

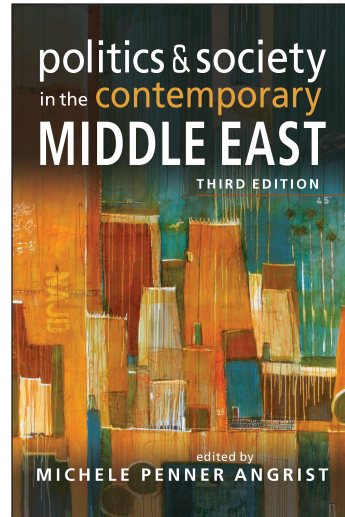
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in the Contemporary
Middle East

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Michele Penner Angrist

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Contents

<i>List of Tables and Figures</i>	vii
1 The Making of Middle East Politics, <i>Michele Penner Angrist</i>	1
Part 1 Contemporary Dynamics	
2 Governments and Oppositions, <i>Mona El-Ghobashy and Michele Penner Angrist</i>	33
3 The Impact of International Politics, <i>F. Gregory Gause III and Curtis R. Ryan</i>	53
4 Political Economy, <i>Pete W. Moore</i>	75
5 Civil Society, <i>Sheila Carapico</i>	99
6 Religion and Politics, <i>Jillian Schwedler</i>	121
7 Identity and Politics, <i>David Siddhartha Patel</i>	145

8	Gender and Politics, <i>Diane Singerman and Danielle Higgins</i>	167
Part 2 Cases		
9	Algeria, <i>Yahia H. Zoubir</i>	189
10	Egypt, <i>Joshua Stacher</i>	217
11	Iran, <i>Arang Keshavarzian</i>	253
12	Iraq, <i>Fred H. Lawson</i>	287
13	Israel, <i>Alan Dowty</i>	309
14	Jordan, <i>Curtis R. Ryan</i>	339
15	Kuwait and the United Arab Emirates, <i>Michael Herb</i>	363
16	Palestine, <i>Nathan J. Brown</i>	395
17	Saudi Arabia, <i>Gwenn Okruhlik</i>	417
18	Syria, <i>Fred H. Lawson</i>	445
19	Turkey, <i>Marcie J. Patton</i>	473
Part 3 Conclusion		
20	Trends and Prospects, <i>Michele Penner Angrist</i>	505
	<i>References</i>	513
	<i>The Contributors</i>	529
	<i>Index</i>	533
	<i>About the Book</i>	551

The Making of Middle East Politics

Michele Penner Angrist

As we approach the third decade of the twenty-first century, headlines from the Middle East are dramatic and worrisome, and often characterized by upheaval and change. There has been the years-long civil war in Syria that has caused domestic disaster and sparked massive movements of internally displaced persons and refugees. There have been famine and desperation in Yemen in the face of a complex military conflict stemming from internal divisions and exacerbated by external intervention. A Saudi Arabian journalist was murdered and dismembered inside the walls of his own embassy. Turkey—once a model for the possibility of democratic politics in the region—has veered toward dictatorship. There is a steady drumbeat of reporting on human rights abuses in Bahrain, alongside restrictions and crackdowns on peaceful oppositional actors in Egypt. How should such headlines be understood? What conclusions can we draw about the peoples and politics of this important region of the world? In this book, we seek to provide key historical knowledge and a set of analytical anchors to ground readers as they track, assess, and make sense of future developments.

Politics in the Middle East has not always been so turbulent. In fact, its contemporary political history has alternated between stability and heady change. Imperial control by European powers gave way to an epoch of transformations in the middle of the twentieth century as the states of the Middle East became sovereign entities. After the dust from this upheaval settled, for decades, citizens of the region were governed for the most part by authoritarian regimes that appeared stable despite the failure of those regimes to deliver security, prosperity, and dignity to their

peoples. Appearances were deceiving, however, and, beginning in December 2010 and throughout 2011, demonstrators confronted dictators across the region, demanding more accountable, more participatory, and less corrupt governance. After decades in office, leaders fell from power in Tunisia, then Egypt, then Libya and Yemen, while another plunged Syria into civil war in an effort to cling to power. Political turbulence also struck the region's monarchies, as citizens in Bahrain, Morocco, and Jordan called for thoroughgoing changes to the rules of the political game.

The early days of the Arab Spring raised the hopes of many that freer, more participatory political systems would be built in its wake. Near the ten-year anniversary of the start of those uprisings, however, the balance sheet is sobering. One can be reasonably optimistic about the prospects for more competitive, freer politics in just one country: Tunisia. After a brief, dramatic experiment with free elections that elevated a member of the Muslim Brotherhood to the presidency, Egypt reverted to a military-led authoritarian regime when armed forces commander Abdel Fattah al-Sisi felled the government of Mohammad Morsi and obliterated the Muslim Brotherhood. Syria, Yemen, and Libya sank into conflict as a result of domestic divides and the interventions of outside actors. Anarchy in these places generated humanitarian catastrophe and enormous refugee flows while widening opportunities for extremist nonstate actors such as al-Qaeda and the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS) to operate. Authoritarian leaders who survived the Arab Spring scrambled to buttress their rule, with several destabilizing effects—including heightened regional sectarianism.

Contributors to this text introduce readers to the contemporary comparative politics of the Middle East. Scholars of comparative politics study the internal political dynamics of countries. In this volume, we will explore how Middle Eastern governments are structured, who opposes those governments and why, and how oppositions work to bring about change. Some comparativists tackle this task by deeply mastering the internal politics of one country. Others study a country's domestic politics while comparing and contrasting what they find with what is happening in other national contexts. Comparativists typically ask themselves what political trends are similar across countries—but also what differences exist, and why? Why did several authoritarian regimes buckle in the face of Arab Spring uprisings, while many more survived? Some buckled relatively peacefully, while significant blood was shed elsewhere—why? Why did the Arab Spring thus far lead to more democratic politics only in Tunisia? What historical, social, and economic factors explain the similarities and the differences that we observe? This is the stuff of comparative politics. We learn about

broader political science processes by studying a collection of countries' politics individually as well as in relation to one another. This text allows the reader to do both.

Let us now turn to defining the Middle East. This turns out to be a complex task. The moniker *Middle East* was not attached to the area by its residents. Rather, beginning in the nineteenth century, political elites in Europe and the United States coined the terms *Near East* and *Middle East* to refer to (various delineations of) territories that lay between Western Europe and the Far East (China, Japan, etc.). Because the term *Middle East* was bestowed on the region by outside powers according to their own political, strategic, and geographic perspectives, it has been criticized as West- or Euro-centric. Still, it is in wide use today and typically refers to the geographic region bounded to the north by Turkey, to the east by Iran, to the west by Egypt, and to the south by the Arabian Peninsula (see Figure 1.1). In addition to Egypt, Turkey, and Iran, the Middle East includes Saudi Arabia, Yemen, Oman, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Qatar, Bahrain, Kuwait, Israel, Palestine, Jordan, Iraq, Syria, and Lebanon.

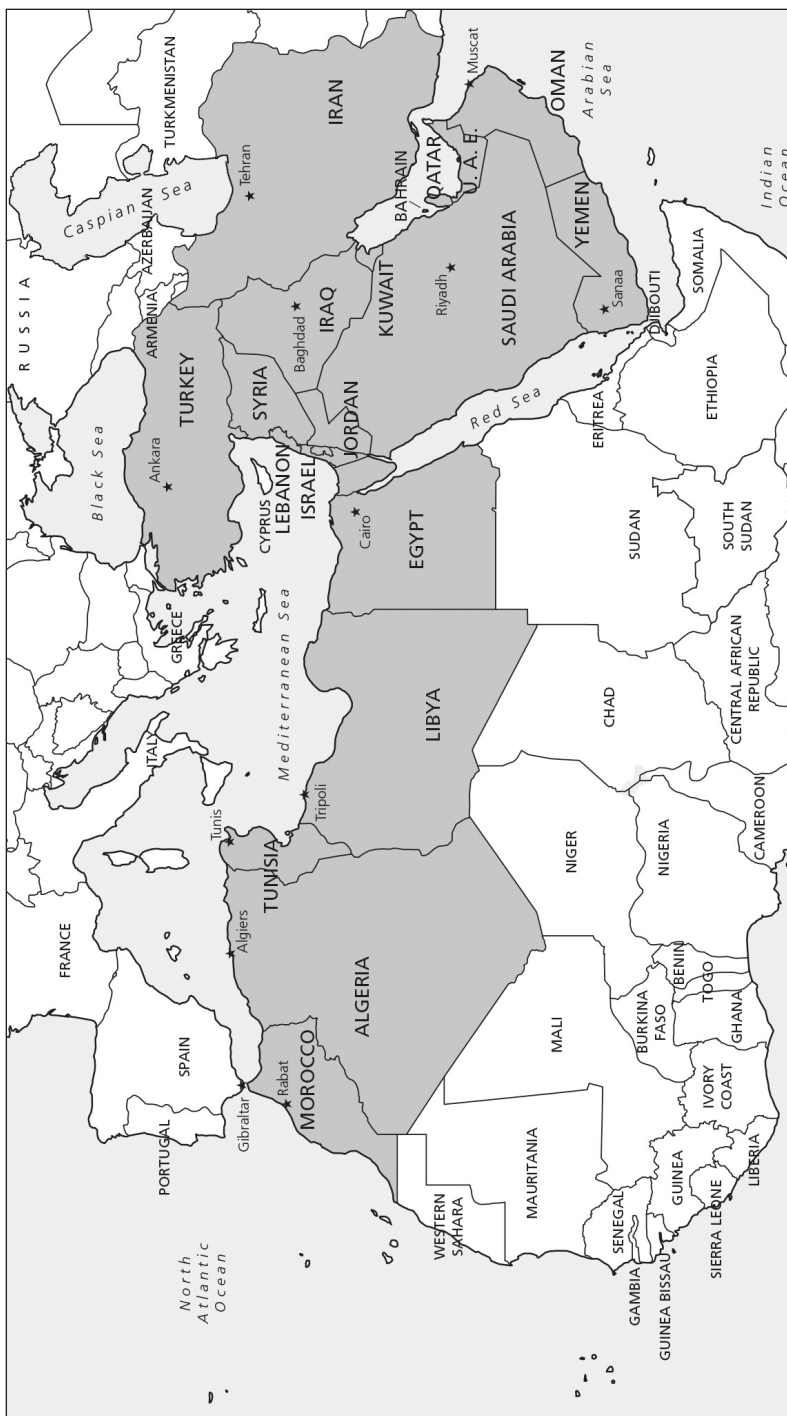
The material in this book also encompasses North Africa, referring to the northernmost tier of African countries that border the Mediterranean Sea: Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, and Libya. These countries share a great deal in common with the political dynamics of the countries of the Middle East. MENA is a commonly used acronym referring to the Middle East and North Africa thus delineated, and readers will encounter it in this text. When used in this volume, the term *Middle East* refers to the countries of the Middle East and North Africa (those highlighted in Figure 1.1).

An Overview of States in the Region Today

The Middle East encompasses twenty countries that are home to approximately 500 million people. Most of these countries are Arab, meaning that their citizens speak the Arabic language and perceive that they have a shared historical, cultural, and social experience as Arabs. Three of the twenty countries are not Arab, however. The national language of Israel is Hebrew, and while many Israelis speak Arabic, the historical, cultural, and social bond for the majority of Israelis emerges from their identity as Jews. Turkey and Iran also are not Arab countries. Turks are a different ethnic group and speak Turkish, a language that linguistically is unrelated to Arabic. The dominant language in Iran is Farsi, which—although written in Arabic script—also is unrelated to Arabic.

Many unwittingly think that the “Middle East” and the “Muslim world” are one and the same. Certainly, the majority of people living in

Figure 1.1 Map of the Middle East and North Africa



all Middle East countries save Israel are Muslim. At the same time, religious minorities—especially Jews and Christians—are to be found in most of them. For example, Christians of a variety of denominations (Maronite Catholic, Greek Orthodox, and others) make up perhaps as much as 40 percent of the Lebanese population, while nearly 10 percent of Egyptians are Coptic Christians. Meanwhile, the Muslim world extends well beyond the Middle East. Muslim-majority countries are found in sub-Saharan Africa, Central Asia, and South and Southeast Asia. Thus the Middle East is just a small slice of the Muslim world in terms of both geography and population. Indeed, a majority of the world's Muslims live outside of the Middle East.

Table 1.1 provides key statistical information about the countries of the Middle East. In terms of sheer size, Algeria, Saudi Arabia, Libya, and Iran are the largest Middle East countries; Bahrain and Palestine, by contrast, occupy tiny pieces of territory. In terms of population, Egypt, Turkey, and Iran are the region's powerhouses, with populations upward of 80 million, while tiny Bahrain has a population of less than 2 million. More than 90 percent of Israelis, Kuwaitis, and Qataris live in urban areas, compared to only 35 percent of Yemenis and only 43 percent of Egyptians. Populations are growing most rapidly in Iraq, Palestine, and Yemen, where the average number of births per woman is above 4; by contrast, seven Middle East countries have fertility rates at or below the replacement rate of 2.1 births per woman. On a per capita basis, the economies of Qatar, Kuwait, the United Arab Emirates, and Israel produce the most. Yemen is the region's poorest country measured in terms of economic output, followed by Palestine and Egypt. Finally, the proportion of adult females who are literate ranges from just 38 percent in Iraq, to 68 percent in Algeria, to 98 percent in Qatar. There is thus considerable variation in the region when it comes to land area, population, and indicators of development.

A central focus of the discipline of comparative politics is the type of governmental system a country has. Often referred to with the term *regime*, a governmental system refers not to the particular group of individuals filling key offices at a given point in time—this is simply a government—but rather more broadly to the processes by which leaders are selected (election? dynastic succession? military coup?) and how those leaders in turn exercise power (in consultation with others according to the rule of law? individually and arbitrarily? somewhere in between?). For decades and until the Arab uprisings of 2010–2011, systems of government in the Middle East were, almost without exception, authoritarian. Indeed for the last quarter of the twentieth century and the first decade of the twenty-first, the region was a global outlier.

Table 1.1 Statistical Snapshot of Middle East Countries

Country	Land Area (sq. km)	Population 2016	Urban Population (% of total) 2016	Fertility Rate, Total (births per woman) 2015	GDP per Capita (constant 2010 US\$) 2016	Literacy Rate, Adult Female (% of females ages 15 and above) 2005–2015
Algeria	2,381,741	40,606,052	71	2.8	4,828	68
Bahrain	771	1,425,171	89	2.1	22,436	92
Egypt	995,450	95,688,681	43	3.3	2,724	67
Iran	1,628,760	80,277,428	74	1.7	6,734	80
Iraq	434,320	37,202,572	70	4.4	5,696	38
Israel	21,640	8,547,100	92	3.1	33,673	n.a.
Jordan	88,780	9,455,802	84	3.4	3,258	97
Kuwait	17,820	4,052,584	98	2.0	35,251	95
Lebanon	10,230	6,006,668	88	1.7	7,144	88
Libya	1,759,540	6,293,253	79	2.3	4,579	82
Morocco	446,300	35,276,786	61	2.5	3,196	59
Oman	309,500	4,424,762	78	2.7	17,071	86
Palestine	6,020	4,551,566	75	4.1	2,571	95
Qatar	11,610	2,569,804	99	1.9	66,411	98
Saudi Arabia	2,149,690	32,275,687	83	2.6	21,395	91
Syria	183,630	18,430,453	58	3.0	n.a.	74
Tunisia	155,360	11,403,248	67	2.2	4,265	72
Turkey	769,630	79,512,426	74	2.1	14,117	93
United Arab Emirates	83,600	9,269,612	86	1.8	40,864	92
Yemen	527,970	27,584,213	35	4.1	680	45

Source: World Bank, *World Development Indicators*, various years (Washington, DC).

Notes: For GDP/capita, the Libya figure is from 2011; the Bahrain and Oman figures are from 2015. n.a. indicates data are not available.

While every other area of the world saw (at least some) dictatorships fall and democracies erected in their stead, dictatorships in the Middle East stood firm. The prevalence and endurance of authoritarian rule in the region prior to 2011 are a crucial context for understanding contemporary politics in the Middle East.

What, generally, does authoritarian rule look like? Leaders are not selected through free and fair elections, and a relatively narrow group of people control the state apparatus and are not held accountable for their decisions by the broader public. Although there is variation from case to case, political rights and civil liberties are generally quite limited. *Political rights* refer to norms such as free and fair elections for the chief executive and the legislature; the ability of citizens to organize in multiple political parties and compete in elections free from interference by the military or other powerful groups; the absence of discrimination against cultural, ethnic, religious, or other minority groups; and transparent, accountable, noncorrupt government. *Civil liberties* refer to freedom of expression and belief, freedom of association and organization, the rule of law, and individual rights.¹ Table 1.2 lists the rankings given to Middle East countries for political rights and civil liberties in 2010 and 2017 by Freedom House, a prominent nongovernmental organization that gauges such rights globally.

Table 1.2 demonstrates that in 2017 only two countries—Israel and Tunisia—scored between 1 and 3 on the political rights scale and could be considered relatively free. Meanwhile, eighteen of twenty countries scored a 5, 6, or 7—on the “not free” end of the scale. While many countries have slightly better civil liberties scores, the overall civil liberties picture is very similar to that for political rights. The table also gives us a sketch of the medium-term impact of the Arab Spring on the region: eleven countries’ political rights scores remained identical from 2010 to 2017; scores worsened in seven countries (Bahrain, Kuwait, Lebanon, Turkey, Yemen, the UAE, and Palestine); and scores improved in only two countries (Jordan and Tunisia).

While most Middle Eastern regimes thus remain authoritarian, they are not homogeneously so. Dictatorship takes more than one form in the area. The two main variants are monarchies and republics. The monarchies are led by kings whose reigns are not conferred by elections; instead, when incumbents die or become incapacitated, leadership is passed down hereditarily through ruling families. In monarchies, power rests in and emanates from the ruling family and those elites that are allied to it. The region’s monarchies are Saudi Arabia, Qatar, the UAE, Morocco, Kuwait, Bahrain, Jordan, and Oman.

Table 1.2 Political Rights and Civil Liberties in the Middle East According to Freedom House

Country	Political Rights		Civil Liberties	
	2010	2017	2010	2017
Algeria	6	6	5	5
Bahrain	6	7	5	6
Egypt	6	6	5	6
Iran	6	6	6	6
Iraq	5	5	6	6
Israel	1	1	2	3
Jordan	6	5	5	5
Kuwait	4	5	5	5
Lebanon	5	6	3	4
Libya	7	7	7	6
Morocco	5	5	4	5
Oman	6	6	5	5
Palestine ^a	6/6	7/7	5/6	5/6
Qatar	6	6	5	5
Saudi Arabia	7	7	6	7
Syria	7	7	6	7
Tunisia	7	2	5	3
Turkey	3	5	3	6
United Arab Emirates	6	7	5	6
Yemen	6	7	5	6

Source: Freedom House, <http://www.freedomhouse.org>.

Notes: Scale is 1–7, with 1 denoting “most free” and 7 denoting “least free.”

a. First value is for the West Bank; second value is for the Gaza Strip.

The region’s authoritarian republics are led by presidents, whose terms in office are conferred by elections. Elections are not free or fair, but they are held, usually at regular intervals, both for the chief executive position and for national parliaments. In these republics, political power typically emanates from powerful presidents who command the loyalty of preponderant political parties, are backed by the military, and have access to large amounts of state revenue that can be used to cultivate clients and co-opt opponents. Historically, Algeria, Egypt, Iraq, Syria, Tunisia, and Yemen were the region’s authoritarian republics. US and coalition forces dismantled Saddam Hussein’s Baath Party regime in Iraq after 2003 and replaced it with a more competitive electoral regime. The Arab Spring brought significant change to several other authoritarian republics, with Yemen and Syria sinking into violent conflict and Tunisia managing a remarkable—if fragile—transition to democracy.

In Algeria, Egypt, and the monarchies of the Middle East, the position of president or king is formidable. Opposition parties and movements have no realistic chance of forcing turnover at the level of chief executive. This is not the case everywhere in the Middle East, however. Israel holds free and fair multiparty elections for seats in its parliament, and the prime ministerial position has changed hands regularly over the past many decades. In Turkey, with a handful of exceptions, multiparty elections have determined which parties sit in parliament and make up the cabinet. In addition, the offices of the prime minister and president have rotated among several political parties on the left and the right of the political spectrum. Lebanon and Iraq also hold multiparty elections to determine the composition of parliaments and cabinets, which then set policy in those countries. The Freedom House scores for Lebanon, Turkey, and Iraq are substantially below those for Israel, however, because politics in these countries is characterized by corruption, discriminatory practices, and/or the presence of armed militias, depending on the case. Still, on the basic matter of whether or not incumbent chief executives are able to be replaced through elections, these countries have been host to a politics that is freer than in the monarchies and authoritarian republics. At the same time, as Chapters 2 and 19 will show, it is not clear that Turkey will remain in this category given the increasingly authoritarian tendencies of its president, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan.

Iran's political system constitutes a category of its own, one that features both democratic and authoritarian elements. In the Islamic Republic of Iran, citizens go to the polls regularly to elect a president and parliament. Historically, such polls have been fair and have featured competition among several political factions. The presidency too has rotated among these factions over the course of the past generation. Yet, a body called the Council of Guardians constrains these elected institutions by vetting all would-be candidates for office. The council also can veto legislation passed by these elected bodies. Ultimate power lies in the hands of Iran's (indirectly elected) Supreme Leader, who controls that country's armed and security forces, judiciary, and media. Iran's 2017 Freedom House political rights score was a 6, indicating that the authoritarian elements of Iran's political system overpower and marginalize its democratic elements.

This is an introductory taste of contemporary political dynamics in the Middle East. The preceding chapters go into much more detail, both by theme and by country. As a foundation for what is to come, the remainder of this chapter explores a set of crucial historical legacies that bear on Middle East politics and society today.

Essential Historical Background

Islamization and Arabization

How did the Middle East come to be predominantly Muslim in terms of faith and predominantly Arab in terms of language and ethnicity? The establishment and spread of Islam began in the seventh century C.E., and it was this process that also Arabized large portions of the region. Prior to the rise of Islam, two empires dominated the Middle East. The Sasanids ruled what is today Iraq and Iran, while the Byzantines ruled the Anatolian Peninsula (modern Turkey), northern Syria, and parts of North Africa, Egypt, and those territories that lie immediately east of the Mediterranean Sea (modern-day Lebanon, Israel, and Palestine). In 610 C.E., a young caravan trader named Muhammad began receiving revelations. He would become the Prophet of Islam, a new faith that was born in Mecca and Medina (cities in what is today Saudi Arabia).

Islam was strictly monotheistic, which stood in contrast to the pagan beliefs of the majority of the tribes that inhabited the Arabian Peninsula at the time. It exhorted members of those tribes—which often were at war with one another—to see themselves as brothers instead, and to submit to the one true god, Allah. Islam also preached the importance of justice and of caring for the weak in society (the poor, the sick, orphans, and the like). Although Muhammad encountered considerable resistance from those to whom his prophecy represented a threat, by the end of his lifetime he had built a new Muslim community, commanding the loyalty of most tribes in the Arabian Peninsula. Upon his death, the realm of Islam exploded geographically. Arabian tribesmen, with zeal inspired by their new faith and by the prospect of power and wealth, carried the banner of Islam northward into the Fertile Crescent (today's Lebanon, Syria, Iraq, Jordan, Israel, and Palestine), then eastward to Iran and westward across North Africa and even into Spain. These expansions destroyed part of the Byzantine and all of the Sasanid empires and paved the way for the creation of two successive Islamic empires: the Umayyad Empire (661–750 C.E.), with its capital at Damascus, and the Abbasid Empire (750–945 C.E.), with its capital at Baghdad.

Prior to Islam's emergence, Arabic-speaking tribes lived primarily in the Arabian Peninsula. With the Arab-Muslim conquests into the broader Middle East and subsequent building of empires, the pace of Arab peoples moving into the region picked up. Arabic, the language of the conquering empires, became the language of written communication with regard to administrative, religious, and cultural affairs. Non-Arabs gradually adopted the tongue as a result. Over an even longer period of time than Arabization consumed, a majority of people in the lands conquered

by Muslim armies became converts to the new faith. These were not forced conversions, however. These Islamic empires allowed Jews, Christians, and Zoroastrians to practice their religions unimpeded as long as they paid special taxes. Conversions occurred slowly, out of political expediency (to be of the same faith as the ruling elite had its rewards), due to commercial interest (Islamic law and networks facilitated trade), as well as out of an acquired shared cultural and social experience.

The Ottoman Empire

The last great Islamic empire was the Ottoman Empire, founded by Turkic tribes beginning in the thirteenth century and centered on the imperial capital Istanbul. At their peak in the mid-sixteenth century C.E., the Ottomans controlled a breathtaking swath of territory, extending from deep into southeastern Europe, eastward to the Iranian border, southward through the Levant and parts of the Arabian Peninsula, and across North Africa to the Moroccan border. The Ottoman sultan controlled a professional army and sat atop a substantial bureaucracy that administered imperial affairs. He was also the caliph of the Islamic umma (community or nation) and used Islam to legitimate his rule. Sharia (Islamic law) constituted a core element of Ottoman law, and the ulama (clerics) staffed the empire's court and educational systems. While this was an Islamic empire, other religious communities were allowed considerable leeway in terms of freedom of worship and control over local community affairs such as education and social services.

Two things are crucial to understand about the Ottoman Empire. First, it represented the last era in world history when the Middle East constituted a politically, economically, and militarily more powerful entity than “the West” (meaning, for that time period, Europe and Russia). During the 1500s the Ottomans challenged Venice, Italy, and Spain for supremacy in the Mediterranean. The Ottoman Empire also laid siege to the Habsburg capital of Vienna twice—once in 1529 and again in 1683. While it was victorious neither time, it did implant a pronounced sense of threat among Europeans.

The second critical point is that the tables began to turn in the seventeenth century as European states became increasingly powerful while the Ottoman Empire weakened. European powers successfully challenged the Ottomans for control over lucrative trade routes and penetrated the Ottoman Empire with European-controlled operations that imported European products and exported raw materials. These developments harmed the Ottomans economically, reducing revenues accruing to Ottoman coffers. Politically, modern nation-states emerged in Europe, as did nationalism, defined by James Gelvin as the “belief that because a

given population shares (or can be made to share) certain identifiable characteristics—religion, language, shared history, and so on—it merits an independent existence” (2008: 56). Nationalist ideals undermined the multiethnic Ottoman Empire by inspiring many of its subject peoples to attempt to secede. Finally, by the turn of the nineteenth century, European armies had become more professional and deadly, utilizing new technologies, tactics, and organizational strategies. Meanwhile, internal to the empire, the quality of sultans was declining and the central government was weakening relative to provincial power-holders. Military morale and discipline too were waning, in part because the inflation that struck Eurasia at this time devalued troops’ pay.

Ottoman elites were painfully aware of this turn of events. In the late 1600s the Ottomans lost territories to Russia, the Habsburgs, Venice, and Poland. In 1656 the Venetians destroyed the Ottoman naval fleet. In the late 1700s the Russians repeatedly and successfully advanced on the Ottomans. European culture increasingly influenced Ottoman elites, who imported architectural and painting styles, furniture—even tulips. By the 1800s, nationalist movements had arisen in Serbia, Greece, Romania, and Bulgaria, and these successfully seceded from the Ottoman Empire.

Ottoman elites were alarmed, of course, and as early as the 1600s began to ponder how they could reform the empire in order to better compete with their European rivals. As the Ottoman community engaged in deep debates, one camp concluded that if the Ottomans were to become a match for the Europeans, they would need to adopt European innovations in military affairs (training and tactics) and politics (parliaments). A second camp reached a quite different diagnosis of the problem, however, concluding that Ottoman weakness was a reflection of declining faith. The answer, then, was a return to a reinvigorated and purified Islam, not the mimicking of European ways.

The former camp won out, for a time anyway. During the late eighteenth century and through much of the nineteenth, Ottoman sultans attempted to radically restructure the empire’s operations to defend against further European encroachment. They changed how their subjects were taxed, both to increase loyalty and to increase revenues flowing to the empire’s coffers. They created an Ottoman parliament, modeled after the British and French institutions—in the hope that more inclusive, consultative governance would make for improved subject loyalty and better policy. They brought in European advisers to train new army units in modern warfare techniques, and they overhauled their educational, legal, and bureaucratic systems.

It would be too little, too late. The reforms implemented during the nineteenth century faced significant internal resistance, and thus their

effectiveness was limited. What's more, the Ottomans could not stem the tide of nationalism and the desire of many Ottoman subject peoples to have their own state. When World War I ended, the Ottomans were on the losing side and would soon be extinguished as an empire.

European Imperialism in the Middle East

The Ottomans' painful experience of decline vis-à-vis an increasingly powerful set of European countries was only the first of a series of conflicts between the Middle East and Europe. The second was an era of direct rule by Britain, France, and Italy over much of the territory of the Middle East. Table 1.3 illustrates which European power controlled what Middle East territory (identified by contemporary country names). Sometimes geostrategic affairs motivated the colonizers. Britain's footprint in the Middle East turned on two main concerns: securing access to regional oil supplies and protecting key access routes to India, the "jewel" of the British Crown. Depending on the case, France generally was motivated by its relations with Christian communities and by commercial interests. Intra-European rivalry and the prestige that was attached to overseas colonies also motivated these powers.

Table 1.3 European Imperialism in the Middle East

Country	European Power	Type of Authority	Years
Algeria	France	Colonial	1830–1962
Bahrain	Britain	Treaty	1880–1971
Egypt	Britain	Colonial	1882–1936
Iran	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
Iraq	Britain	Mandate	1920–1932
Israel	Britain	Mandate	1920–1948
Jordan	Britain	Mandate	1920–1946
Kuwait	Britain	Treaty	1899–1961
Lebanon	France	Mandate	1920–1943
Libya	Italy	Colonial	1911–1951
Morocco	France	Colonial	1912–1956
Oman	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
Palestine	Britain	Mandate	1920–1948
Qatar	Britain	Treaty	1916–1971
Saudi Arabia	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
Syria	France	Mandate	1920–1946
Tunisia	France	Colonial	1881–1956
Turkey	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
United Arab Emirates	Britain	Treaty	1892–1971
Yemen, South	Britain	Colonial	1839–1967
Yemen, North	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.

Note: n.a. indicates not applicable; territory was never controlled by a European power.

The degree to which European powers took over the reins of power in their respective holdings varied substantially. In part this depended on the type of intervention. Generally, holdings acquired prior to World War I were colonies, territories that European powers conquered unapologetically and exploited for their own purposes in the context of global great-power competition. Holdings acquired after World War I were awarded by the League of Nations under the mandate system in the context of new international norms regarding European control over distant lands. Where they acted as mandatory powers, Europeans ostensibly had an obligation to protect natives' welfare and prepare them for independence. In the Persian Gulf, British imperialism took the form of treaty relationships negotiated with the ruling families of the small states that lined the coast.

In what ways did European power impact the region during this era? On one end of the spectrum, in Kuwait and the UAE, for example, Britain controlled foreign policy and port operations while leaving domestic political arrangements largely alone. In Morocco, the French took over domestic affairs—but did so by penetrating and harnessing existing indigenous institutions (like the monarchy), leaving them intact. By contrast, in Algeria, France uprooted and resettled tribes, destroyed domestic religious institutions, confiscated land, settled more than 150,000 Europeans, and ultimately annexed the entire country (as three separate French provinces). Even more dramatically, at the end of World War I, France and Britain literally drew the modern-day boundaries of Lebanon, Syria, Iraq, Jordan, and Israel/Palestine; engineered their respective political systems; and—in Iraq and Jordan—selected which kings would be placed on their respective thrones.

European rule had substantial socioeconomic impacts as well. France and Britain used their colonies as export markets for cheap European manufactured goods that competed with locally made products, hurting domestic artisan and craftsman classes. European powers also relied on their imperial holdings as a source of raw materials (cotton, wheat, etc.). These dynamics integrated the Middle East into global markets in a dependent manner as exporters of agricultural or primary (raw material) products, a fact that was an obstacle to future development and prosperity. While European control shaped the economic trajectories of Middle East states in key ways, the European powers' disposition toward their Middle East subjects was one of superiority and contempt. France and Britain legitimized their holdings in part with the idea that they had a "civilizing" mission in the region. They looked down on Islam and facilitated the entrance of Christian missionaries into Middle East societies. Another key impact of the colonial period was a domestic divide that emerged in Middle Eastern

countries between urban elites who often adopted European ideas and culture, on the one hand, and the rural masses who remained more oriented toward Arab-Islamic culture, on the other.

Several countries in the region escaped the yoke of direct European rule. Turkey was the successor state to the Ottoman Empire in its core Anatolian Peninsula territory. While European powers had clear designs on that land in the wake of World War I, an Ottoman army officer named Mustafa Kemal organized Turks into a national movement and fought an independence war to establish the borders of what today is Turkey. In Iran, the Qajar dynasty ruled from the late 1700s through the early twentieth century, when power shifted into the hands of Reza Khan and subsequently to his son, Mohammad Reza Shah Pahlavi. Saudi Arabia is the product of the statebuilding efforts of the Al Saud tribe, which beginning in the early 1700s sought to expand and consolidate its power in the Arabian Peninsula. The campaign had its ups and downs, but by 1932, Saudi Arabia was a nation-state and has been independent ever since. Prior to its unification in 1990, Yemen had existed as two separate countries for over a century and a half: Britain ruled South Yemen as a colony, while North Yemen escaped European control. The Gulf state of Oman did as well.

Creation of the State of Israel

If Europe was the source of imperialist policies that left a strong imprint on the borders, politics, economies, and cultures of the Middle East, so too was it the birthplace of the modern story of the emergence of Israel. In the late nineteenth century, in the face of various forms of discrimination against Jews—including violent pogroms against Jewish communities in Russia and Eastern Europe—a man named Theodor Herzl began to advance the Zionist case that Jews constituted a nation, one that needed its own state in order to ensure that Jews could live in security and dignity in a land where they constituted a majority. He and like-minded Jewish leaders worked to make this vision a reality. They built institutions to raise awareness about and funds for the project, and they sought diplomatic support. Zionist diplomatic overtures ultimately found success in Britain, which, in the 1917 Balfour Declaration, lent its support to the creation of a Jewish national “home” in Palestine.

That support took concrete form at the close of World War I when the League of Nations portioned out the lands east of the Mediterranean Sea to France and Britain as mandates. The legal document establishing the Palestine Mandate included the language of the Balfour Declaration. The pace of Jewish migration from Europe to Palestine, which had already begun in the late 1800s, began to pick up, with major waves of

migration occurring after World War I and in the 1930s. Tens of thousands of European Jews purchased land, settled, and began building new lives, new communities, and new institutions (including collective farms, a labor federation, schools, hospitals, and social services) in Palestine. At that time, the vast majority of the inhabitants of Palestine (90 percent in 1917) were Arab. They saw Zionism and the influx of Jewish immigrants as threatening to Arab political, economic, and cultural interests.

From 1920 to 1947, Britain attempted to manage what would prove to be an intractable conflict. The number of Jews in Palestine grew, as did the amount of land owned and worked by Jews. A rise in Arab landlessness and poverty followed, as the Arabs who had worked the lands purchased by Jews were forced to find employment elsewhere. Frustration and despair grew within the Arab community. Violence between Jews and Arabs broke out in the late 1920s and again in the mid-1930s. The economic strains of the Great Depression, and then Adolph Hitler's execution of millions of Jews during World War II, sharpened the conflict. In 1947, Britain, exhausted by the war and unable to reconcile Jews and Arabs, took its leave of Palestine and turned the problem over to the newly created United Nations.

The United Nations proposed that the territory of the Palestine Mandate be partitioned into two states, with Jerusalem—a city dear to Jews but also to Arab Christians and Muslims—as an international protectorate. The proposed Jewish state would have enclosed 55 percent of the land at a time when Jews represented approximately 32 percent of the population and owned 6 percent of the land. While the Jewish community accepted the UN proposal, Palestinian Arabs saw it as unjust—and rejected it. This impasse would mean war. With the international community unable to effect a solution, those on the ground prepared to fight. During the mandate years the Jewish community in Palestine had built a military organization, the Haganah, which now went into action seeking to secure the territories the partition plan had designated for the Jewish state. On May 14, 1948, Zionist leaders proclaimed the State of Israel. Almost immediately, the surrounding Arab countries invaded. Israel would be victorious in this war, extending the lands under its control beyond what would have been its borders according to the UN partition. The conflict between the newly created Jewish state and its Arab neighbors continues to the present.

Pathways from Colonialism

Israel was becoming a reality in the Middle East at about the same time that Middle Eastern populations were preparing to throw off the yoke of European domination. Egypt and Iraq achieved independence rela-

tively early, in the 1930s (see Table 1.3). A wave of independence achievements then came during and after World War II, with Lebanon, Jordan, Syria, Libya, Morocco, and Tunisia becoming independent—in that order—between 1943 and 1956. Kuwait, Algeria, and (South) Yemen became independent in the 1960s, and Bahrain, Qatar, and the UAE followed in 1971.

Forcing the French and the British to take their leave was a task that varied in difficulty depending on the setting. Kuwait and the UAE had it relatively easy, as British domestic political discontent with the costs of imperialism prompted a more or less unilateral withdrawal. More often, independence was the product of nationalist movements that arose across the region, called on France and Britain to depart, and put pressure on them to do so. These movements tended to take the form of political parties—for example, the Wafd in Egypt, the Neo-Destour in Tunisia, and Istiqlal in Morocco. In Jordan, Iraq, Syria, and Egypt, nationalist movements used a variety of approaches to get their point across. These ranged from simple entreaties and signature-gathering campaigns, on the one hand, to demonstrations, protests, strikes, boycotts, and sometimes even riots, on the other. The goal was to show France and Britain that attempting to retain control over their Middle East holdings was going to be an increasingly difficult endeavor—and that the costs of staying outweighed the benefits. In all of these cases, the approaches seemed to work. France and Britain came to the negotiating table and granted independence to these countries—all with little to no violence.

Nationalist movements in Tunisia and South Yemen faced comparatively stiffer resistance from France and Britain, respectively. In these cases, nationalist contests dragged on longer and involved more violent methods, including bombings and assassinations. By far the most bitter independence battle, however, took place in Algeria. France was willing to let go of Syria—a League of Nations mandate that it was officially obliged to prepare for independence—without too much of a fight after having been the mandatory power there for approximately a generation. But Algeria was a colony, not a mandate, and France had been in control there for well over a century. Algeria had been politically integrated into France, and tens of thousands of French citizens had settled there. When in the 1950s a nationalist party called the National Liberation Front (FLN) took shape, it met strong French resistance. Algerian independence came in 1962, but only after a bloody, eight-year war that took some 700,000 lives.

In the wake of the physical departure of the imperial powers, however, the extent to which Middle Eastern countries were independent was debatable. Often, nominally independent states maintained political,

economic, and military ties to their former masters. While this may seem counterintuitive—after all, there was a great deal of ill will and anger toward the Europeans—newly independent Middle East countries were often too weak to do otherwise. In some instances, they were simply unable to force Europeans to leave completely. For example, while Egypt technically became independent in 1936—becoming a member of the League of Nations that year—Britain still controlled Egyptian foreign policy and the Suez Canal. In other instances, leaders maintained those ties more voluntarily, understanding that they could benefit from ongoing political-military support from and trade relations with their former masters. The postindependence Iraqi regime, for example, received significant British military aid, equipment, and assistance, and allowed Britain to retain basing rights in the country. In Jordan, a British officer, Sir John Bagot Glubb, remained commander of the Jordanian army until 1957.

In many cases, these postindependence ties to European powers either endure to the present day or have been redrawn to the United States, which, with France and Britain exhausted at the end of World War II, rose to become the preeminent Western power and a pivotal external player in Middle East politics. Morocco, Tunisia, and Algeria maintained close political, economic, and cultural ties with France, for example. Jordan maintained close ties to Britain, but also cultivated increasingly strong links with the United States over time. Mohammad Reza Shah Pahlavi made Iran a key US political and military ally in the region. And in the Gulf, Saudi Arabia and the smaller Gulf states came to depend on the United States for security in the wake of the British departure.

In Syria, Egypt, and Iraq, however, lingering ties to European powers after independence did not survive the powerful domestic dissent they generated. In those societies a power struggle emerged that pitted conservative, established elites who had served France or Britain and presided over enduring ties to their former masters against a younger, “challenger” generation (often civil servants, workers, students, and peasants) that disagreed with conservative elites on a variety of issues. While conservative elites were content with the economic status quo, challenger forces—often organized into socialist and communist parties—pushed for land reforms, the nationalization of industry, and other redistributive policies designed to address the skewed distribution of wealth they saw in their societies. Challenger forces also strongly objected to conservative elites’ enduring ties to Europe. For challengers, European imperialism was a humiliating chapter in the history of their nations, one they could not close the book on until those ties were broken. Such ties were especially difficult to stomach in the wake of

British support for Zionism. When in 1948 Arab armies were humiliated by Israel, tensions reached a breaking point. Challenger forces blamed conservative elites for failing to shepherd national economic, political, and military development in ways that would have allowed Arab states to stand truly independent and militarily victorious in the region.

What followed in Syria, Egypt, and Iraq was a series of coups that reoriented domestic politics and foreign policy for decades. For challenger forces, the task at hand was figuring out a way to oust conservative elites from power. While multiparty elections were being held during these years, conservative elites (rightly) felt threatened by challenger forces and either rigged elections to ensure conservative victories or simply ignored their results if they were not favorable. Given that the electoral route to power was closed, challengers turned to the army—where officers and recruits often were sympathetic to challenger views and wielded the coercive power to overthrow existing regimes. Military coups unfolded in Syria in 1949, in Egypt in 1952, and in Iraq in 1958. The political systems established in their wake cut ties to the West, established ties with the West's Cold War rival, the Soviet Union, and pursued redistributive economic policies.

Regime Structure and Disposition After Independence

What did Middle East political systems look like and prioritize after the dust had settled in the wake of the imperial powers' departure? There were three basic types: single-party dictatorships, monarchical dictatorships, and democratic (or semidemocratic) regimes.

Single-party systems. Political systems dominated by single, preponderant political parties emerged in Syria, Iraq, Egypt, Algeria, Tunisia, and South Yemen—all of which were republics ruled in dictatorial fashion by presidents. In most cases, presidents hailed from militaries, which had been key institutions of upward mobility for the lower classes. The political support of the military was a core anchor for these political systems. But preponderant, ruling political parties also served presidents in their exercise of power. These parties were massive, with systems of branches organized throughout these nations' territories as well as, often, in universities and workplaces. Presidents typically drew from party cadres to fill key positions in the bureaucracy in order to ensure that those in charge of implementing policy were loyal. Presidents also used these parties to distribute patronage (jobs and other material perquisites such as food, attractive terms for loans, etc.) to supporters, to socialize young people into the ideals of the regime, and to mobilize people into demonstrations of public support for the regime on important political

occasions. Finally, presidents typically structured elections such that their ruling parties won either all or the vast majority of parliamentary seats—making parliaments rubber-stamp institutions.

These regimes adopted a state socialist economic development agenda. They used the power of the state to restructure and grow national economies: they nationalized numerous industries; they invested capital in industrialization campaigns; they implemented land reform programs that broke up the estates of large landholders and redistributed them to peasants; and they built massive state bureaucracies to manage the economy and deliver social welfare services to the masses. Their twin goals were to augment national power by building a thriving economic base and to see to it that all citizens—not just the elite—benefited.

The single-party dictatorships in the postimperial Middle East subscribed to the ideals of pan-Arab nationalism as articulated by Egypt's president Gamal Abdel Nasser. He blamed the West for facilitating the emergence of Israel and for dividing Arabs into a number of artificial states after World War I. This weakened Arabs when, according to Nasser and many intellectuals in the region, Arabs in fact constituted their own nation and should have had their own comprehensive state. To restore Arab strength, and to return the whole of the Palestine Mandate to the Palestinians, the divisions wrought by European interference would need to be overcome, and Arab political systems would need to be unified. How this would be accomplished in practice was never clear—and an experiment with Egyptian-Syrian union begun in 1958 ended in failure just three years later—but the ideals resonated among Arabs, whose hopes were raised that a renaissance of Arab power and dignity would soon be in the offing. As these single-party systems matured through the 1950s and 1960s, the Cold War was building into a crescendo of bipolar competition. With the United States evolving into Israel's most important ally, the Middle East's single-party regimes moved in the direction either of strategic neutrality or of alliance with the Soviet Union.

Monarchies. In the Middle Eastern monarchies—Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Kuwait, the UAE, Oman, Morocco, Jordan, and Iran—the right to rule stemmed not from elections but rather from claims about the legitimacy of specific families' indefinite monopoly on power. Depending on the country, such claims revolved around a family's historic role in founding the state (Saudi Arabia and Kuwait) and/or a family's religious lineage (several ruling families trace their ancestry to the Prophet Muhammad). In addition to claims about the legitimacy of family rule, royal families relied on a variety of other mechanisms for staying in power.

Trusted individuals (often family members) headed up the army, the secret police, and the cabinet. And the oil-rich monarchies used portions of their wealth to provide their subjects with elaborate social welfare benefits (free schooling, health care, etc.) to bolster political loyalty.

Like the single-party dictatorships, Middle Eastern monarchies tended to pursue state-led economic development. The state took the lead in making investments and building industry. The (many) monarchies with oil wealth used those resources to establish large public sectors and extensive social welfare services. Yet while the monarchies followed economic strategies similar to those of the single-party regimes, they did so without the populist and redistributionist ethos that often characterized the single-party cases. Neither did the monarchies subscribe to pan-Arab nationalist ideals. Iran is not an Arab country and thus was marginal to that discourse. The Arab monarchies were threatened by Arab nationalism, in part because in two of the states that advocated Arab nationalism most ardently, Egypt and Iraq, monarchs had been dethroned in very recent memory. Moreover, the republican and socialist ethos of those regimes was anathema to traditional ruling royal families and their wealthy, elite political allies.

While Egypt, Syria, Iraq, and Algeria courted Soviet assistance during the Cold War years, Middle East monarchies tended to ally with the United States. Iran under Mohammad Reza Shah Pahlavi (1941–1979) became a US client in the Middle East, advancing US foreign policy objectives in the region and buying US military equipment. Resource-poor Jordan relied on the United States for economic assistance and security guarantees. The oil-rich monarchies relied on the United States for security guarantees. Rivalries between the Middle East's single-party dictatorships and monarchies constituted an important Cold War dynamic in the region.

Democratic and semidemocratic systems. In just three countries did citizens have the capacity to vote incumbents out of office through elections: Israel, Turkey, and Lebanon. All three countries' structures featured a president (with Lebanon's and Turkey's having more constitutional authority relative to Israel's primarily ceremonial post) alongside a prime minister and cabinet constituted from an elected parliament. In all three countries, parliamentary elections were organized in such a way that parliaments reflected domestic constituencies in proportional fashion. Israel and Turkey had multiparty systems wherein parties gained parliamentary seats proportionate to the percentage of the vote share each won in elections. In Lebanon, electoral districts and seat allocation practices were designed to represent the country's myriad religious and sectarian groups.

Israel and Lebanon were democratic, while significant military influence in politics made Turkey semidemocratic.

Israel and Turkey followed state-led economic development trajectories similar to those pursued by single-party and monarchical regimes. In both Israel and Turkey during the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s, the state played a major role in the economy—owning substantial assets and directing the priorities and pace of development. Lebanon was a regional exception during this time as it preserved a largely market economy during the heyday of state socialism in the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s. In terms of foreign policy, Israel and Turkey were part of the Western “camp” during the Cold War—Turkey as part of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) alliance, and Israel with its superpower backer, the United States. Lebanon was split between forces seeking to orient politics toward the West and others seeking to make Lebanon part of the pan-Arab nationalist fold; this divide was one of many stresses that sent Lebanon into fifteen years of civil war beginning in 1975.

The (Poor) Performance of Founding Regimes Through the Late 1970s

While state socialist economic development, Arab nationalism, and the confrontation with Israel dominated the rhetorical and policy landscape beginning in the 1950s, by the 1970s their collective failure had become evident. State socialist economies did not produce growth and prosperity for the Middle Eastern countries that adopted them. Instead, many countries faced bankruptcy and the need, beginning in the 1970s and 1980s, to radically restructure their economies. Neither did pan-Arab nationalism produce its intended effects. Intra-Arab rivalries—including those between the conservative monarchies and the more radical single-party republics—undermined the dream of Arab unity and strength. The failure of pan-Arab nationalism was underlined—and the ideology discredited—when Arab states suffered another devastating loss to Israel in the 1967 Six Day War. Nearly two decades after Arab states had failed to vanquish the forces of the Jewish state in 1948, in the 1967 war Israel captured the Golan Heights from Syria, the West Bank and East Jerusalem from Jordan, and the Gaza Strip and Sinai Peninsula from Egypt.

These developments undermined the legitimacy of Middle Eastern regimes—especially the single-party republics. Many analysts have argued that Nasser and the leaders of other single-party states (Syria, Iraq, Algeria, etc.) had made an implicit bargain with their peoples: the regimes would provide their citizens with economic prosperity and victory over Israel—but not political participation, free elections, and accountable government. Now, with regimes failing to deliver on their

part of this bargain, citizens in the Middle East became politically restive. Because the monarchies had promoted neither populism nor pan-Arab nationalism, they were not as jeopardized by their failure. Still, the resource-poor monarchies were in difficult economic straits. And all Arab monarchies' citizens saw themselves at least in part as Arabs rather than just "Saudis" or "Kuwaitis." Arabs' inability to overcome Israel perplexed, demoralized, and led many (in monarchies and republics alike) to attempt to diagnose the roots of Arab weakness.

The Iranian Revolution and the Rise of Political Islam in the 1970s

As citizens, intellectuals, and activists pondered the reasons Arab regimes failed to deliver, many settled on variations of one basic answer: that Arab governments and society had distanced themselves too much from the teachings and traditions of Islam. The Arab single-party regimes in particular, while paying lip service to Islam, were quite secular in outlook and practice. Meanwhile, Arab societies, especially their middle- and upper-class urban strata, had adopted Western, secular mores and popular culture—including with respect to ways of dressing, decorating, consuming, recreating, and relating to the opposite sex. To critics, these developments undermined Arabs' Islamic heritage, in turn corrupting and handicapping them in their quest for dignity, prosperity, and power. Such Islamist thinkers harkened back to the days when the Umayyads, Abbasids, and Ottomans—empires that explicitly incorporated Islam and Islamic law into the public sphere—were in their glory, reasoning that political success stemmed from Islamic foundations.

In countries across the Middle East, Islamic movements emerged. More accurately, they reemerged, because the Muslim Brotherhood—the region's first and for decades one of its most important movements—was founded in Egypt in 1928. Established by Hassan al-Banna, a schoolteacher who rejected British political, economic, and cultural penetration of Egypt, the Muslim Brotherhood sought to return Egyptians to more pious lifestyles through educational and charitable activities, with the long-run goals of liberating Egypt from European domination, reconstituting the Egyptian state according to sharia law, and pursuing social and economic development. Nasser outlawed the Muslim Brotherhood, but his successor, Anwar Sadat, allowed it to return to action in the late 1970s to counterbalance his leftist opponents. Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood inspired branches in Syria, Jordan, and Palestine. Similar movements appeared elsewhere, including Tunisia's Islamic Tendency Movement and Algeria's Islamic Salvation Front.

These movements were galvanized in 1979 when, in Iran, Shi'ite cleric Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini brought down the monarchy of Mohammad Reza Shah Pahlavi by building a broad political coalition under the umbrella of politicized Islam. From the late 1950s through the 1970s, the Shah had presided over a secular, repressive, Westernizing dictatorship that was tightly allied with the United States, had diplomatic relations with Israel, and gravely mismanaged the Iranian economy despite that nation's considerable oil wealth. In making those choices, the Shah alienated numerous sectors of Iranian society. Khomeini deftly drew upon Islamic symbols and values to formulate a powerful critique of the Shah's regime, temporarily unify a wide variety of political factions, and move millions of Iranians to protest the Shah's regime—at considerable personal risk—in wave after wave of demonstrations that ultimately wore down the will of the Shah's armed forces to resist. On January 16, 1979, the Shah left Iran and headed into exile. Khomeini proceeded to build a new political system: the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Iran's Islamic Revolution sent a shock wave through the Middle East. For incumbents, the success of an oppositional Islamist movement was grim news. For Islamists, the revolution supplied powerful encouragement that there was hope for their cause. Indeed, much of the "stuff" of domestic politics across the region from the 1980s to 2011 pitted regimes against oppositional forces dominated by Islamist parties or movements. The comparative strength of Islamist actors—vis-à-vis both incumbents and other oppositional groups—varied from country to country, as did the tactics Islamists espoused. Some groups chose violent trajectories and sought to directly overthrow incumbent regimes, while others rejected violence and bided their time, "working within the system" as they focused on building their influence in society and in the institutions of the state. With few exceptions, however, Islamists were—and are—a political force to be reckoned with, regionwide.

Economic Reform and Democratization Pressures

The rise of political Islam was not the only new reality in the Middle East in the 1970s. Regimes also confronted two additional phenomena that constrained rulers' options and put pressure on their positions. First, beginning in the late 1970s and continuing into the 1990s, nearly every Middle Eastern country had to reform its economy, decreasing the state's role and integrating with the global market economy. Countries did so to varying degrees—and always reluctantly, because loans from the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund designed to facilitate economic restructuring came with conditions attached, including policy changes that caused hardships for citizens at the same time that

they deprived regimes of key tools of political control. Second, also beginning in the 1970s, a wave of democratizing regime change swept through Southern Europe, Latin America, the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, and parts of Asia and sub-Saharan Africa. Everywhere, political freedom seemed to be on the march.

For the Middle East's incumbent dictators, a new global democratic ethos was unwelcome, as it served to further delegitimize regimes whose constituents were already discontented and who faced increasingly significant Islamist oppositions. Meanwhile, all rulers—democrats and dictators—struggled with painful economic reform processes and worried about how the “losers” would react politically. Yet in the face of these multiple pressures—from Islamists, economic reform, and global democratizing norms—the region's authoritarian regimes persisted (for decades) by employing a variety of political strategies. Leaders in oil-rich states distributed their largesse in ways that kept key clienteles loyal and muted socioeconomic grievances. Leaders in less wealthy states tended to combine systematic repression carried out by their intelligence and security services with “facade” democratization—licensing opposition parties and holding elections that looked competitive while in reality playing fields were uneven and the positions candidates were elected to were devoid of actual power. Leaders also exploited the fears of many constituencies, both domestic and foreign, who worried about Islamists' power and what they would do with it if allowed to rule. Their argument essentially was, “better the devil you know.”

The Arab Spring and Beyond

In December 2010, Arab authoritarian regimes began, for the first time, to be vulnerable. In Tunisia, massive, peaceful demonstrations were triggered by the self-immolation attempt of a desperate young man, Mohammad Bouazizi, and then facilitated by labor activists and social media. These protests overwhelmed the security forces, and, when the Tunisian army refused to enter the fray on his side, President Zine el-Abidine Ben Ali fled to Saudi Arabia. A single-party dictatorship erected in 1956 and sustained for fifty-five years by just two presidents had crumbled in one month's time. The Arab public—indeed, the whole world—watched this breathtaking turn of events on satellite television, and within weeks similar protests erupted across the region, expressing economic grievances while demanding more participatory, less corrupt governance.

By the end of 2011, three presidents had fallen: Ben Ali in Tunisia, Husni Mubarak in Egypt, and Ali Abdullah Salih in Yemen. The regime of Libya's leader Muammar Qaddafi had crumbled as well. In each of

these countries, the stuff of politics then shifted to rewriting the rules of the game. In Tunisia, Egypt, and Libya this process got under way via the election of new representative assemblies that took up the herculean task of crafting new constitutions. In Yemen, complex negotiations unfolded among various stakeholders under the auspices of the Gulf Cooperation Council. In Syria, President Bashar al-Asad faced serious nationwide protests. His regime, however, has survived both the protests and the bloody and protracted civil war that followed in their wake.

While the presidents of Arab republics that had been characterized by single-party rule were especially vulnerable during the Arab Spring, the region's monarchies weathered the storm. Only Bahrain (where a Sunni monarchy governs a majority Shi'ite citizenry) experienced protests on a regime-threatening scale. The Bahraini government violently repressed protesters—with help from Saudi and Emirati forces—and during the ensuing years responded to persistent dissidence with arrests, detention, trials, and occasional violence. In no other monarchy was the status quo seriously threatened.

The monarchies were not passive in the face of regional upheaval, however. They felt their grip on power weaken and mobilized their resources to quell further rebellions and influence outcomes in the most affected countries—Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, Yemen, and Syria—where political trajectories were uncertain as key actors sought to establish new governing norms and institutions. Saudi Arabia led the countercharge, suppressing its own dissidents, sending troops to Bahrain, brokering an agreement that eased President Salih out of power in Yemen, and shoring up the poorer monarchies, Jordan and Morocco, with financial and political support. The Moroccan king preempted more thoroughgoing political change by offering a set of constitutional amendments that liberalized—but by no means democratized—the monarchy, and then holding new elections. Jordan's king made multiple changes in the prime ministerial and other cabinet positions, and his regime oversaw the passage of several modest reform measures bearing on elections, parties, and the judiciary. Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, and Qatar intervened in domestic affairs in Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, Syria, and Yemen, providing resources to and positive media coverage of favored politicians, parties, movements, and/or military leaders (Lynch 2016).

For those who hoped that Middle East political systems might evolve in a more inclusive and plural direction after the Arab Spring, trends have been sobering. Tunisia's politicians crafted a new, more democratic constitution and held sequential national elections that saw that country's Islamist party, En-Nahda, first take—and then relinquish—power. There were numerous crises along the way, however,

and continuing socioeconomic grievances threaten to delegitimize new political institutions and practices. In Egypt, after a turbulent transitional period wherein the Muslim Brotherhood squared off against the military establishment in a test of wills, Field Marshall Abdel Fattah al-Sisi seized power, banned the Muslim Brotherhood, and established a new iteration of military-led authoritarian rule. Transitions in Libya and Yemen deteriorated into violent conflict due to their weak state institutions and deep domestic political divides, coupled with the interference of outside actors. The repression of the (moderate) Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt together with the breakdown of political order in Libya, Yemen, and Syria in turn created opportunities for extremist Islamist actors, including ISIS and al-Qaeda, to recruit members and to gain and control territory.

Importantly, the Arab Spring's repercussions were not limited to Arab states. In hindsight, the Green Movement protests in Iran following a fraudulent presidential election in June 2009 may have been a precursor to the Arab Spring, and incumbent Iranian conservatives no doubt had the Arab Spring on their mind as the 2013 and 2017 presidential elections unfolded. The fall of Mubarak in Egypt and Ben Ali in Tunisia deprived Israel of two of its most moderate Arab interlocutors while temporarily empowering Islamists with a more critical position vis-à-vis the Jewish state. In mid-2011 Israel experienced its own set of mass demonstrations, which saw economic grievances take center stage. Meanwhile, the upheavals presented Turkey with diplomatic headaches as it tried to manage the impact of political change on its commercial relationships with Arab states. Civil war in Syria meant that Turkey (as well as other neighboring states) was burdened with significant refugee flows as well as worries about how the dynamics of the Syrian civil war would impact Turkey's fraught relationship with its Kurdish population.

In a time of transition and upheaval in the Middle East, then, this book equips the reader with the general and specific knowledge essential for making sense of contemporary Middle East politics. Part 1 of the book contains seven chapters that provide an overview of the patterns, trends, and dynamics that characterize the region as a whole, across a number of core topics. Chapter 2, "Governments and Oppositions," analyzes the extent to which citizens can—or cannot—hold their governments accountable through periodic, democratically meaningful elections and the alternation in power of multiple political parties. Chapter 3, "The Impact of International Politics," offers a framework for understanding how dynamics and pressures outside states' borders have shaped the domestic politics of countries in the Middle East. Chapter 4, "Political Economy," analyzes how states have tried to

spur economic growth and development, how politics has influenced the substance of economic decisions, and how economic realities in turn impact political dynamics and decisionmaking.

Chapter 5, “Civil Society,” examines how citizens in countries of the Middle East organize outside the explicitly political sphere for philanthropic purposes and to advance their political, economic, and social interests—as well as why and how the Middle East’s mostly authoritarian regimes have sought to control, curtail, and contain such activities. Chapter 6, “Religion and Politics,” explores the three monotheistic faiths that emerged in the Middle East, the extent to which states in the region are religious, and the main forms of politicized religious activism in the region. Chapter 7, “Identity and Politics,” considers how various types of attachments—to religion, language, lineage, and geographic homeland—matter politically. Finally, Chapter 8, “Gender and Politics,” looks at the ways that women’s (and men’s) roles in society have been constructed and contested in the Middle East.

Part 2 presents case studies of contemporary political dynamics in twelve of the region’s twenty countries: Algeria, Egypt, Iran, Iraq, Israel, Jordan, Kuwait and the United Arab Emirates, Palestine, Saudi Arabia, Syria, and Turkey. Each case study chapter opens with a historical overview and description of the contemporary political structure of the country in question. Each then examines the seven issue areas presented in Part 1, explicating the specific dynamics that animate each arena.

As a whole, the text demonstrates that several key problems, dynamics, and issues dominate politics in the contemporary Middle East. First, wars (civil and otherwise) have resulted in tremendous physical destruction and humanitarian suffering in Syria, Yemen, Libya, and, for a time, the region of Iraq where ISIS challenged the Iraqi government for territorial control. In these spaces we cannot describe and analyze political systems, as multiple armed groups (with very different visions of what politics should look like) are fighting for the right to control territory and the state. This is an important reminder that stable governance—wherein only state authorities possess the means of violence (and use it sparingly), and no other group challenges the state via militia or guerrilla activity—provides the key public good of basic political order.

Second, after decades of authoritarian rule, Tunisia has joined Israel, Turkey, Lebanon, and Iraq in crafting a political system in which electoral competition determines who rules. In these five countries, leaders and citizens alike confront the arduous challenge of living up to the letter and spirit of constitutions that call for actors with very different political preferences to make decisions transparently and through the ballot box rather than via diktat, violence, or corruption.

We will see that they do so with varying degrees of success. In the meantime, authoritarian rule persists through large swaths of the region: the monarchical systems, Algeria, Egypt, and Iran. In these countries, those who rule and those who are ruled will continue to engage in political struggles that will determine the prospects for more participatory and accountable governance.

Third, citizens' self-identification with respect to language, lineage, place, faith, and sect informs their political goals and tactics. These identities can divide political communities, affect contests about the shape of politics, and make democratic compromise more difficult. Across the Middle East's Muslim-majority states and also in Israel, for example, actors debate whether political rules should be based on secular or religious principles. Until the Arab Spring uprisings, regional dictatorships tended to be quite secular but faced (and repressed) potent Islamist opposition movements; in many places, violent confrontations took place between the two. In the wake of the Arab Spring uprisings, once-banned Islamist parties won elections in Egypt and Tunisia and assumed key roles in governance and the writing of new constitutions. Given the gulf in political perspectives deriving from very different identities, Islamist-secularist interactions and negotiations have been complex, heated, and difficult. In Tunisia thus far, secularist and Islamist actors are finding a way to coexist peacefully; the same cannot be said of dynamics in Egypt. Religious, sectarian, and/or ethnic divides complicate pluralist politics in similar ways in Lebanon and Iraq. Sunni-Shi'ite tensions especially have grown in the region in the wake of the Arab Spring as Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, and other Gulf states have wielded sectarian appeals and accusations designed to weaken domestic opponents.

Fourth, the Middle East faces daunting economic problems that influence political dynamics and are in turn affected by politics. Regime type aside, the goal of generating sustainable prosperity that is broadly shared by citizens has eluded even the richest of Middle East states in recent decades. Socioeconomic grievances were a key driver of Arab Spring protests. Many observers worry that Tunisia's nascent democratic system will be threatened if it is not perceived by citizens as offering sufficient economic progress. Autocrats who survived the Arab Spring have more reason than ever to worry about economic performance, living standards, and unemployment. In the meantime, state fragmentation, insurgency, and war in Libya, Yemen, Syria, and elsewhere have destroyed infrastructure and lives, and reduced living standards.

Fifth, an important dilemma for the region's leaders and peoples is how to relate to the West, and particularly the United States. European actors exercised imperial control over the region in the nineteenth and

early twentieth centuries, only to be overtaken by the United States as the major Western hegemon after World War II. Today, Western countries are major (and not always welcome) military players on the ground in the region at the same time that they control the purse strings of global financial institutions and offer democracy as a political model—one that some aspire to and others reject altogether. What the content of diplomatic relations with the West should be and whether Middle East states adhere to Western policy exhortations (regarding economics, family law, human rights, etc.) constitute extremely sensitive political issues that divide and antagonize political parties and civil society actors.

All of these domains—the shape of political regimes, identity politics, economic challenges, and regional relations with the West—influence women’s status in the region and will continue to shape the outcomes of struggles over gender norms. Significant intraregional variation notwithstanding, women in the Middle East participate in the labor force and political institutions at a far lower rate than do their male compatriots; regional norms prescribe a primarily domestic role for women; and women’s legal rights in the area of family law are distinctly circumscribed. While for many (male and female) this state of affairs is acceptable, others work to achieve increased legal parity, economic autonomy, and political voice for women.

While these dynamics and challenges animate politics in the Middle East, it is important to keep in mind that there is a diversity of experience in the region: stable countries and countries torn apart by civil war, democracies and dictatorships, rich states and poor states, countries that have cooperative relationships with the West and countries that vigorously confront the West. This text helps readers navigate complexity to comprehend both broad patterns and trends as well as the important differences and variation that also exist within the Middle East.

Note

1. These characterizations of political rights and civil rights are adapted from Freedom House’s methodology statement, available at <http://www.freedomhouse.org>.