak in their own voices, the book offers a glimpse of an emerging symbolic structure that is important in sustaining a social tension with authoritarianism.

Al-Naqeeb, too, sees a key role for the human rights movement, which he hopes will establish clearer boundaries between the state and society and greater independence for social institutions, especially those that transcend communal identities. Also like Dwyer, al-Naqeeb believes education gives rise to new expectations but, al-Naqeeb warns, it does not remove the communal identities that he feels thwart those expectations. Mobility closure—the inability to rise because key private and public sector posts are earmarked for powerful families—generates frustration. In a contracting economy this frustrated drive for social mobility cannot be sublimated in material improvement. Al-Naqeeb hopes that these frustrations will express themselves in prodemocracy movements that will usher in a new era of weak political rule, strong cultural unity, and a thriving private sector and independent civil society. In other words, he envisions a new era very reminiscent of his first era, the pre-colonial *natural* state, when political authority was weak and the economy, civil society, and cultural life consequently flourished. Al-Naqeeb the activist is hopeful, but his own argument provides little grounds for hope.

The human rights movement faces formidable obstacles. As Dwyer notes, one is its historical association with the West, an association regimes stress in an effort to marginalize the movement. Another is its elitism. Dwyer's faith in the movement rests on shaky pillars: the mobilizing power of ideas and especially intellectuals' "growing influence on other people's views as a result of the expansion of print and electronic media" (p. 9). He does not test this remarkable proposition: his interviews are exclusively with intellectuals (among other sampling problems). Nor is there any evidence (in northern Africa or elsewhere in the region) linking societal levels of education to successful human rights efforts (although the efforts themselves may be linked). Although this elite bias accurately reflects the voice of the movement, it is not the voice of those for whom it purports to speak. Both they and the rulers know that.

Nonetheless, Dwyer raises an important point. The human rights movement offers a clear, alternative set of ideas about authority. To understand its attraction, one should recall al-Naqeeb's important if overstated point: the ideas rulers offer are often not very good, and people

see through them. One reason for the appeal of the human rights movement, then, is that it has ideas that compete well with those offered by the rulers: ideas about how politics ought to be, about what constitutes just behavior on the part of the rulers, and on how that justice should be secured.

ISLAMIST GROUPS

Clearly the dominant opposition voices in the Arab world are Islamist (using the term broadly, to encompass a range of groups who consciously organize political opposition by invoking Islamic vocabulary and principles). Islamist and human rights groups are not mutually exclusive as their rhetoric might sometimes suggest. Islamists, of course, have a very practical interest in supporting human rights: they are the favored target of state violence throughout the Muslim world; their rights are the first to be trampled. But Islamist and human rights groups also share an important, although often unacknowledged, common intellectual ground. Both oppose an element at the core of authoritarianism: arbitrariness—even an unhappy set of rules allows you to order your daily life. At the heart of both movements is a denunciation of arbitrary government and a promise to replace it with the rule of law (God's or men's). Human rights groups aim to change not just the players but also the rules and (as Migdal might say) the rules about rule making. So, too, the Islamists. The condemnation of government corruption, the call for governmental accountability, the emphasis on rule of law (Islamic) to end the arbitrary rule of capricious leaders: these are as clearly critiques of authoritarian rule as anything the human rights movement puts forward—but without the Western taint.

In opposition, then, Islamist groups offer a substantive critique of the authoritarian state. But would they act any differently in power? On this the authors part company. Al-Naqeeb will have nothing of the Islamists, seeing them as no better than the current rulers. Mayer is more cautious. Certainly Islamist ideology is no guarantee that rights will be protected: her own cases—some of the most authoritarian regimes in the region—demonstrate that. She examines the efforts of the region's few Islamic regimes: postrevolutionary Iran, Pakistan under Zia al-Haq, and the Sudan (the only Arab case) under Numairi, to codify and implement an Islamic set of human rights principles.²³ The result, she concludes, has

²³ She analyzes the following texts: the Iranian constitution; Jama'at-i-Islami's founder Abu'l A'la Mawdudi's *Human Rights in Islam*; the Azhar-affiliated Islamic Research Academy of Cairo's *Draft of the Islamic Constitution*; the Universal Islamic Declaration of Human Rights; and Sultanhussein Tabandeh's *A Muslim Commentary on the Universal Declaration of Human Rights*.

been a systematic limitation rather than expansion of the civil and political rights found, for example, in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and related international law. She argues, however, that the primary explanation for this authoritarianism lies less in Islamic teachings, which she finds rather flexible on the issue of rights, than in the rulers' cynical manipulation of Islam. She is concerned, however, about the apparent inflexibility in Islamic positions on minority and women's rights. Clearly, Islam can be manipulated to serve regimes that for entirely other reasons trample peoples' rights. However, she leaves open the door for the emergence of more progressive Islamist regimes that might protect these rights. Hinnebusch pushes that door open a bit more. Syria's Islamist opposition has called for a more open political system, promising elections, party competition, an independent judiciary, and freedom from torture and repression. It has specifically promised to protect the rights of religious minorities (in part a reaction to the sectarian favoritism of the present regime). Hinnebusch does not dismiss this as mere rhetoric. Dwyer is still more optimistic, pinning his hopes on the progressive Islamists who alone can cast human rights in local terms. He believes, not unreasonably, that a successful movement must resonate with local values and invoke local traditions—and Islamic ones are the most evocative. Islamist groups are the only opposition with sufficient mass support to ever attain power. Their progressive wing, he believes, is the best hope for a less authoritarian regime.

Islam clearly has values and traditions that are compatible with the kind of rights protections that the prodemocracy liberals endorse: equality, respect for the rule of law, a "tradition of tolerance of debate and argument" (even if, as Mayer points out, that tradition is sometimes repudiated by Islamists today; p. xiii), respect for private property, a concern for social justice. Certainly democrats have invoked consultation and other Islamic traditions to justify formal participation in decision making and the freedoms that sustain that participation. But ideas alone cannot defeat a well-armed state. Will these opposition groups ever come to power? The human rights movement, deeply reformist, has neither the strength nor the inclination to overthrow regimes, and the Islamist groups are the security state's top priority. No Arab regime appears ready to allow Islamists to come to power peacefully. For a time it looked as if Algeria might take the peaceful route, but it did not. If it had, it might have revealed the extent to which the practice of democratic politics was itself tempering. The necessary give-and-take of forming legislative coalitions or the exigencies of collecting the trash and paying the teachers might in practice temper an Islamist opposition whose positions

on issues had been informed in the oddly ideal world of complete powerlessness. Observers have been very divided on this issue; unfortunately, it looks as if we will not soon learn the answer. Nor can Islamists defeat today's security apparatus in street battles. The question of which sort of Islamists will eventually come to power may depend on how they come to power. If not through elections, there remains one more direction for change: from within the state.

The state, of course, has always been its rulers' worst enemy. The military in the Middle East once overthrew rulers with great regularity. The development of a truly effective security apparatus may also prove ultimately a threat to the regime. If, as Migdal and Sadowski have suggested, the developmentalist state can be sabotaged, so too perhaps can the security state. Like any other bureaucracy, it is penetrated by groups with their own corporate interests. The fact that the state absorbs social groups intact, as al-Naqeeb argues, suggests that those groups have some independent strength: something to offer as well as something to gain. They retain some autonomy and interests that may allow them to resist later on. Al-Naqeeb and Lawson note the tribal base of Gulf armies and police. Syria's army was Alawite based before the Baath came to power. Once loyal to the rulers, these groups can over time develop and pursue interests independent of the rulers. Even groups the state creates can peel off to join the opposition. Quite unintentionally, the state itself may promote bureaucratic interests that can become privatized and threaten those who created them. The opposition's best strategy may thus be to destroy these authoritarian regimes from within, by infiltrating and privatizing their security forces. If the state security forces are not beating up the people the rulers want them to, this could undermine the effectiveness of rulers possessing even state-of-the-art security technology. (Since privatization would not eliminate repression, this would, of course, offer little consolation to those who do run afoul of the security forces.)

CONCLUSIONS

The literature on authoritarianism neglects the Arab world and suffers accordingly. Together the authors reviewed here offer a more nuanced explanation of the breakdown of dialogue between state and society, regime and opposition. Their work is accessible and could be read productively by scholars of any region.

As these books demonstrate, the Arab world offers several important, generalizable lessons. In notable contrast to journalistic writing on the

region, where everyone is a cultural theorist, political scientists who study the Middle East are far more likely to use historically based economic and social-structural arguments and share certain notions embodied in dependency literature (although most depart from the core dependency arguments at some point) than to build on notions of Arab culture. On economic factors, as al-Naqeeb demonstrates, there is no simple trajectory states must follow from poor and autocratic to rich and democratic. Nor is there an easy and necessary connection between economic liberalization and authoritarian decline: authoritarian regimes may implement economic reform through a new set of authoritarian alliances and emerge from economic crises strengthened. On social-structural factors, the writers here grant central importance to colonialism and to the class system and particular classes it produced. At this level of generalization, most authors in the field (even those who eschew the connection) have accepted much of the basic dependency perspective, at least for the colonial period. But class is not the sole determinant of political outcomes. Hinnebusch, Lawson, and al-Naqeeb show that authoritarian regimes have survived by manipulating the complicated cleavages of Arab societies—sect and tribe, as well as class. The resilience of repressive institutions has also clearly contributed to the persistence of authoritarianism. The internal momentum of these institutions may be rooted in the circumstances of its creation, sometimes colonial, sometimes post-colonial. But whatever its origins, the repressive apparatus, with its various security forces, is characterized by an inertia that independently sustains authoritarianism. Finally, these cases suggest the peculiar role that ideas may play in sustaining authoritarianism. To survive, these regimes must not only embrace repressive institutions but also create an atmosphere of public toleration, although not necessarily affection, for the use of force. They do so through what many at first mistake for culture: developmentalism (really an ideology of indefinitely deferred gratification) and neotraditionalism. These appeals, to an unreal past and a surreal future, provide the ideological underpinnings of authoritarianism.

To guard against the notion that states are either repressive *or* democratic, we need a better understanding of those circumstances in which regimes choose violence over accommodation, force over dialogue. That is what these books provide: insights with passports, approaches that can be tested in other parts of the world. Both violent and accommodating state responses to opposition are patterned, and those patterns need to be studied in a way that is historically grounded as well as comparative. The study of authoritarianism now needs to build on regional works

from the Middle East and elsewhere and to explore their common themes. Such a project, drawing its theoretical inspiration from cases throughout the world, will help integrate an unfortunately dispersed literature and deepen our understanding of the worldwide phenomenon of authoritarianism.