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ARAB REGIMES AND DEMOCRATIZATION: RESPONSES TO THE CHALLENGE OF POLITICAL ISLAM

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In the post-World War II period the relationships of Middle Eastern states to their societies have taken a variety of forms. While most of these states have been governed by authoritarian regimes (either monarchical or "republican") only two--Turkey and Israel--have experienced almost unbroken periods of parliamentary electoral politics. Of the Arab states only Lebanon came close to the liberal model, but its democratic system came crashing down in 1975 with the beginning of a 15-year civil war and is now just beginning an uncertain renewal.

Several world and regional factors, however, have recently emerged which seem to be facilitating a significant--but fragile and perhaps reversible--process of liberalization in Arab politics. The collapse of the Soviet Union has undermined a certain type of authoritarian-nationalist model. The end of the oil boom has accentuated growing socioeconomic strains in all but the small, super-rich, oil-rentier states of the Gulf and sharpened societal demands for more political participation. The ascendancy of neoliberal economic development doctrines in the industrialized countries and international financial organizations has accelerated processes of structural adjustment and privatization, which may be generating countervailing political forces <u>vis à vis</u> states and regimes. Growing popular cynicism and discontent with failed nationalist promises, and even possibly a loss of self-confidence among segments of the ruling elites themselves may also be undermining the "authoritarian habit" in Arab public opinion. Civil society, in short, may be coming of age.

But a distinct--perhaps paradoxical--feature of the new

politicization in Arab societies is the rise of Islamist political groups as the most articulate and best organized expressions of opposition to the prevailing authoritarian order. Islamism is by no means the only form of organized opposition in the fermenting civil societies of the Arab world, but it does seem to be the most popular and ubiquitous. For their part, incumbent ruling elites which (with rare exceptions) do not relish sharing power with publics which they distrust (to say the least); for them the "democratic question" is scarcely separable from the "Islamist challenge." This paper, therefore, focuses on various regime strategies for dealing with this challenge as a way of appraising the process of democratization in general. The underlying assumption is that "liberalization" or "democratization" in the Arab world at this stage is mainly a "top-down" rather than "bottom-up" phenomenon.

Whatever the deeper causes there is no doubt that Arab countries have recently begun to experience a certain "opening". Kuwait and Morocco, which in the past have had a limited and fitful flirtation with parliamentary politics, have each held significant elections within the past year. Jordan has just held its second relatively free election in four years. Yemen, perhaps the most unlikely candidate for democratization, held a successful election in April 1993. Lebanon held its first parliamentary election in 20 years in September 1992--flawed yet important for national reconstruction. Even those systems most impervious to participation and contestation seem to have loosened up a bit. Among the authoritarian-nationalist "republics" one would want to distinguish the current situation in Egypt and Tunisia (notwithstanding their "Islamist" problems) as one of greater openness than that in Syria or Iraq. And among the most closed and traditional of

monarchies it is interesting to observe the cautious experimentation with "consultative councils" in Oman and Saudi Arabia. Thus one can see why some political scientists who follow Arab affairs argue that liberalization or even democratization may now be possible in a region of the

world that has been perhaps the most resistant to democratic or liberal political behavior (e.g., Hudson, 1988, 1991; Al-Sayyid, 1991; Cantori et al, 1991).

Notwithstanding their authoritarian image, then, Middle Eastern states and regimes are not monolithic in their relationships to society. Nor are they monolithic in their response to the principal populist current of the 1990s (and, I think, beyond)--Islamic radicalism. It is helpful, therefore, to classify and compare these responses in order to clarify our thinking about the future possibilities for democracy, liberalism, internal stability, and regional stability in the Middle East. Without attempting to draw any conclusions, let us describe how various regimes have sought to relate to the Islamist trend. In doing so, it is important to note that regime strategies are not necessarily constant over time; they change according to circumstances.

But we need to go beyond description. Why do different regimes exhibit different responses to the Islamist phenomenon? Part of the explanation surely lies in the socioeconomic environment of each country. Islamism in North Africa may have a strong element of lower-class discontent behind it, while in Saudi Arabia or Jordan the social circumstances lend a different character to the Islamic protest. The structure of the leadership and ruling elite in each country certainly also must be borne in mind. A minority-based regime, as in Syria, may feel impelled to adopt certain tactics that a relatively "authentic" regime, as in Jordan, would find inappropriate. One might also consider that a regime's external relations play a part. For example, regimes close enough to the United States to be recipients of aid (such as Tunisia) perhaps therefore are

perhaps more vulnerable to Islamist criticism than regimes whose ties to the U.S. are cooler (such as Yemen).

Islamic radicalism is not entirely a monolithic force either (see, e.g. Dessouki, 1982, Esposito, 1982, Sivan, 1985; Wright, 1985; Stowasser, 1987) While there is much that binds Islamic movements from the Maghrib to Iran together ideologically, and while there appear to be significant intellectual and organizational linkages among these groups, there are also differences in doctrines, objectives, tactics, and constituencies among them. The Muslim Brotherhood of Egypt is not a carbon copy of the Islamic Salvation Front of Algeria or the Hizballah of Lebanon. Islamists in Morocco cannot adopt the operational code of the Nahda of Tunisia if only because the function of Islam in the legitimacy formula of those two regimes is so markedly different.

Bearing in mind the complexities both of regimes and Islamist movements, it may be helpful to compare regime responses to the growing strength of radical Islam on a spectrum of exclusionary to inclusionary strategies. At the exclusionary extreme we find a strategy of <u>forced exclusion,</u> based on the assumption that Islamist organizations pose an unacceptable threat to regime security and domestic stability. This is a strategy of head-on conflict, of "radical surgery." A more sophisticated yet still essentially exclusionary strategy is <u>marginalization.</u> It has two aspects: one dimension is the creation of a national consensus, typically through the promulgation of a pact among the various contending political tendencies, that lays down rules for political contestation in which overtly religious parties, or parties with external affiliations, are banned. The other dimension is attrition: the constant application of pressure tactics,

low-level harassment, bureaucratic obstacles, etc. A third strategy which is also essentially exclusionary is <u>preemption.</u> This strategy combines the prohibition of non-regime-sanctioned Islamist activity with a vigorous assertion that the regime itself exclusively embodies Islamic political legitimacy. We move next to the strategy of <u>limited accommodation,</u> which is inclusionary of Islamist participation, but under conditions designed to insure that such groups are prevented from achieving dominance. Such conditions may include electoral rules, districting, and licensing procedures that would inhibit Islamist strength, as well as the regime's encouragement for "moderate" Islamic organizations over "extreme" ones. Finally, we have at the most liberal end of the spectrum the strategy of <u>full inclusion.</u> Regimes taking this position treat Islamic political organizations on the same level with other opposition groups; they accept the idea of loyal opposition and assume that Islamist opposition will also play according to the constitutional rules.

The terminology we use for convenience can convey unstated value judgements. Such may be the case with an inquiry about regime responses to Islamist activity, in which it may appear that Islamic activism is implicitly "bad"—a force that "good" regimes are trying to cope with. It is not my purpose to convey moral judgements about Islamism in Arab politics, implicitly or explicitly. At the same time, there appears to be a widespread perception on the part of ruling elites in almost all Arab countries that Islamist movements <u>are</u> in fact bad, and a threat to incumbent regimes. In their view, radical Islam is a force to be curbed in one way or another, be it through forced exclusion, marginalization, preemption, or limited accommodation. To most incumbent elites the fifth strategy, full inclusion,

is a strategy leading to defeat. It is beyond the scope of this paper to examine regime-Islamist relations from the Islamists' point of view, but one can imagine an equally interesting set of questions: short of accepting a regime's invitation to enjoy full and equal access to power (the regimes' "full inclusion"), is it in the interest of Islamist organizations to accept marginalization, preemption, or limited accommodation in order to avoid their own "forced exclusion"--i.e., repression at the hands of the regime?

Let us now examine each of these regime strategies, taking in each case one or more countries as examples. Syria will be cited to exemplify the strategy of forced exclusion; Tunisia exemplifies the strategy of marginalization, Saudi Arabia and Morocco are in a position to practice preemption; Egypt and Jordan are following varieties of limited accommodation; while Algeria up until the palace coup of December 1991 represented, perhaps uniquely in the contemporary Arab world, a government prepared to accept Islamist participation in democratic contestation.

A. Forced Exclusion

Almost every Arab regime has engaged in repression of radical Islamic organizations. Regimes that I have classified as pursuing a strategy of preemption or limited accommodation have been quite egregious in persecuting Islamic militants. But some regimes have been more repressive than others and have pursued repression as virtually the only method for dealing with Islamic challengers. These include Syria, Iraq, Tunisia, Libya, and (recently, following the December 1991 coup) Algeria. All of them have dealt crushing blows to Islamist challengers: Syria against the Muslim Brotherhood, Iraq against the Da'wa, Tunisia against the Nahda, Libya

against "thousands" of Islamic dissidents (The Economist, March 7, 1992, p. 42), and Algeria against the Islamic Salvation Front.

Perhaps none of these regimes were more ruthless or effective than Syria's in confronting the Islamist challenge. It should be noted that the Islamist challenge itself was ruthless. In response to a campaign of terrorism inspired by the Muslim Brotherhood in the late 1970s and the early 1980s, the regime of President Hafiz al-Asad used Draconian measures to suppress an Islamist rebellion in the city of Hama in February 1982: in addition to massive material damage, it was estimated that at least 10,000 people died. Asad's regime was doubly vulnerable to the Islamist challenge: the President himself and key members of the ruling establishment were Alawites-- members of a Shi'ite Islamic sect whose "deviation" from mainstream Islam was abhorrent to orthodox Sunnis. Furthermore, his regime was Ba'thist; and the Ba'th Party's ideology stresses Arab nationalism over religious loyalty (indeed, one of the Party's founders was a Greek Orthodox Christian). Since 1982 the Syrian regime has enjoyed greater stability. It has sought to deflect new Islamist protest by persuading the "official" Islamic clergy to endorse the regime's religious credentials and by including Sunni Muslims in many important government posts, except those responsible for internal security. In the June 1990 parliamentary elections, only regime-approved parties and independent candidates were allowed to participate, and Islamists were simply not present. In December 1991, President Asad won 99.9 percent of the popular vote in a plebiscite to renew his mandate. One can only speculate as to how many other Arab heads of regime, threatened by Islamist opposition, have

drawn the conclusion that the best way to deal with this kind of challenge is to liquidate it physically--and totally.

Two questions, however, arise with respect to the feasibility of forced exclusion as a strategy. First, under what circumstances is such an approach necessary, given the heavy moral and human costs? Second, does the regime have the power to carry it out successfully? In the two clearest cases of this kind, Syria and Iraq, the regimes seemed to be fully convinced that the Islamic opposition was a mortal threat. They both also calculated--apparently correctly--that they had the strength to destroy (or at least cripple) the Islamist opposition. But the strategy is not successful in all cases: other regimes have attempted it with less decisive results. Egyptian president Anwar Sadat tried it in 1981, when he summarily jailed thousands of opponents, Islamists and others; but soon afterwards he was assassinated by an Islamist cell in the Egyptian army. Libyan president Qadhafi, from the scant information available, may be attempting a similar liquidation, but it is far from clear that he has broken the Islamist opposition. Algeria presents the most recent and dramatic case, one in which a strategy of full inclusion was aborted in midstream. But there too it is doubtful that the new regime's sustained campaign against the Islamic opposition will succeed; indeed, at the moment it seems probable that there will be a long period of instability, rather than a "clean kill." Similarly, Tunisia, which embarked on a strategy of marginalization after Zine Abidine Ben Ali assumed power in 1987, hardened its stance and today appears to have declared war on the main Islamic movement. The outcome, however, is in doubt.

5. Marginalization

The idea behind the strategy of marginalization is to create some kind of institutionalized consensus about the rules of political competition-- usually by means of a "national pact" or "charter"--to which all the significant political forces in the country are a party. Middle Eastern regimes that initiate such pacts are pursuing a hidden as well as public agenda. The public agenda involves commiting the main parties and personalities to behave as loyal opposition. At the same time, the pact also defines the criteria for inclusion--and exclusion--from the political arena. Organizations with religious names, or which utilize essentially religious symbolism, can be excluded from formal participation even if they are not actually outlawed. Similarly, parties or movements of a transnational character may also be excluded. Islamist organizations such as the Muslim Brotherhood can be (and are) denied formal participation both because their names are religious and because they are obediant to an externally-based organization with branches in several other countries. The Tunisian and Jordanian regimes have each recently promulgated national pacts and have used them to try and marginalize Islamist groups. Yemen too has worked to create a similar kind of charter. Tunisia has been strict in interpreting its national charter so as to marginalize--indeed, suppress, Islamist participation. In Jordan and Yemen, however, Islamist groups have been allowed to compete in elections and enter parliaments; that is why we consider those regimes as pursuing a strategy of limited accommodation rather than marginalization or exclusion.

(In a somewhat different way Lebanon functioned under a National Pact whose purpose was to fix formal power-sharing arrangements among sectarian communities, however, the purpose was not so much to marginalize religious-sectarian forces but rather to regularize their participation. Lebanon's pact obviously did not prevent religious radicalism among both Muslims and Christians in 1975 from overwhelming the rules of power-sharing and contestation and fueling a catastrophic civil conflict that may not be over yet.)

The Tunisian case is interesting because the Ben Ali regime came to power with relatively liberal credentials and initially appeared determined to reach some kind of accommodation with the rising Islamic populism rather than to suppress it by force. Indeed, the precipitating factor in Ben Ali's removal of the ailing President Habib Bourguiba in 1987 was Bourguiba's own heavy-handedness toward Islamist challengers. Ben Ali's takeover was accompanied by his rescinding of death sentences against Islamist militants; and even though some Tunisians were apprehensive about his career background in internal security, they welcomed his apparently liberalizing and democratizing intentions. The national pact hammered out in 1988 appeared to observers as an inclusionary, liberal document (see Anderson, 1991, p. 260); but in reality it masked the regime's intention to weaken opposition to the ruling RCD (Rassemblement Constitutionnel Democratique) in general, and Islamist opposition in particular.

The first year and a half of Ben Ali's regime seemed to bear out the expectations of liberal reform generated by his takeover. The new president issued amnesties for over 10,000 political prisoners, and committed

Tunisia to observe international standards on the trial and punishment of suspects. But the government's promises to democratize were never kept. As early as January 1988 Ben Ali insisted on retaining the leadership of the RCD, over the objections of opposition leaders. The RCD was able to retain total control of the Chamber of Deputies, and the opposition boycotted municipal and provincial elections in June 1990. Not only did the government refuse to permit the Islamic party, Al-Nahda, to be officially registered, it began to arrest large numbers of the movement's supporters. Amnesty International, having initially welcomed the new government's liberalization policies, issued reports highly critical of the government's suppression of human and political rights, the most recent in March 1992. According to this report, the government had arrested at least 8,000 Al-Nahda sympathizers since September 1990, holding thousands of them in prolonged incommunicado detention (Amnesty International, 1992, p. 30). It also reported hundreds of allegations of torture. Other independent external observers, as well as Tunisian officials and intellectuals, also insist that there is a climate of political repression in Tunisia today, with particular emphasis on what officials see as the Islamic threat.

This is not the place to discuss the substance of these reports or the Tunisian government's vigorous efforts to refute them; what is more germane is to ask why the government has adopted such a strategy and whether it is likely to promote political stability. Interviews with Tunisian officials reveal deep suspicion of the intentions of the Nahda: an unshakeable perception that it is a subversive organization aiming at an Iranian-style revolution—not just in politics, but in all aspects of life. The Nahda was accused of having external linkages with an "Islamist

international." Twice since June 1991 the government has claimed to have uncovered a Nahda plot to overthrow the government, although these charges are greeted with skepticism by many observers. Perhaps the President's background as an internal security official and his entourage of like-minded people predisposed him to such an outlook. Perhaps the continuing problem of Tunisia's poor, unemployed, alienated, and youthful lower classes sensitized them to the problem of urban rioting. The outbreak of the Iraq-Kuwait crisis in August 1990, and the ensuing results, also possibly increased the nervousness of the ruling elite.

At bottom, perhaps, is the regime's sense that it lacks a robust legitimacy formula: it cannot claim to inherit the legacy of Bourguibism (although this legacy has lost much of its potency for younger Tunisians); nor can it claim to be broadly representative or untarnished by the perceived corruption of the state and the RCD. In short, the regime appears to maintain a very pessimistic view of the risks of democratization, and the threat of Islamism. Its pessimism has led it essentially to abandon its own blueprint for an opening to "risk-free" democracy as set forth in the National Pact. Of course, the possibility that the Nahda would in fact act in a subversive or revolutionary manner should it achieve any formal power cannot be ruled out, notwithstanding its leaders' commitment to play by democratic rules. But by promising democracy and then throwing down the gantlet to a populist Islamic movement, it may have committed a self-fulfilling prophecy. Whether a strategy of marginalization by attrition will work depends on which side has the most stamina for the long pull. The evidence so far is inconclusive. According to The Washington Post in June 1991, "Tunisia Appears to Have Defused its Militant Fundamentalist Surge;"

but six months later the same paper (and the same writer) declared, "Tunisia Faces Renewed Threat from Islamic Fundamentalists" (Jonathan C. Randal, The Washington Post, June 6, 1991 and January 11, 1992).

C. Preemption

In the Middle East today there are four regimes--in Saudi Arabia, Morocco, Iran, and Sudan--that can, and do, make a claim to exceptional Islamic authority. The latter two are governed by radical Islamic movements that came to power relatively recently through revolution or coup; for the immediate future, at least, they would seem to have preempted any foreseeable Islamist opposition challenge. The first two, however, are long-established monarchies, staffed by ruling elites not only long-accustomed to power and privilege but also from social and cultural backgrounds very different from the present-day Islamist constituency: the poor and lower-middle classes, semi-educated, unconnected with the West. But the Saudi and Moroccan regimes ground their authority in Islamic legitimacy too. The Saudi-Wahhabi dynasty prides itself (although pride itself is sinful to Wahhabi Muslims) on an Islamic puritanism that abjures what it sees as the laxity, luxury, ostentation, and corruption of the historical Islamic mainstream. Operation Desert Storm revealed for Americans the austere Islamic ideology practiced in the Kingdom. As for Morocco, the King is more than a monarch: he is "Commander of the Faithful," an Islamic title fit for a ruler whose dynasty claims descent from the family of the Prophet Muhammad. The uneducated Moroccan masses, influenced perhaps by the heterodoxies of North African Islam, are said to believe that the King possesses magical God-given powers and that he enjoys divine protection. One might suppose, then, that these two regimes

are, as it were, inocculated against any radical Islamic challenge. Yet such challenges exist, and each regime has deployed an array of tactics to coopt or override the challengers.

The Moroccan case, which I shall mention only briefly, is instructive inasmuch as it juxtaposes a regime that enjoys traditional Islamic legitimacy against a society that displays all the traits of Third World socioeconomic volatility. Anti-regime protest in the past has emanated from the nationalist left, from Marxists, from ambitious military officers, and perhaps from the Berber minority. Mass protest has been rooted more in socioeconomic discontent than Islamist anger. In the riots of January 1984, according to one observer, Islamic radicals played only a marginal organizational role and were weakened owing to their fragmentation into as many as 20 different groups (Seddon, pp. 117-18). Moroccan diplomats claimed that reports of demonstrators displaying banners with Ayatollah Khomeini's picture were greatly exaggerated. King Hassan II appeared to enjoy widespread respect as chairman of the Islamic Conference. But the regime's policy toward Islamist (as well as other "unacceptable" opposition groups) had its coercive side as well. In 1990, for example, Amnesty International reported "scores of arrests" of members of an Islamic organization known as Al-Adl w'al-Ihsan (Justice and Charity). During the Gulf war King Hassan was challenged by hundreds of thousands of pro-Iraqi demonstrators, and he continues to have to cope with a formidable debt and massive unemployment. So far relatively little of this latent discontent has taken an Islamist form, and his preemption of Islamic legitimacy continues to be successful. However, as Munson remarks, "...it would be a mistake to assume that militant Islam will remain as politically impotent as it now

appears to be. ...militant Islam in its more populist forms remains a tremendously powerful mode of political discourse" (Munson, 1986, p. 284).

The Saudi regime's Islamist "problem" is quite different from that of Morocco's. Saudi Arabia has a small, dispersed population and an enormous oil income. But the regime's legitimacy rests historically on a particularly austere form of Islam, one with which today's super-affluent society seems far removed. In 1929, King Abd al-Aziz ibn Saud's bedouin army, the Ikhwan, rebelled against the King's royal authority and rejected his pragmatic accommodations with Britain and the insufficiently puritanical 'ulama. The Ikhwan were suppressed but 50 years later a member of a leading Ikhwan family, Juhayman al-'Utaybi, led a two-week insurrection against the Saudi regime by occupying the Grand Mosque in Mecca. In addition to whatever personal scores he wished to settle, Juhayman and his followers were protesting the alleged corruption of the royal family, the presence of alcohol in the country, and the "liberation" of Saudi women (Ochsenwald, 1981, p. 276). Anti-government demonstrations also erupted among the sizeable, and persecuted, Shi'ite minority in the oil-rich eastern province. Although the disturbances were finally put down (with French and perhaps American assistance), the events aroused understandable alarm in ruling circles, representing as they did the confluence of historic ideological cleavages and contemporary tensions arising out of the extraordinary development of Saudi society resulting from the oil bonanza.

The regime's response was, first, to tighten up the security apparatus, and second, to reassert its Wahhabite Islamic credentials. The Kingdom's most prominent Islamic jurist, Shaykh Abd al-Aziz bin Baz, began to play a more prominent role, both as advocate for stricter Islamic

observance and as supporter of the regime. The ulama (Islamic scholars) and clergy also assumed a more visible public role. The mutawwi'in (guardians of public morality) were given greater latitude to enforce prayer and other observances. The King himself expanded his title to "Conservator of the Two Holy Places" (Mecca and Medina). In the Gulf crisis of 1990-91, King Fahd was persuaded to permit the stationing of a very large non-Muslim military force in eastern Saudi Arabia. Some members of the royal family reportedly were apprehensive about the possible negative consequences for the regime's Islamic credentials, and the regime quickly squelched the well-publicized "drive" by Saudi women protesting the prohibition of women drivers. Nevertheless, tape casettes strongly attacking the regime for its corrupt activities and collaboration with the immoral Americans apparently are widely circulated. King Fahd's announcement in March 1992 of his intention to establish an Advisory Council and undertake other reforms was seen both as a response to petitions from the Islamic and other sectors of Saudi society for greater participation. At the same time, powerful members of the ruling establishment, including Shaykh bin Baz, began to utter public criticism of the alleged excesses of the muttawwi'in, and pledged to protect the sanctity of private homes from religious zealots. Saudi Islamists complained that the regime had begun a campaign of arrests of Islamic militants in January 1992, rounding up Saudis who had served in Afghanistan as mujahidin fighters against the communist government in Kabul. Shi'ites in eastern Saudi Arabia came under attack from certain Wahhabi clerics as heretics. Ironically, radical Islamists in other Arab countries (for example, Algeria) that Saudis had been financially supporting ridicule the idea that Saudi Arabia is an Islamic society.

To date, the regime has been successful in containing radical Islamic challenges, whether from the militant Ikhwan tradition, from Shi'ites, or from more modernist, alienated anti-Western elements. But Ochsenwald's observation is worth noting: "...the traditionalism of Saudi theologians does not seem to offer any substantial answers to the new challenges facing their society." (Ochsenwald, p. 285). Notwithstanding its intensely Islamic legitimacy formula, its virtually unlimited financial resources and its demonstrated American security umbrella, the Saud dynasty appears to feel itself on the defensive against new murmurings of Islamist protest and is scrambling to preempt the challengers.

D. Limited Accommodation

Regimes that lack the capabilities for outright suppression or marginalization by attrition of Islamic movements and that also lack the ability effectively to preempt the Islamic agenda can turn either to a strategy of full inclusion, with all its perceived risks, or to a strategy of limited accommodation. The rulers of Egypt, Jordan, and Yemen recently have been following this course. It is not insignificant that these are rather poor, fast-growing and quite politicized populations, each with a deeply rooted Islamic tradition. Government in these countries is under a variety of socioeconomic and/or ideological pressures that it is increasingly unable to contain mainly with threats and coercion.

In Egypt, President Hosni Mubarak's predecessors, Nasser and Sadat, each tried to "solve" their Islamist "problem" by repression: executions of leaders, mass arrests and detention. Sadat, having at first courted the relatively compliant Muslim Brotherhood, eventually became alarmed at the

growing radicalized groupings (gama'at), tried to suppress them and in 1981 was murdered by an Islamist assassination team in the army. Mubarak set out to bring the "moderate" Muslim Brother leadership into the political arena as part of his modest liberalization program. Although not allowed to run as a political party, Muslim Brother candidates in alliance with other parties won small numbers of seats in the 1984 and 1987 National Assembly elections. But the Muslim Brothers along with all the other opposition parties (except the Tagam'a) elected to boycott the 1990 elections in protest over what they considered to be the unfair advantages given to Mubarak's ruling National Democratic Party. This hiatus in formal Islamist participation has probably worked against the interests of the regime and the Brotherhood alike and casts a certain shadow over the "limited accommodation" strategy. Nevertheless, the strategy has saved the regime from a head-on confrontation with political Islam in general. Public expression and freedom of the press still provide an outlet for Islamist and other kinds of opposition opinion. Another advantage of allowing some Islamist elements access to the public arena is that they have to compete on equal terms with other parties and programs. Their own organizational problems help serve as a check on their growth. The Islamists are probably not more factionalized than other Egyptian opposition groups, but as Springborg notes, the Muslim Brotherhood has been weakened by internal divisions (Springborg, 1989, pp. 231-38). In terms of his own policy behavior, Mubarak has maneuvered deftly to mollify and defuse Islamic protest, for example by backing restrictions on women's employment, while pursuing other policies (out of raison d'état), such as the American connection, that are anathema to many Islamists.

If an inclusionary posture defines the political dimension of the regime's strategy, the security dimension involves full-time surveillance of the dozens of clandestine Islamist organizations that are capable of resorting to violence. The food riots of 1977 and the police riots of 1984 revealed how such groups can inflame socioeconomic tensions. The Egyptian government has been quite heavy-handed in its treatment of certain Islamist groups, as several human rights reports demonstrate (e.g. U.S. Department of State, Country Reports on Human Rights, 1990, p. 1366; Amnesty International, Egypt, January 1992). Notwithstanding the zealotry of certain Interior Ministers, the sheer size and density of Egyptian society makes it difficult to guarantee security from the kind of violence that was directed against Sadat and several other officials. Sporadic and recent attacks by Islamic militants on Egyptian Coptic Christians are another indication of the tensions beneath the surface of Egyptian society. Most recently (on June 9, 1992), Egyptians were shocked by the assassination of the prominent writer Farag Fouda, an acerbic critic of the radical Islamists, at the hands of a member of the Jihad (Holy War) organization. It brought to mind the murder by Islamists of Rifaat al-Mahgoub, the speaker of the Egyptian parliament, in December 1990, and revealed yet again the continuing seriousness of the radical Islamist challenge. At the present time, newspapers report that hundreds of Islamic militants are in detention. Mubarak (unlike several other Arab leaders) seems to be aware that the costs of outright suppression may be greater than the state can afford. And while analysts (e.g., Springborg, p. 244) give him high marks for a sophisticated approach to the Islamist phenomenon, they also caution that

Islamic radicalism could spill over the institutional channels that he has constructed to contain it.

Jordan is so small compared to Egypt that the whole country could be swallowed up in one of the districts of Cairo. But within its scale it is in its way an even more politicized society than Egypt. Ruling in the vortex of the Arab-Israeli conflict and inter-Arab politics, King Hussein entitled his autobiography, Uneasy Lies the Head. With a population now two-thirds Palestinian and an economy in shambles as a result of the sanctions on Iraq resulting from the Gulf war, Jordan at first glance would not seem to be a suitable place for an experiment in democratization. Yet the King--perhaps the shrewdest of all the Middle Eastern leaders--decided following the economic riots of April 1989 that the kingdom's survival depended on a political opening (Abdul-Rahman and al-Khouri, pp. 144-46).

In November of that year Jordan held its first full and free legislative election in three decades. Islamists won 34 out of 80 seats in the lower chamber, more than any other political bloc. It is said that the King and his advisors were shocked by the strength of the Islamist showing, but they did not panic. Instead, they allowed its representatives to participate in the cabinet as well as the parliament, and they resisted the temptation to curb the somewhat sensationalist Islamist press. This political opening made it possible for the regime to recover from the economic stagnation, public disgust over governmental corruption, and the paralysis in the Palestinian-Israeli "peace process." The astuteness of this move could only be fully appreciated a year later when the Iraq-Kuwait conflict broke out, creating one of the most serious crises Jordan had ever faced. Buffeted by Saddam Hussein's aggression, Kuwait's expulsion of thousands of Palestinians and

Jordanians, Washington's anger over King Hussein's criticism of U.S. military involvement, and Israel's menacing stance, the King emerged more popular than he had ever been. Despite their deep differences with the Palace on other issues, the Islamists—now with a stake in government—demonstrated their solidarity.

The King kept his nerve because, in the first place, he possesses powerful Islamic legitimacy as a sharif, a lineal descendant from Beni Hashem, the tribe of the Prophet Muhammad. Second, he also possesses an efficient and feared internal security agency, the General Intelligence Department (Mukhabarat al-'amma). As a small state, Jordan is easier to police than Egypt or the north African countries. Third, he may well have found it useful for a sizable Islamist bloc to emerge as a counterweight to the nationalist-leftist tendency, which has historically been more troublesome to the Palace than the Islamists. Fourth, he was convinced that he could write and enforce institutional rules designed to prevent an Islamic (or any other party) from gaining too much control. To that end, Islamists along with other political tendencies participated in the drafting of a National Charter in 1991 set forth the political "rules of engagement". Among other things, political parties are forbidden to have external linkages and they are not allowed to organize within the armed forces or security bureaucracies. The question of external linkages is directly germane to the Muslim Brotherhood, which has a trans-national leadership based in Germany and branches in several Arab countries.

A campaign anecdote may illustrate how that question figured in the 1989 elections and, more generally, how Islamists and (relative) secularists debated each other. A hotel manager (and ally of the Palace)

who was elected from Aqaba described how in the campaign he was attacked by his Muslim Brotherhood opponent as a secularist, a man of loose morals (being a hotel manager), and corrupted by Western habits; but the hotel manager counterattacked, accusing his Islamist opponent of being obediant to a foreign-controlled organization. And he quoted King Hussein who had said that since all Jordanians are Muslims they don't need a Muslim party to represent them. Both candidates won seats.

So far the Jordanian regime's strategy of limited accommodation is holding. But the stresses on the system are growing. In 1990, as the King prepared to join the U.S.-sponsored "peace process" with Israel, the Islamist partisans loudly objected. Subsequently 50 members of the lower house (including the Islamists) expressed no confidence in the government of Palestinian-born Tahir al-Masri; although the petition had no legal standing since parliament was not in session, Masri resigned anyway. The Islamists also voted no confidence in the newly appointed government of the King's cousin and longtime troubleshooter, Major-General Sharif Zayd bin Shakir; but the government won the vote. With no Islamists in ministerial positions, the new government continued actively to participate in the peace talks. Another ominous development was the arrest in 1991 of 60 Islamic radicals for acts of sabotage carried out by two clandestine organizations, the Holy Warriors in the Name of God and the Prophet Muhammad's Army. With the prospects of a long-term economic crisis news sources reported earlier this year that domestic political tensions were rising and that Muslim fundamentalists in particular were complaining of secret police surveillance, harassment, and arrests (The Middle East Reporter Weekly (Beirut), February 22, 1992, p. 15). An academic specialist stated that "the

country faces growing polarization, both between the regime and the opposition (leftist and Islamist) and between secularists and Islamic militants." She went on to contend that the Muslim Brotherhood wanted to use democratic forms to gain power and then "alter the political and socioeconomic structure" (Amawi, 1992, p. 28). Thus, even the most successful example of limited accommodation provides scant confidence about future stability.

E. Full Inclusion

We conclude with a brief remark about the fifth and final regime strategy for dealing with radical Islam: full inclusion. Our remark is brief because there is no case in recent years of this strategy being fully carried out. A strategy of full inclusion means simply that a regime institutes liberal democratic procedures, with majority rule coupled with protections for individuals and minorities and more stringent voting procedures for constitutional amendments and the like. Full inclusion means taking responsible Islamist spokesmen at their word when they insist (as do Jordanian Islamists, for example) that they will abide by democratic practices and constraints; moreover, there should be rules in place to ensure that they do so whether they wish to or not. It also means terminating the interference of internal security services in normal political life, especially their campaigns against Islamist or other oppositions that a regime regards as strong and threatening. The only Middle East regimes where something approaching this model exists (with qualifications in each case) are in Turkey, Israel, and Iran; there are no Arab cases.

The only Arab regime to approach this model was Algeria between October 1988 and December 1991. During that period, the government and (reluctantly) the ruling National Liberation Front of President Chadli Benjadid instituted a new constitution and sweeping liberal reforms that paved the way for provincial-municipal and then legislative elections under a multi-party system with a newly free press. The process was aborted after the first round of legislative elections when a cabal of security and military officials forced Benjadid's resignation and set about to reverse the substantial political gains made by the Islamic Salvation Front (FIS). In a trice Algeria moved from one end of our spectrum to the other, and the regime is now attempting to liquidate the FIS altogether.

The immediate lessons of the collapse of the process are easier to calculate for Algerians than for the rest of the Arab world. In Algeria itself, the FIS and likeminded organizations appear to have drawn the conclusion that protracted armed struggle is the only course open to them, while the government is struggling first to suppress Islamism and then to reconstitute a "democratic" political order without them. But it will be more difficult for the Algerian authorities to eradicate the movement as effectively as the Syrian government emasculated its Islamist opposition owing to factors as basic as size and distribution of population, geography, topography, and even perhaps the "embeddedness" of Islam in the political culture. In the longer term, everything depends on which side wins--or, indeed, whether either side can win at all. As for regimes and ruling elites across the Arab world that must be watching the Algerian drama with the greatest attention, most, I suspect, are applauding the crackdown and arguing that it should have come sooner; and some non-Islamist opposition

groups may have similar views--for the moment. But if the crackdown cannot be accomplished decisively and the costs of suppression begin to mount without any end in sight, the virtues of accommodation may become more apparent. Islamic forces elsewhere in the Arab world may "learn" from the Algerian experience that they cannot expect to attain real power through democratic procedures. But that does not necessarily mean that they will cast their lot with "armed struggle," if only because it too may not be successful. Contemporary Arab regimes may lack legitimacy but they do not lack formidable coercive power, so there may be rational grounds for Islamists to consider accommodation, at least as a tactic. In this respect, it is plausible to imagine that some Islamist analysts are now faulting the FIS (or at least its more extreme spokesmen) for having articulated too revolutionary a program, thus gratuitously frightening the ruling establishment. Until the ongoing struggle between regime and Islamic opposition in Algeria comes to some kind of resolution, one way or the other, the lessons of Algeria will be ambiguous.

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One can debate the moral, philosophical, and political merits (or demerits) of the abortion of Algeria's democratization experiment. Without doing that, let us simply raise the question whether the it shows that a non-violent, orderly transfer of supreme executive power is, for all practical purposes, impossible in Arab political systems at the present time. If the answer is yes, then there are interesting--perhaps depressing-- implications for democrats and for Islamists. Either end of our spectrum of strategies--full exclusion or full inclusion--seems to lead to violence and instability. Advocates of genuine democracy and of Islamist government

might draw the conclusion that they can only fully succeed if they can muster sufficient revolutionary force. Short of that, perhaps their most satisfactory outcome is what we have called limited accommodation. Regimes might draw similar conclusions. If full inclusion means to Arab ruling circles some probability that they will have to abdicate power, and if they refuse to accept that outcome, then they should try something else. But full exclusion, or even marginalization by attrition may prove to be very costly strategies. They too, perhaps, should see the wisdom of limited accommodation.

But is limited accommodation a stable solution? Only to the extent that the rules of accommodation are perceived by mainstream Islamist and other opposition parties as legitimate. At the moment in Jordan, Egypt, and Yemen it would seem that the terms are acceptable--there is some (but not much) access to influence if not power, and there seems to be a perception that greater influence might be possible in the future. If such perceptions seem naive, remember the context: limited accommodations represent an improvement over previous unadulterated authoritarianism, and so even cynical participants might be pardoned for harboring the illusion of an ongoing process of liberalization. But if the illusion--not to mention the reality--of future theoretical full inclusion fades, then the center of gravity in the Islamist sector is likely to shift away from mainstream organizations toward the clandestine radicals.

The logic of limited accommodation points in the direction of full inclusion. Full inclusion need not be a license or springboard for Islamist or any other opposition groups to take over governments and (re)introduce authoritarianism: constitutional limitations, checks and balances, and

independent judiciaries are the instruments for preventing such outcomes. It is by no means clear that Islamist groups fully included in a liberal-democratic political process would have the ability to form governments singlehandedly or bring about constitutional changes legally, as the limited popular and parliamentary strength of such parties in Jordan, Egypt, Yemen, Lebanon today indicates.

The main obstacle to the process toward full inclusion is the unwillingness of leaders and regimes to contemplate relinquishing power by legal or any other means. The patrimonial regimes, notably Saudi Arabia, balk at all but the most cosmetic gestures toward power-sharing. The ruling family of Kuwait, which for a time had gone farthest toward liberalization, backtracked even before the Gulf war, not because of an Islamist threat but because it could not countenance any serious challenge from any source to its authoritarianism. The leaders of "republics" like Syria, Iraq, and Libya seem equally unlikely to permit liberal-democratic power sharing unless they are forced to, either by domestic pressures that become too costly to suppress or through international pressures--or both. Pressures from both sources appear to be increasing. Limited accommodation, therefore, would seem to be a modality worth encouraging, not as an end in itself, but as a transition phase toward full inclusion of all parties (Islamists included) prepared to play according to liberal-pluralist rules of the game. Difficult as it may be to pursue this process, it may be the best way to promote future legitimacy and stability.

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Epilogue: Recent Elections

Since September 1992 there has been an unprecedented wave of electoral activity in the Arab world: national parliamentary elections in five countries: Lebanon, Kuwait, Yemen, Morocco, and Jordan. What does this latest evidence allow us to conclude about the state of democratization and the role of Islamist parties in general?

In September and October 1992 Lebanon held its first parliamentary elections in 20 years. It was widely hoped that the elections would seal the peace accords negotiated in Ta'if, Saudi Arabia two years earlier and bring to an end Lebanon's catatastropic and seemingly interminable civil war. Indeed, the elections on balance seem to have performed this healing function to some extent. Nevertheless the election process was flawed in several ways. Important elements of the Maronite Christian sect boycotted the election to protest Syria's involvement, and turnout was low to nonexistent in several constituencies in Mount Lebanon. A number of Lebanese politicians of various sects protested the timing of the elections, arguing with some reason that there was insufficient time to prepare the registration lists. The electoral law itself was modified to allow certain sectarian za'ims to compete without serious competition. Voters living in the southern border zone occupied by Israel were not allowed to participate. And, in the opinion of many Lebanese, the presence of Syrian army and security forces tainted not so much the voting on election day itself but, more importantly, the process of selecting candidates.

On the other hand, voter turnout was substantial in many parts of the country, and there was significant competition in several districts. In the

Syrian-controlled Biqa' valley the son of Lebanon's president, supported by Syria, was defeated. There was a certain continuity of representation by old "parliamentary families," but there was also a shift toward party and group representation and a large increase in deputies with a "professional" as opposed to landed or big business background. Perhaps the most significant result was the strength of two Shi'ite Islamic parties, Hizballah and Amal. There was also a small number of representatives from Sunni political groups. Lebanon's civil war had been fought in part over sectarian power-sharing, and the Ta'if accord brought the Muslim representation up to 50 percent. In terms of "real" power, the 1992 elections accentuated the Muslims and diminished the traditional Maronite Christians. Whether this adjustment will prove stable is still unclear, but one can conclude that Lebanon is moving toward "fuller inclusion" of Muslims and Islamist parties.

Kuwait held competitive elections in October 1992 after a lapse in parliamentary life since 1986. The only Gulf country to have had any serious record of democratic politics, Kuwait's ruling family nonetheless was loathe to tolerate too much legislative independence and twice in recent times had dissolved the parliament. Following the Iraqi invasion and Kuwait's liberation by an American-led international military coalition, the Al-Sabah family came under strong domestic and international pressure to restore genuine parliamentary life. Reluctantly it agreed to hold elections, and the results explained that reluctance. In the 50-member chamber, some 36 of the winning candidates were in the opposition, including eight Islamists and nine pro-Islamists. Notwithstanding Kuwait's highly restrictive suffrage law, most observers rated this election as a significant

move back toward the political liberalism for which Kuwait had occasionally been known in the past.

In Yemen, following the unification of north and south Yemen in 1990, the first nationwide elections were held in April 1993. International observers were generally satisfied with the procedural aspects, although a local Yemeni monitoring group was more critical. The merger of two single-party regimes led to a parliament in which those two parties (the General People's Congress of the north and the Yemeni Socialist Party of the south) found themselves competing with a new challenger--the Islah Islamist party headed by Shaykh Abdallah Al-Ahmar. Of the 301 seats, the GPC took 123, the Islah took 62, and the YSP took 57; smaller leftwing nationalist and conservative parties and independents took the rest. Some six months since the election, Yemen has entered into a serious political crisis, with the old fissures between north and south beginning to reemerge. With the YSP still dominating the south and the GPC (in some degree of cooperation with the Islah) in the north, it is by no means clear that the elections have had the integrating effect that Yemenis had hoped for.

In June 1993 Morocco held the first of a two-stage parliamentary election. Two-thirds of the deputies were elected by direct popular vote, while in October the remaining third were chosen indirectly by electors selected by the King from municipalities and provinces. A "Democratic Bloc" (the kutla) of five left-of-center opposition parties polled nearly 60 percent of the popular vote in June. The kutla leaders were angered by the results of the indirect voting in October, however, in which their edge from the popular vote was reversed, leaving the pro-government coalition of parties with a small majority. The kutla accordingly decided to boycott

participation in a new cabinet. It appears, therefore, that King Hassan faces some difficulties in forming a stable government. What is noteworthy in the Moroccan case, for our purposes, is the absence of any formal Islamist party in the electoral or parliamentary arenas. King Hassan not only continues to dominate the political landscape, allowing a limited accommodation with certain parties, but he also continues to preempt the "Islamic" constituency. The King insists that he alone represents Islamic legitimacy and that Islamist parties cannot be allowed. The Islamist movement in Morocco therefore remains under ground.

Finally, we note the Jordanian elections of November 1993. King Hussein, firmly convinced that political liberalization was essential for his Kingdom's stability at a difficult period in regional affairs, pursued the policy of limited accommodation with Islamists and other political forces that he had initiated in 1989. By altering the electoral law toward a system of "one person, one vote" he was able to diminish the representation of the Islamic Alliance Party in the Lower House from 22 to 16. The elections are said to have been conducted properly, and the new parliament is not expected to challenge the King's intention to pursue the Arab-Israeli peace process, something that the Jordanian Islamists (including many Palestinian Jordanians) have opposed.

In conclusion, two points are worth making about the recent electoral activity. First, the fact that elections (which are not obviously sham) are taking place at all is new and noteworthy. Second, in all five cases the Islamist vote is significant but modest. In no case does it approach a majority. In several cases it constitutes a plurality. But in every case Islamists must pursue coalition strategies with non-Islamist parties if

they are to play the political game. Inclusionary strategies seem, therefore, to work.

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