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More Freedom, Less Terror?

Liberalization and Political Violence in the Arab World

Dalia Dassa Kaye, Frederic Wehrey,
Audra K. Grant, Dale Stahl

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Preface

In 2003, President Bush lamented, "Sixty years of Western nations excusing and accommodating the lack of freedom in the Middle East did nothing to make us safe," transforming democracy promotion into a national security priority. According to this logic, America must promote democracy as an antidote to terrorism; democracy promotion could no longer be relegated to obscure bureaus of the U.S. government. After 9/11 revealed the threats posed by extremism emanating from the Middle East, the Bush administration, and indeed many across the political spectrum, no longer considered democracy in the Arab world a luxury.

To be sure, the destabilizing events that have unfolded in Iraq and the broader region since 2003 have led to a backlash against democracy promotion in the Middle East, and to some extent, against the United States as well. Moreover, democracy promotion never secured a very high level of support or resources from the U.S. administration even at the height of its popularity. But given the prominent role of democracy promotion in the broader U.S. strategy for the Middle East, it is curious that so little research has empirically explored the relationship between democracy and terrorism.

Our study is an attempt to fill this gap, examining six Arab cases in depth. Rather than ask whether democracy can stop terrorism, we explore how liberalization processes can influence calculations regarding political violence in various domestic contexts (recognizing that there are no democracies, and arguably no genuine democratization processes, in the Arab world today). Has the introduction of politi-

cal reforms into the Arab Middle East alleviated terrorism and violent extremism? If so, in what ways and under what conditions? If not, why? Can the reversal of reforms and a return to repressive policies increase the risk of terrorism over time? In short, what are the *effects* of liberalization processes on the resort to political violence—immediate and delayed—in this critical area of the world?

This work should be of value to members of security policy communities in the United States and abroad as well as regional experts focusing specifically on the Middle East. Academic researchers and instructors may also find the study useful, as should the nongovernmental research and policy communities. Comments are welcome and should be directed to the lead author, Dalia Dassa Kaye (dkaye@rand.org).

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Summary

Many policymakers and analysts across the political spectrum consider democracy promotion an important element of a counterterrorism strategy. Yet others have argued that democracy can do little to stop terrorism and may even make the situation worse, particularly in unstable regions such as the Middle East. But neither side of this debate has moved far beyond unexamined assumptions and unsupported assertions; scant empirical evidence links democracy to terrorism, positively or negatively. This study examines whether such links exist by exploring cases from the Arab world—the region that inspired this debate in the first place.

This study examines how the process of political reform influences calculations regarding political violence in six Arab states. It is not a study of the relationship between fully functioning democracies and terrorism, because democracy and, arguably, genuine democratization are still absent in the Arab world today. This is also not a study about the causes of terrorism or how to end terrorism, as we recognize that the sources of terrorism are complex and multifaceted, and no one antidote is likely to address entirely its root causes.

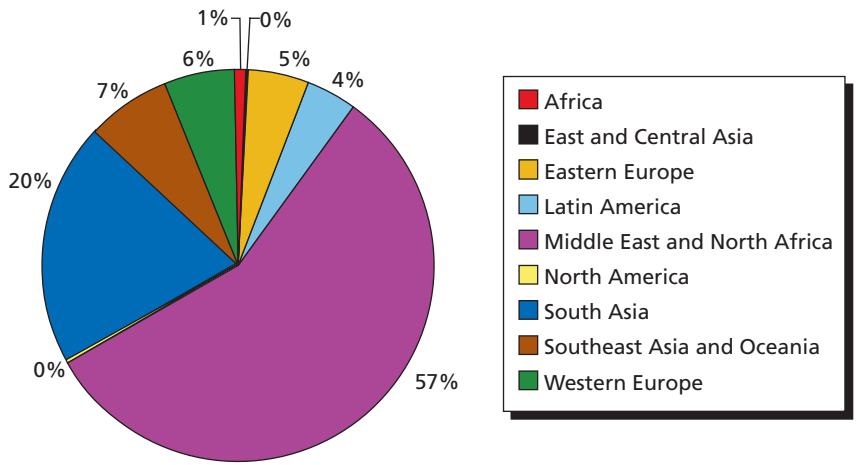
Rather, our goal is to assess whether and how political liberalization and related civil liberties (or their absence) have affected the resort to and/or support for terrorism. Has the introduction of political reforms into the Arab Middle East alleviated terrorism and violent extremism? If so, in what ways and under what conditions? If not, why? Can the reversal of reforms and a return to repressive policies increase the risk of terrorism over time? In short, what are the *effects* of liberalization processes on political violence—immediate and delayed—in this critical area of the world?

Tackling the Democracy-Terrorism Question: The Study's Approach

Even if democracy, or its absence, cannot on its own explain levels of terrorism, we must recognize that a significant number of terrorist incidents around the globe—at least since the U.S. invasion of Iraq in 2003—occur and stem from largely undemocratic regions (specifically the Middle East and North Africa), as Figures S.1 and S. 2 illustrate.

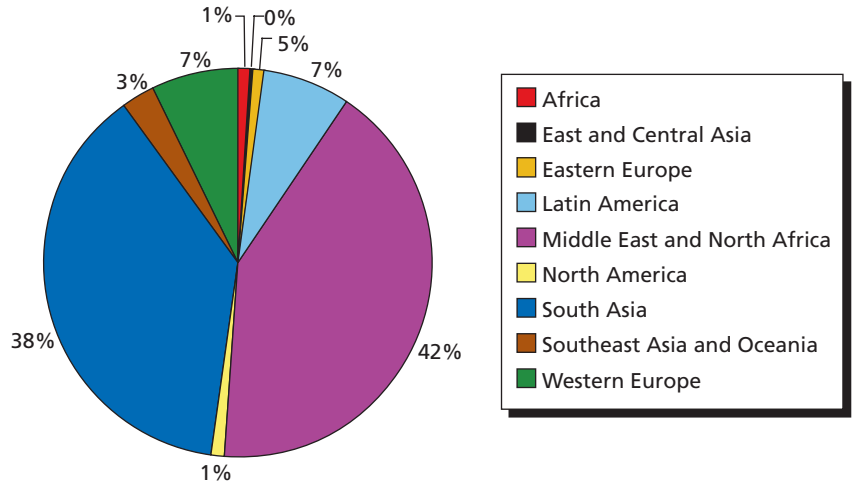
At the very least, these data suggest the need to explore how reform processes are functioning in the Arab World and their possible effects on levels of violence. Consequently, this study examines the effects of liberalization processes in the Middle East and North Africa over 15 years, asking whether such processes influenced the choices of domestic actors to engage in or support acts of terrorism or other forms of political violence. To do so, we delineated the causal logics usually assumed, but often not articulated, that are, in theory, supposed to link democratic practices to more pacific behavior (applying such logics to the more limited reform processes that exist in regions such as the Middle East). This analysis led us to identify three main processes by

Figure S.1
Terrorism Incidents, by Region, from the End of Combat Operations in Iraq (May 1, 2003) to December 31, 2006



RAND *MG772-S.1*

Figure S.2
Percentage of Claimed Terrorist Incidents by Regional Base of Operations, May 1, 2003, to December 31, 2006



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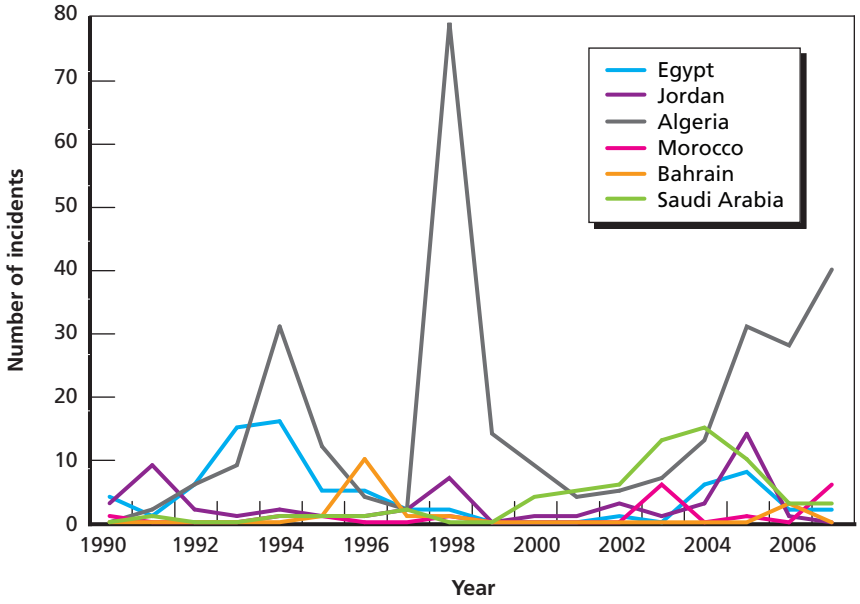
which democracy proponents expect democracy to undercut terrorism: *espousing norms of tolerance, creating functioning and inclusive institutional structures, and increasing the legitimacy of the political system*. We also considered arguments suggesting that the *destabilizing nature of transitional states* may make them more inclined toward war (and we applied such logic to the terrorism arena).

We explored the above hypotheses in Arab cases, in large part because the extremism that produced 9/11 and most directly influenced this policy debate came from this part of the Muslim world. In terms of the case selection within the Arab world, we developed several criteria. First, we wanted our cases to reflect variation both on levels of liberalization and levels of terrorism. As Figures S.3 and S.4 illustrate, our cases provided such variation over the 15-year time period we cover (1991 to 2006).

We also selected cases from different subregions within the Arab world (the Levant, the Maghreb, and the Gulf) where at least one of the subject countries is viewed as a major regional player. Finally, we did not choose cases that are complicated by ongoing or recent hot wars

Figure S.3
Total Number of Terrorist Incidents for Case Study Countries, 1990–2006

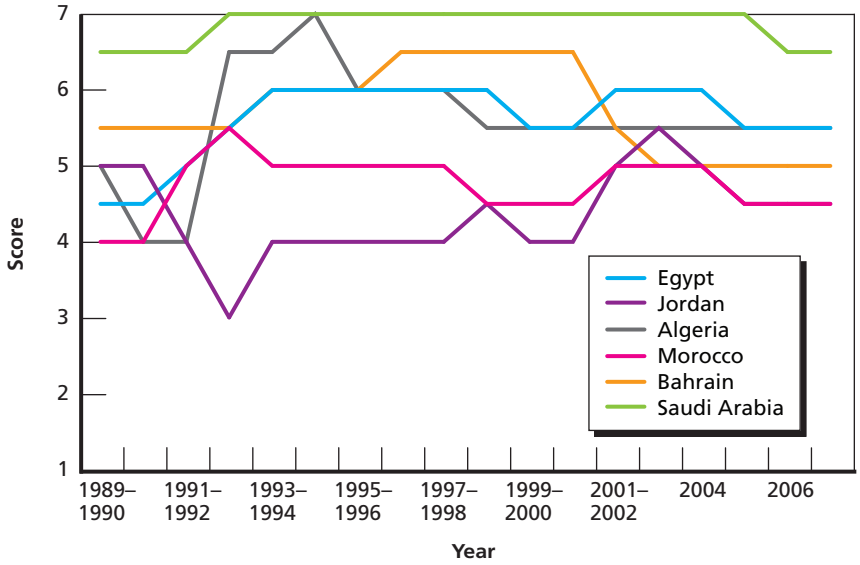


RAND *MG772-S.3*

and foreign occupation (e.g., Palestine, Lebanon, or Iraq), as it would be more difficult in such cases to discern the effects of liberalization measures as opposed to other factors that could be fostering extremism. Despite the destabilizing regional context of Arab-Israeli violence and the Iraq war, the cases we explore illustrate dynamics more independent of these conflicts and allow a better exploration of how the introduction of various levels of reform affected extremism and political violence over time.

The cases rely on extensive fieldwork in each country. Collectively, we interviewed over 130 regional experts (analysts, officials, journalists, military personnel, academics, and activists). Some authors also observed election rallies, political debates, and other civic forums. We also drew on secondary literature and primary source materials, including Arabic sources.

Figure S.4
Freedom House Scores for Case Study Countries, 1989/1990–2006



NOTE: A score of 1 indicates the highest degree of freedom, and 7 the least.

RAND *MG772-S.4*

Liberalization in the Arab World Can Both Contain and Exacerbate Political Violence

The study's six empirical cases—Egypt, Jordan, Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, Algeria, and Morocco—suggest that the way political reform operates in practice is significantly different from the abstract theoretical assumptions made on either side of the debate. Because democracy and, arguably, genuine democratization are not apparent in these cases, and in all cases we see significant backtracking, the effects of liberalization are mixed and may be delayed. Rather than fostering norms of tolerance, pluralism, and institutional inclusion, government-led reform processes in the Arab world often bring about intolerance and exclusionary political systems, contributing to, rather than undermining, support for political violence. And yet, controlled state processes and effective security institutions, including repression, have contained levels of political violence in many instances. That said, the destabiliz-

ing effects of transitional systems might be more apparent over the long run, when state policies of control and repression run their course.

Of all the assertions linking democracy to terrorism, the legitimacy argument seems to have the most significant impact. The enhanced legitimacy of the system produced through political openings can undercut extremist actors. But more ominously, the decline of a regime's legitimacy when reforms are not viewed as genuine or if significant reforms have been reversed can threaten long-term stability.

Despite significant differences across cases (particularly in terms of the varied conditions and receptivity to political reforms), one of the most critical commonalities is the finding that, even if limited reform measures can have some moderating effects on domestic actors, backtracking on reform and a widespread perception that the political process lacks legitimacy can prove destabilizing. The most negative aspects of political reform processes in the Arab world (e.g., exclusionary political systems, intolerance, and sectarian, tribal, and ethnic divisions) are the result of their limited and incomplete nature, not their mere existence. The following findings elaborate on this key point.

Political openings can co-opt and moderate opposition forces and marginalize hard-liners, but not indefinitely if reforms fail to produce tangible results. Allowing mass-appeal opposition movements, including Islamists, to participate legally in the political process has in some cases fostered moderation and prevented more violent tactics of confrontation against the state. In the case of Morocco, for instance, the government has permitted the political participation of moderate Islamist parties, leading them toward accommodation with the government instead of confrontation. Similarly, Jordan's inclusion of the Islamist opposition into the political process has had a moderating effect, undercutting support for more radical elements within and outside the party. However, growing confrontation between the government and the Islamist opposition is providing ammunition for more hard-line elements, who question the benefits of participating in a political process that is viewed as corrupt and illegitimate. A similar dynamic is at play in Bahrain, where the November 2006 parliamentary election bolstered the ranks of the pro-participation party, al-Wifaq, while siphoning support from the militant al-Haq movement.

But al-Wifaq's inability to produce tangible results from its parliamentary tenure and the resulting rise in frustration are pushing more Shi'a back to al-Haq.

Political reforms have had little effect in promoting norms of tolerance; if anything, they often exacerbate existing societal cleavages. Although reform processes have in some cases had a moderating effect on the opposition, their limited and controlled nature—and the fractured context in which they are operating in the Arab world—have resulted in a distinct absence of norms of tolerance and pluralism across all cases. Fear of growing Islamic power among governments and secular opposition movements is increasing intolerance of opposing groups and leading to crackdowns on freedom of expression. Egypt, for example, still suffers from significant tension and violence between its Muslim and Coptic communities, and Copts are generally opposed to any changes that would give Islamist groups further power, as they are unsure about whether political liberalization would actually lead to further protection of minority rights. The holding of elections in Bahrain in 2006—particularly in the context of sectarian strife in Iraq, Hizballah's war with Israel, and the disclosure of the "Bandar Report" (an alleged government plan to co-opt Sunnis in order to marginalize the Shi'a in Bahrain)—exacerbated sectarian tensions and intolerance of other groups.

Political institutions in the Arab world are controlled and exclusionary. Opening up the process to allow for new institutional mechanisms, such as political parties and elected parliaments, has had some moderating effects on opposition forces in several cases, preventing the formation and support of more radical groups. For instance, one Shi'a opposition party, although continually viewed with suspicion by Bahraini Sunnis, has largely abandoned its radical agenda since the 1990s and has participated in elections and pushed for political reform via peaceful channels. But institutional openings are often tightly controlled and limited.

In the Jordanian case, election laws are structured to systematically exclude and marginalize the Islamist opposition. In Algeria, institutional mechanisms, such as the official ban on Islamist parties from elections and political life, have forced the Islamic movement

to the sidelines. Similarly, Islamic opposition groups have been consistently excluded from political participation in Egypt. In the Gulf cases, democratic structures are viewed as "institutionalized sectarianism." Nowhere is this more apparent than in Bahrain, where the king unilaterally revised the 1973 constitution, subordinating the elected parliament to an appointed upper house and depriving it of any ability to formally introduce new legislation or exert financial oversight over government ministries. The effective neutering of this body, along with electoral gerrymandering designed to ensure Sunni dominance, spurred a widespread Shi'a and leftist boycott of the 2002 parliamentary and municipal elections. The result was a National Assembly that was disproportionately dominated by Sunni Muslim groups.

Cosmetic reforms and backtracking erode regime legitimacy and contribute to political violence. While liberalization measures may not have a direct effect on existing radical terrorist groups, even limited reforms can help "pull the rug out" from under the extremists if opposition groups and the broader public believe the system is legitimately addressing their concerns and interests. In some of the study's cases, for example, political reform has helped generate societal support for counterterrorism measures against extremist groups. However, perceptions of legitimacy can suffer when regimes fail to deliver on promised reforms. Indeed, regional polling suggests that publics desire democratic governance but are consistently disappointed with their leadership's failure to deliver. The growing public sphere and new sources for information may only be exacerbating the gap between rising expectations for democracy and the disappointing reality of its absence.

In Morocco, even though the monarchy's legitimacy remains largely intact, the continued corruption and lack of rule of law (in addition to massive economic disparities) are major irritants for Islamists. The most dramatic example of democratic reversal leading to violence is the Algerian case, where the nullification of elections in 1992 (in which the Islamic Salvation Front was poised to win) led to the explosion of a civil war that engulfed the country in violence for nearly a decade. In the Gulf, the anemic power of elected bodies also erodes regime legitimacy and contributes to violence. Parliaments are viewed

as surreptitious channels for Islamist domination, resulting in a web of bylaws and rules that prevent them from exercising any real power. This invariably has led to cynicism and charges of hypocrisy, damaging whatever legitimacy the initial holding of elections might have conferred on the regime.

Limited reforms are not always destabilizing in the short term. If liberalization in the Arab world has had a poor record in terms of producing real political inclusion, tolerance, and legitimacy, in many instances it has still not proved as destabilizing as we might expect. This is particularly the case given that reform processes are often pursued as part of a larger regime strategy of accommodation and repression. In Bahrain, Jordan, and Saudi Arabia, for example, the competency of the regimes' security services played a major role in either curtailing or preventing terrorism and violence. While co-option and other techniques of accommodation and repression can mitigate the destabilizing effects of stalled reform processes, such tactics do not address long-term, underlying challenges. Strategies of repression may eliminate terrorist threats for a time, but they also may be pushing back the problem. For example, the success of the Egyptian government in using repression to quell terrorism within its borders by the end of the 1990s may have inadvertently sent the extremists elsewhere.

Rule of law and human rights are particularly critical factors in influencing calculations regarding political violence. Although all aspects of reform in the Middle East have been limited, some elements provoke more resentment than others. This is particularly true of those aspects related to rule of law and human rights. For example, close observers of Egyptian politics and the state's struggle with violent groups view the protection of human rights and the rule of law as key elements of democracy, and as particularly important elements in boosting the legitimacy of the regime. In Bahrain, one of the most important, tangible initiatives that bolstered the credibility of the new emir when he came to power in 1999 appears to have been reforms in the judiciary, particularly the removal of the despised British chief of Bahraini security and increased freedom of the press. Author interviews revealed that prison reform, rule of law, human rights, freedom of expression, and a general improvement in the judiciary system are perceived as criti-

cal early steps to legitimizing a genuine democratic process. The nexus between legitimacy and judicial reform appears to be borne out even in the Saudi case (the most authoritarian case examined in this study), where writings of Saudi jihadis themselves routinely attack the harshness and human rights abuses of the penitentiary system.

There are many reasons for a rise or decline in radicalism and terrorism that are unrelated to political reform. This study recognizes that a rise or decline in terrorism is not only related to political reform processes. This is one of the reasons why quantitative assessments of this subject often fall short, including the limited quantitative data produced for this study. Correlations between levels of democracy and levels of violence are often indeterminate. Aggregate data at the national level (such as that employed by Freedom House (FH) and the RAND-MIPT [Memorial Institute for the Prevention of Terrorism] terrorism database) also miss regional variations that may account for political violence that are largely unrelated to political processes occurring at the national level.

The cases in this study also highlight a number of other factors affecting levels of violence, or public opposition to violent extremists, that are unrelated to internal reform processes. For example, the decline of Iranian-backed terrorism in Bahrain in the late 1990s was probably more rooted in Bahrain's external rapprochement with Iran and policy shifts inside Iran than internal reform measures. Similarly, the spike in violence that arose in mid-2003 inside Saudi Arabia likely resulted from regional developments, such as the return of Saudi veterans from the Afghan front and the Iraq war, rather than the nominal internal reform process. In Morocco, the 2003 bombings in Casablanca are believed to be a response to Morocco's relationship with the United States and the West in the aftermath of the Iraq war as much as they are a protest against domestic conditions. Other factors that affected levels of terrorism in various cases (positively and negatively) include the effectiveness of state security services, the nature of jihadi cells within the country and their prior experience, the cohesiveness of opposition forces, other negative regional developments (e.g., the Iraq war, violence in the West Bank and Gaza, and the Lebanon conflict), negative public reactions

to terrorist tactics, and broader socioeconomic conditions within the country.

Pursue Realistic Democracy Promotion Rather Than a Return to Realism

Destabilizing regional developments since the Iraq war—as well as growing concerns about rising Iranian power and influence—have led to a backlash against democracy promotion in U.S. policy circles. Shoring up support from undemocratic Sunni Arab regimes to help stabilize Iraq and counter Iran appears to be a greater priority for U.S. policymakers than democracy. The strong showing of Islamist movements in elections across the region, and particularly the HAMAS victory in the Palestinian elections, has only contributed to this trend. The growing consensus in Washington is that democracy is dangerous in this part of the world. In other words, U.S. policy is largely returning to a pre-9/11 "realist" posture.

However, our study suggests that a return to realism would be shortsighted. Yes, there are dangers and risks inherent in reform processes in regions such as the Middle East, and our cases provide ample evidence to this effect. But there are also dangers in trying to stymie such processes. Indeed, one of the most dangerous triggers for radicalization and a resort to political violence is the backtracking on reform apparent across the region. This suggests that pressing ahead with genuine democratization, not just limited reforms, may stem extremism over time by bolstering the legitimacy of weak and vulnerable regimes.

That said, our suggestion that the United States maintain democracy promotion as a key foreign policy priority does not mean that we recommend a transformational policy of regime change or the imposition of democracy by force. Political reform in the Arab world, and indeed across the broader region, is a varied and internal process that requires sensitivity and recognition of the limits of what external actors can affect. But serious attention to liberalization measures in this region, particularly in the areas of human rights and rule of law, can serve U.S. interests over the long term. In short, rather than a return to

realism, U.S. policy should pursue realistic democracy promotion. This means focusing on the key areas that matter consistently and forcefully while recognizing that democracy is no panacea for countering terrorism. Democracy promotion is one critical way to diminish motives and support for violent acts, but counterterrorism policy must rely on multiple tools to effectively address this complex and multifaceted challenge. Our study suggests that democracy promotion, if carried out carefully, should remain in the toolbox.

This report concludes by offering the following policy recommendations:

Apply sustained pressure, scrutinize, and limit applause. U.S. attention to reform measures and sustained pressure can serve as a critical impetus for continued efforts among key allies. This does not mean pressuring important allies such as Egypt, Jordan, and Bahrain to pursue policies that would threaten their survival. The focus should be on strengthening democratic institutions and practices, including election laws, so that reforms that have been initiated are followed through and substantiated. The problem for many regional democracy activists is the perceived absence of sustained U.S. commitment and the belief that the United States is often deceived by the façade of democratization that, in practice, is not genuinely allowing alternative voices to be heard or adhering to basic civil liberties. What is needed is a more disciplined U.S. policy metric for measuring reform, as well as more-careful attention to the manner in which approval, endorsement, or criticism is publicly conveyed.

Emphasize judicial reform and rule of law, human rights, and transparency. In many cases, the legitimizing effects of political reforms are hindered by a lack of progress on rule of law and judicial reform. Torture, political imprisonment, anti-assembly laws, arbitrary arrests, censorship, and abusive security services continue to erode regime legitimacy across the region, and by extension, U.S. legitimacy, given American support for these regimes. Indeed, American post-9/11 actions (Abu Ghraib, Guantanamo, rendition policies) have themselves eroded the U.S. image as supportive of human rights and rule of law. In addition, many interviews for this study suggested that another critical area of reform was financial oversight of government affairs,

the lack of which continues to hamper the building of popular trust with the regime. U.S. policymakers should be more attuned to measuring progress in these areas before lauding reform solely on the basis of elections.

Avoid taking sides. Across the region, accusations of U.S. meddling in electoral processes are widespread, particularly in the aftermath of the U.S. rejection of the HAMAS victory in the Palestinian elections. In the Gulf, the United States is viewed as fueling sectarian strife; in Bahrain, Mulsim Brotherhood (MB) candidates routinely point to Shi'a meetings with U.S. embassy personnel as proof of a larger electoral conspiracy. While a degree of paranoia will always exist, overt signals of U.S. partisanship, particularly for liberals, should be avoided—they damage the legitimizing effects of reform by injecting a foreign-patronage dimension into indigenous institutions. Moreover, they antagonize potential and future partners. For example, in the 2006 parliamentary elections in Bahrain, liberal candidates supported by the United States faired poorly in the election; post-election commentary blamed their defeat on America's vocal and overt patronage.

Safeguard security while respecting the rule of law. Arab publics do not want the Iraq experience replicated throughout region, and their concerns for security and stability lead to considerable tolerance for government crackdowns on extremist groups. But such efforts must be balanced with the need to maintain legitimacy by respecting the rule of law and avoiding excesses. U.S. policymakers must convey these priorities to regional partners and adhere to such principles in America's own actions in the region, particularly in Iraq and Afghanistan, where U.S. forces are concentrated.

Engage Islamist parties while leveling the playing field for other types of political opposition. Accepting and engaging Islamist parties (at least those that adhere to nonviolent practices) may not be ideal, given that many hold positions contrary to U.S. interests. But the dominance of Islamist movements in the region, if only because authoritarian governments have not allowed any other alternatives to develop, is a reality that U.S. policy cannot wish away. Over time, Islamist popularity may erode if they fail to deliver and respond to basic needs in society, but at the moment, such movements fill a gap not pro-

vided by existing leaderships. To enhance the legitimacy of reform processes in the region, the United States must recognize the role Islamists play and engage such actors. U.S. embassy officials should continue to reach out to representatives of such groups even if, at times, they will refuse to meet. U.S. policymakers should also encourage allies to continue or adopt co-option and accommodation strategies that are more likely to encourage moderation and marginalize radicals. At the same time, the United States can try to foster (but not overtly support) more secular or even Islamist alternatives that are less socially conservative, while recognizing that such alternatives will take time to develop because they currently do not have broad appeal.

Recognize political motivations behind pro- and antidemocratization stances. Stances on the democracy-terrorism question often mask ulterior political motivations and positions. For example, the Egyptian government often argues against reforms by evoking fears about Islamist takeovers that will lead to massive violence and unrest, but it uses such fears as a cover to crackdown on *all* political opposition, including secular parties. The MB, on the other hand, argues in favor of democratization ostensibly because it favors pluralism and free and fair elections, but in reality it too seeks to maneuver the political system to its liking, which in practice may not tolerate minority views. The Saudis at times express opposition to Bahraini political reform (because of concerns regarding Iranian influence), opposition that has been exaggerated by the ruling al-Khalifa in Bahrain as a useful pretext for avoiding real reforms. Western policymakers need to understand such motivations in order to pursue appropriate democracy promotion and counterterrorism strategies.

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Abbreviations

AIS	Armée Islamique du Salut
EIJ	Egyptian Islamic Jihad
EOHR	Egyptian Organization for Human Rights
ETA	Euskadi Ta Askatasuna
FFS	Socialist Forces Front (Algerian)
FH	Freedom House
FIS	Islamic Salvation Front (Algerian)
FLN	National Liberation Front (Algerian)
GAI	al-Gama'a al-Islamiyya (Egyptian)
GIA	Armed Islamic Group (Algerian)
GCC	Gulf Cooperation Council
GID	General Intelligence Department (Jordanian security service)
GSL	Free Salafist Group (Algerian)
GSPC	Salafi Group for Preaching and Combat (Algerian)
IAF	Islamic Action Front (Jordanian)
IAS	Islamic Action Society (Bahranian)
IER	Truth and Reconciliation Commission
IFLB	Islamic Front for the Liberation of Bahrain

IMF	International Monetary Fund
INDH	Human Development Initiative
IRGC-QF	Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps–Quds Force
MB	Muslim Brotherhood
MIGC	Moroccan Islamic Combatant Group
MIPT	Memorial Institute for the Prevention of Terrorism
MP	member of parliament
MSP	Movement for Society and Peace (Algerian)
NDP	National Democratic Party (Egyptian)
NGO	nongovernmental organization
PJD	Justice and Development Party (Moroccan)
QAP	al-Qa'ida on the Arabian Peninsula
RCD	Rally for Culture and Democracy (Algerian)
RND	National Democratic Rally (Algerian)

CHAPTER ONE

"Democracy" and Terrorism in the Arab World: A Framework for Analysis

Introduction

Very little empirical work has seriously investigated the widespread policy assumption that the promotion of democracy in the Middle East will help "dry up the swamp" of international terrorism. Indeed, the linkages between democracy and terrorism are more often asserted than explained. A senior administration official who helped draft President Bush's national strategy to combat terrorism reportedly could not cite any authoritative study linking the rise of democracy with the defeat of terrorism, other than to say "I'm personally a huge fan of John Stuart Mill."[1] Considering that democratization was offered as at least one of the objectives of the U.S.-led invasion of Iraq in 2003 and remains a component of U.S. policy in the region today,[2] it is critical that we better understand this relationship. This study attempts to do so by grounding our analysis with empirical data from the Arab world—the region that inspired this debate in the first place.[3]

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1 Cited in Hirsh (2006).

2 Although the "freedom agenda" is not as prominent in President Bush's second term, the administration has not entirely abandoned the concept, even if it is taking a more nuanced approach to the issue in light of Iraq. See, for example, Carpenter (2008). Presidential candidates for the 2008 U.S. elections have also debated the role of democracy promotion in U.S. regional strategy. See Cook (2007b).

3 Of course, democracy promotion is not new to American foreign policy, but the explicit linkage between democracy promotion and the prevention of terrorism is a relatively recent

What are the mechanisms through which democracy (or, more accurately, liberalization in the Arab context) is supposed to reduce extremism? What is it about democratic systems that will lead organized political actors to turn toward nonviolent rather than violent means to express their views and demands and reduce popular support for terrorist actions? Or, as some are now asking, does democracy have anything to do with terrorism and, if so, might it make matters worse?[4] Even if democracy may have a moderating effect—in line with democratic peace theory—does the process of democratization in transitional societies lead to more rather than less violent behavior?[5] And how do such concepts apply to liberalization processes in the Arab world, given that the region still lacks democracy and arguably genuine democratization? Answers to these questions clearly have significant implications for U.S. democracy promotion and counterterrorism policies in the Middle East. We seek to address these questions by developing a number of potential causal connections drawn from this broader debate, which we then assess in six empirical case studies: Egypt, Jordan, Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, Algeria, and Morocco.

We find that reform processes in the Arab world have varied effects in different contexts, on different types of political actors, and over time. In some cases, reform efforts have had a moderating influence and have prevented radicalization and a resort to violence. In other instances, liberalization measures have destabilizing effects, particularly given the limited and controlled manner in which such measures are implemented.

Our study also suggests that it would be a mistake to define the effects of political reform on political violence based only on one case (e.g., Iraq) or one type of terrorist actor (e.g., al-Qa'ida). A more nuanced understanding through other cases, such as those we include in this study, reveals that some positive dynamics are possible while also illustrating the deleterious and at times unintended repercussions of limited reform processes, particularly when backtracking is apparent.

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concept developed in the immediate aftermath of the 9/11 attacks in the United States.

4 The most prominent piece sparking such questions is Gause (2005).

5 For an elaboration of this argument globally, see Mansfield and Snyder (2005).

Rather than abandon the reform agenda entirely—particularly given that regionals themselves are unlikely to abandon such efforts[6]—American policymakers should develop more-refined understandings and approaches toward democracy in this region. In particular, our findings suggest the need to focus on political rights, human rights practices, and institution-building as much as elections.[7] The cases in this study also suggest that one of the most important elements of reform, in terms of stemming radicalization, is strengthening the legitimacy of the existing system through, for example, greater adherence to rule of law, human rights, and government transparency. What seems to produce the most frustration in repressed societies is not that people cannot go to the polls, but rather the lack of personal freedoms and rights.

Finally, it is important to underscore what this study is *not* about. This is not a study examining the sources of terrorism.[8] We recognize that the sources of terrorism are complex and multifaceted, and no one antidote is likely to address entirely its root causes. For this reason, we do not extensively examine other underlining factors (such as levels of economic development or education) that may foster extremism,[9]

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[6] In recent years, calls for reform have been rising in the Arab world. Among the more noted documents drawing attention to the so-called democracy deficit in the Arab world have been the UN Human Development Reports (2002, 2003, 2004a, 2005). Also, see the Alexandria Statement (2004); Arab Center for the Development of the Rule of Law and Integrity and the International Foundation for the Election Systems (2007a, 2007b); "Arabs Speak Out About Democracy in New Reports" (2007); and "Arabs Rate Democratic Institutions, Urge Reforms in New Report" (2007).

[7] However, some analysts argue that although elections may produce destabilizing results in the Middle East, they are a reality that U.S. policymakers cannot ignore. See, for example, Dunne (2007).

[8] For the seminal work on the causes of terrorism, see Crenshaw (1981). Crenshaw observes that the lack of political participation is one cause of terrorism but by no means the only one, as the causes of terrorism are multiple and can be distinguished between those that are preconditions as opposed to direct causes. For an updated review of this question in a post-9/11 context, see Cronin (2002–2003).

[9] Moreover, many studies have questioned the relationship between economic or educational factors and terrorism, noting, for example, that many terrorists (including those responsible for the 9/11 attacks), are highly educated and economically well off. In his study of Muslim insurgencies, Mohamed Hafez finds no correlation between economic depriva-

although we take note of economic factors as they relate to issues of political inclusion or other liberalization measures in various cases.[10] This is also not a study about how to end terrorism,[11] though our analysis would, again, suggest skepticism about any one solution solving such a multidimensional and varied challenge. And finally, this is not a study about the state of democracy (or more accurately its absence) in the Arab world today.[12]

Rather, our study asks a more specific question: Has the introduction of political reforms into this region over the past 15 years (from 1991 to 2006) alleviated the problem of terrorism and violent extremism? If so, in what ways and under what conditions? If not, why? What are the costs of Arab states reversing political reforms and reverting to repressive policies in terms of the potential for increased terrorism? In short, what are the *effects* of liberalization on opposition to or support for political violence in this critical area of the world?

Democracy in the Middle East: "Liberalized Autocracies" or Genuine Democratization?

What do we mean by democracy in the Middle East? Analysts vary on definitions and the type of data necessary to assess the state of reform

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tion and levels of political violence. For his critique of economic factors, see Hafez (2003). On this issue, also see Krueger and Maleckova (2003); Blomberga, Hess, and Weerapana (2004); and Piazza (2006).

[10] For a study on the effects of social and economic development as a tool in stemming terrorism, see Cragin and Chalk (2003).

[11] On this question, see Cronin (2006).

[12] While we certainly track the nature and extent of political reforms in the case studies, our interest is in assessing the effects of various reforms or rollbacks, not in analyzing the reforms themselves at length. For overviews and progress report assessments of liberalization in the Middle East, see, for example, Diamond, Plattner, and Brumberg (2003); Saikal and Schnabel (2003); Carothers and Ottaway (2005); Handelman and Tessler (1999); Richards (2005); Ottaway et al. (2005); Bellin (2004); and Albrecht and Schlumberger (2004). For continuous updates on the state of democratic reforms across the region, see the *Arab Reform Bulletin*, published by the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. Also see Marc Lynch's blog, Abu Aardvark (Lynch, n.d.).

among different Middle East states.[13] Yet consensus has emerged on two central points: (1) A new wave of political reforms (commonly referred to as "liberalization") emerged in the region beginning in the late 1980s and early 1990s and (2) such reforms have not yet led to the emergence of democracies and, arguably, genuine democratization (i.e., the process of transitioning from authoritarian rule to democracy) anywhere in the Arab world. If anything, many regimes have backtracked on even limited reforms, though there is significant variation in liberalization efforts across the region, including the cases included in this study.

Indeed, the limited and often controlled nature of political openings has led some analysts to question whether generic democracy theories outlining a staged and largely linear transition from authoritarianism to democracy apply to regions such as the Middle East. Daniel Brumberg's concept of "liberalized autocracy" best characterizes such skepticism, suggesting that liberalization measures initiated by autocrats may permanently stall, as such leaders have no intention of opening up the political system to allow for popular participation, civil liberties, and rights that are protected by law (common attributes of functioning democracies).[14] In Brumberg's view, liberalized autocracy is not just "the trademark mixture of guided pluralism, controlled elections, and selective repression" but rather "a *type* of political system whose institutions, rules, and logic defy any linear model of democratization."[15]

Limited political and civil openings that are often initiated and ultimately controlled by the state (a common regime survival strategy to offset economic or other societal pressures) may indicate liberalization, but not real political inclusion or even a process that might lead to such inclusion (democratization).[16] As Brumberg and Diamond explain:

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13 See, for example, Iliya Harik's critique (2006) of Freedom House measurements.

14 Brumberg (2003 and 2005).

15 Brumberg (2003, p. 35). Other analysts have noted the limitations of traditional democracy definitions for regions like the Middle East, where the phenomenon of elections without democracy is prevalent. See, for example, Diamond (2002).

16 For a distinction between liberalism and democracy, and the related concept of illiberal democracy, see Zakaria (2003). Also, see Jaber (2003).

"Arab leaders look to liberalization as a way to divide the opposition even while letting it blow off steam. The proliferation of civil society groups, a somewhat open press, and access to the Internet and satellite television can create a feeling of virtual democracy without opening the doors to dramatic reforms. . . . Liberalization without popular sovereignty or political accountability is thus the essence of liberalized autocracy—a form of hybrid regime that produces 'elections without democracy.'"[17] According to this assessment, a program of liberalization that "*actually* intended to achieve democratization" would have to go much further than even the most "liberal" of the autocratic states in the region, such as Morocco or Jordan, have gone.[18] Steven Cook similarly suggests that measures such as a relaxation of police powers, greater freedoms for political association, and institutional changes that weaken regimes' political control would be more accurate indicators for the transition from authoritarianism to genuine democratization than merely the existence of elections.[19] Given the persistence of authoritarianism in this region, and even its "upgrading,"[20] many regional analysts share Brumberg and Diamond's skepticism that such hybrid regimes will ever move beyond limited reforms.

That said, some analysts argue that even limited political reforms can still have significant and long-lasting effects. As Jillian Schwedler argues, the tendency to focus on the stalled nature of reform "overlooks the often dramatic evolution in public political space that results from even limited political openings. . . . Political parties organize, publish agendas, and seek to build a constituency. Public political debates expand, and the language of democracy is invoked by both state and nonstate actors. . . . These developments are often dismissed because the broader process is not 'moving forward' and meaningful democ-

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17 Brumberg and Diamond (2003).

18 Such indicators for "real" democratization would include lifting all restrictions on the press, intellectual freedom, and associations; setting up independent and accountable institutions (courts, electoral commissions, audit offices, anticorruption agencies, central banks); and, of course, free and fair electoral competition. See Brumberg and Diamond (2003).

19 Cook (2007a, p. 148).

20 Heydemann (2007).

racy is nowhere on the horizon."[21] In her study of Jordan and Yemen, Schwedler finds that even though nondemocratic regimes are still in place, reforms have led to the restructuring of public political space in a way that is promoting pluralist practices. Other analysts focusing on Morocco also offer a less pessimistic perspective, suggesting that recent elections in that country have continued its "partial democratization" process and that limited reform may have a "limited shelf life."[22]

The aim of this study is not to explain the persistence of authoritarianism in this region[23] or to settle the debate about whether liberalized autocracies in the Middle East are a permanent fixture or a hybrid system capable of moving toward real democratization. Our objective is to assess how the limited reforms and liberalization processes we have witnessed to date have affected calculations toward the use of political violence.[24]

To make such an assessment, we adopt a broad understanding of such reforms, including not only political rights but also civil liber-

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21 Schwedler (2006a, p. 193).

22 McFaul and Wittes (2008, p. 21).

23 For different explanations of the persistence of authoritarianism in the Middle East, see Bellin (2004) and Albrecht and Schlumberger (2004). Bellin argues the "robustness" of authoritarianism is not because the Middle East lacks the prerequisites for democracy (i.e., the Arab exceptionalism argument), but rather because of the strength and effectiveness of states' "coercive apparatus" that prevents viable opposition. Albrecht and Schlumberger also observe that the lack of any effective, well-organized, and financed autonomous groups that can compete or oppose state power (except for non-co-opted Islamic groups) explains the continued trend toward authoritarian rule in the region. Richards (2005) adds external political impediments to the list of reasons why the transition away from authoritarianism toward democracy is so difficult in the Arab world. For further discussion of the impediments and opportunities for the transition away from authoritarianism, including dilemmas of rentier states, see Kazemi and Norton (1999).

24 The effects of genuine democratization or democracy on terrorism and political violence may or may not produce similar dynamics as those we identify based on more limited political reform measures. It is possible, for example, that real democratization could either lead to greater political violence than we see resulting from more limited reforms because of the greater political stakes, or conversely, less political violence because of the genuine incorporation of a wide range of political and social actors into the system. Much, of course, would depend on how quickly and in what manner democratization came about. We thank Larry Diamond for bringing this point to our attention.

ties and freedoms. Such inclusive definitions are more appropriate for a study assessing the effects of reform on levels of political violence, because many assumptions about the way in which democracy is, in theory, supposed to reduce extremism are not limited to greater participation in the political process. They also relate to the promotion of greater tolerance for opposing opinions and groups and venues to express opposition views, as well as the level of repression in a given society.

Consequently, this study draws to some extent on Freedom House (FH) data because FH adopts such broad understandings of democracy. The FH index ranks countries' level of freedom based on both political rights and civil liberties, scoring countries in both categories separately and then providing a combined score.[25] Political rights are measured by the extent to which people participate freely in the political process, including legitimate elections, competition for public office, political parties, and organizations. Civil liberties include the freedom of expression and beliefs, associational rights, rule of law, and personal autonomy from the state.[26] Freedom House ranks countries on a scale of 1 to 7 based on these types of variables, with a score or 1 indicating the highest degree of freedom and 7 the least. These scores are shown in Table 1.1. Countries with a combined score from 1 to 2.5 are considered "Free," 3 to 5 "Partly Free," and 5.5 to 7 "Not Free." All Arab states fall into either the "Partly Free" or "Not Free" categories, including the six case studies we examine at length.

Because no Arab democracies exist, this study considers the effects of more limited political reform efforts on political violence and extremism in the Arab world, not the relationship between developed democracies and terrorism.

Finally, the democracy literature not only helps us understand how to interpret "democracy" in a region such as Middle East, it also

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[25] For a detailed overview of Freedom House methodology, see Freedom House (2007).

[26] Freedom House bases its ratings on a checklist of 10 political rights questions and 15 civil liberties questions. Political rights are grouped into three categories (electoral process, political pluralism and participation, and functioning government) while the civil liberties questions are based on four categories (freedom of expression and belief, associational and organizational rights, rule of law, and personal autonomy and individual rights).

Table 1.1
2007 Freedom House Scores for Arab League States

Country	FH Score
Partly Free	
Comoros	3.5
Kuwait	4
Jordan	4.5
Lebanon	4.5
Mauritania	4.5
Morocco	4.5
Bahrain	5
Djibouti	5
Yemen	5
Not Free	
Algeria	5.5
Egypt	5.5
Oman	5.5
Qatar	5.5
Tunisia	5.5
United Arab Emirates	5.5
Iraq	6
Saudi Arabia	6.5
Syria	6.5
Libya	7
Somalia	7
Sudan	7

suggests the sequence in which democracies are likely to emerge. Most significantly, democracy theorists working in a comparative perspective view the establishment of impartial and effective state institutions (e.g., bureaucracies, police, a judiciary that implements the rule of law) as

critical early steps in democratization efforts.[27] Such analysts argue that political inclusion (e.g., elections) should follow, rather than precede, such institutional development. In other words, democracy promotion should not just consist of a checklist of various reforms to encourage in random fashion, but rather should take into account the crucial element of *sequence*. That said, other democracy analysts question the sequencing logic, given the realities of reform processes in regions such as the Middle East, where autocrats are unlikely to voluntarily pursue institutional reform and rule of law without the pressure produced by competitive election processes.[28]

Despite these limits, the sequencing dilemma still offers important insights into reform processes in transitional states. Drawing on the principles of democratic theorists such as Robert Dahl, political scientists Edward D. Mansfield and Jack Snyder argue, for example, that "Where rules, habits, and institutions of competitive politics were well established before holding unfettered mass elections . . . the transition to democracy went relatively smoothly. In contrast, where mass electoral politics developed before the institutions to regulate political competition were in place, transitions were prone to conflict. . . . Elites tended to feel threatened by political change, and leaders often deployed nationalism as a justification for intolerance and repression."[29] Such understandings can help explain the instability in Iraq, with sectarianism perhaps replacing nationalism as the central justification for continued conflict in ethnically fractured nations such as those in the Middle East.

Consequently, many democracy analysts view the establishment of viable state institutions as far more significant than, for example, civil society development. While civil society development can be helpful, some democracy analysts question whether such groups—particularly in the Middle East, where many Western-supported nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) have limited domestic grassroots support—can

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[27] See, for example, Bellin (2004).

[28] Carothers (2007a).

[29] Mansfield and Snyder (2005, pp. 8–9). They draw on Dahl's *Polyarchy* (1971) in this assessment.

make a significant difference in furthering political reform.[30] Others observe that not only is civil society development in the Middle East limited, but not all groups are politically neutral, and some may even promote norms and policies that run counter to U.S. interests.[31] Instead, strengthening state institutions may have a greater impact. These are important lessons to keep in mind when considering prescriptions for U.S. democracy promotion,[32] which we discuss further in the final chapter.

Understanding Terrorism

Definitions of terrorism are famously contested and varied. And in large-n statistical studies, definitions of terrorism can have a significant impact on research results. However, in this study, because we are not engaging in such analysis but rather are focused on in-depth case studies drawing on qualitative and quantitative measures, different interpretations of terrorism should not affect our research conclusions as dramatically. For our quantitative examination of terrorist incidents in our cases, we draw on the RAND–Memorial Institute for the Prevention of Terrorism (MIPT) Terrorism Incident Database's definition of terrorism, which determines the content of the database. According to the RAND-MIPT definition,

> Terrorism is violence calculated to create an atmosphere of fear and alarm to coerce others into actions they would not otherwise

[30] For detailed discussions of the role of civil society in the Middle East, see Hawthorne (2005); Carothers (1999–2000); Ottaway and Carothers (2000); and Norton (1994 and 1995).

[31] Berman (2003). Tamara Wittes (2004) also notes the potentially negative effects of civil society development in the Middle East.

[32] For a review of post-9/11 U.S. democracy promotion initiatives as well as European approaches, see Dalacoura (2005), Sharp (2006), Wittes (2008b), Kopstein (2006), and Yacoubian (2004).

> undertake, or refrain from actions they desired to take. Acts of terrorism are generally directed against civilian targets.[33]

This definition would include military targets that make a broader political statement (e.g., the attack on the USS *Cole* in Yemen) as acts of terrorism. Other central elements in defining terrorism include the motivations of terrorists, which must be political (i.e., not all crimes are acts of terrorism even if terrorist acts are viewed as criminal). Finally, terrorism is generally carried out in a way that will achieve maximum publicity.

However, in this study, while we draw on such definitions in our data analysis of terrorist incidents, our case studies also take into account other forms of political violence, such as riots or antigovernment protests that may turn violent. While such acts may not be captured in large terrorism data sets, such incidents may still be politically motivated and indicate general trends toward instability and the potential for more extreme and systemic political violence. Our study largely does not address political violence associated with insurgency, although Algeria involves political violence that more closely resembles insurgency than the other cases. While terrorism can certainly be employed as a tactic by insurgents (in addition to guerrilla and more conventional warfare), insurgency and terrorism are distinct concepts, and our study's focus is on the latter.[34]

The Democracy-Terrorism Debate

Post-9/11 "Draining the Swamp" Logic

While promoting democracy has long been at least a rhetorical element in U.S. foreign policy, the aftermath of the 9/11 attacks significantly elevated the democracy agenda and framed it as a national security

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[33] In Memorial Institute for the Prevention of Terrorism (2002, p. 4).

[34] As one analyst explains the distinction, "Insurgencies combine violence with political programs in pursuit of revolutionary purposes in a way that terrorism cannot duplicate. Terrorists may pursue political, even revolutionary, goals, but their violence replaces rather than complements a political program" (Morris, 2005, p. 2).

imperative. Promoting democracy abroad was no longer viewed as a supplement to other core national security interests; it now became a key national security priority. According to the new logic, the lack of democratization in regions such as the Middle East had fostered repression and extremism by preventing outlets for alternative views and opposition. In other words, U.S. support for regional authoritarian regimes for the sake of stability inadvertently allowed extremism to flourish.

As President Bush argued in one of his most noted speeches on the topic, "Sixty years of Western nations excusing and accommodating the lack of freedom in the Middle East did nothing to make us safe. . . . As long as the Middle East remains a place where freedom does not flourish, it will remain a place of stagnation, resentment and violence ready for export."[35] One Middle East analyst supportive of the Bush administration approach, Reuel Marc Gerecht, suggests that this speech indicated that President Bush rightly understood the problem of "bin Ladenism" as related to the absence of democracy: "bin Ladenism was essentially generated by this perverse nexus between dictatorship and Islamic extremism, both through support and through oppression . . . and the only way you could deconstruct it was to introduce democracy in the Middle East."[36] According to Gerecht, allowing democracy to run its course in the region would likely produce undesirable, hostile anti-American leaderships and accelerate anti-Americanism (as well as anti-Zionism/Semitism), but in his assessment, this is "actually good. It's the fever that will break the disease. You have to let it go."[37] Repressing or reversing undesired outcomes resulting from democratic processes, such as in the Algeria case in the early 1990s, only produces more, not less, extremism, according to this view.

Natan Sharansky, a former Soviet dissident and currently an Israeli official, was another prominent figure supportive of President Bush's democracy agenda. Sharansky similarly argued that allying with regional dictators resulted in more terrorism and extremism and that

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35 Bush (2003).

36 Gerecht (2005).

37 Gerecht (2005).

only the introduction of freedom and democracy to the region would ultimately solve the problem.[38] Senior officials within the Bush administration have also argued forcefully in favor of promoting democracy for the sake of regional stability, although they suggest some degree of caution in how the United States goes about promoting such a strategy.[39]

But it has not just been the Bush administration and its supporters promoting the notion that democracy can serve national security interests. Indeed, the democracy agenda generated bipartisan support and acceptance in the aftermath of 9/11. Martin Indyk, a senior official in various posts in both Clinton administrations, was among the first to lay out the "draining the swamp" logic, suggesting that the United States had made a mistake ignoring political reform in the 1990s while narrowly pursuing Arab-Israeli peacemaking.[40] Leaders of nonpartisan organizations such as Freedom House also vocally support the notion that democracy promotion can help combat terrorism. As Jennifer L. Windsor argues, "promoting democratization in the closed societies of the Middle East can provide a set of values and ideas that offer a powerful alternative to the appeal of the kind of extremism that today has found expression in terrorist activity."[41]

Academic works have also begun to address the issue of terrorism based on this premise. As one scholar argues in a volume that examines this question in a number of regions, "Terrorism flourishes in autocratic, authoritarian, and totalitarian societies. Such societies provide the economic, religious, ethnic, or regional basis for extremism to develop and terrorism to take root. This would indicate that democ-

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38 Sharansky and Dermer (2004). Sharansky and Dermer do not limit their understanding of democracy to political elections. Rather, for the authors, democracy is also about instilling fundamental freedoms, exemplified by what they calls the "town square test" of freedom: "Can a person walk into the middle of the town square and express his or her views without fear of arrest, imprisonment or physical harm?" (p. 41). For more on Sharansky's views, see Sharansky (2005). For a review of Sharansky and Dermer's book, see Kibble (2006).

39 See, for example, Haass (2003).

40 Indyk (2002).

41 Windsor (2003).

ratization processes, whatever the initial costs, are (in the long run) the best means to eventually alleviate terrorist behavior."[42] Other studies on terrorism since 9/11 have also pointed to the lack of democracy as one of the most critical underlying causes of extremism.

One psychologist compares the radicalization process of terrorists to floors in a building, suggesting that the social context of repression and political exclusion forms an important part of the foundation for terrorism on the "ground floor": "Closed systems are inefficient, particularly when they are kept in place by brute force. . . . The lack of open competition and circulation in these societies [in the Near and Middle East] breed corruption and inefficiency. In this context, it should not be surprising that many people, particularly the young, experience a strong sense of injustice and despair."[43] Using a staircase metaphor, the scholar further argues that although typical counterterrorism measures—more troops, improved technology, effective profiling, and better human intelligence—are part of the solution, they will never fully address terrorism because such policies only target those who have already radicalized (i.e., those on the "highest floors on the staircase to terrorism").[44] In doing so, such policies "neglect the most important floors on the staircase, the first few floors where the vast majority of the population exists."[45] In other words, democracy can serve as a *preventive* mechanism against radicalization and ultimately terrorism, according to such scholars.

But while such academic works have begun to move the policy debate beyond assertions regarding the positive effects of democracy, they have not yet fully delineated and explored the causal mechanisms through which such positive effects are to come about. They also have not adequately addressed the limitations and potential dangers of reform processes in regions such as the Middle East, nor have they engaged in

[42] Crotty (2005).

[43] Moghaddam (2006, p. 64).

[44] Moghaddam (2006, p. 127).

[45] Moghaddam (2006, p. 127).

sufficient empirical examination of this question.[46] Indeed, developments in the Middle East since the Iraq war have led to a democracy backlash, with many across the political spectrum now questioning the wisdom of promoting democracy in the region.

The Democracy Backlash

A number of regional developments have contributed to growing uneasiness with the democracy agenda in the Middle East, both within and outside the region.[47] One element of greater caution is the strong showing of Islamist parties across the region, from HAMAS to Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood (MB) to Lebanon's Hizballah. Another blow to the democracy agenda has been the instability in Iraq and the violence and sectarian conflict that engulfed that country following elections. Destabilizing regional developments since the Iraq war—as well as growing concerns about rising Iranian power and influence—seem to be leading to a "demotion" rather than promotion of democracy in U.S. regional strategy.[48] Shoring up support from friendly Sunni Arab regimes to help stabilize Iraq and counter Iran appears to be a greater priority for U.S. policymakers than political reform. In other words, U.S. policy is largely returning to a pre-9/11 posture. As one analyst (and democracy skeptic) summarizes the situation: "The strategic bottom line is clear: Undoing some of the damage in Iraq, so as to block Iranian hegemonic expansion westward and thwart Islamist militants, is far more important for the United States and the Middle East at this juncture in time than persisting with a failed and destructive experiment in democratization."[49]

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[46] An important exception is Hafez (2003). Hafez explores the Algerian and Egyptian cases in depth to support his argument that a combination of political exclusion and reactive repression of Islamist opposition fosters extremism.

[47] For a broader discussion of concerns over democracy promotion in U.S. national security strategy, see Fukuyama and McFaul (2007–2008).

[48] See, for example, Cooper (2006), McManus (2006), Shadid (2007), and Exum and Snyder (2007).

[49] Alpher (2007).

Some scholars have also begun to criticize the democracy agenda by questioning the notion that democracy has anything to do with a reduction in terrorism. One of the most vocal critics has been F. Gregory Gause III, whose 2005 *Foreign Affairs* piece, "Can Democracy Stop Terrorism?" generated significant policy discussion and debate. Gause asks,

> Is the security rationale for promoting democracy in the Arab world based on a sound premise? Unfortunately, the answer appears to be no. . . . The data available do not show a strong relationship between democracy and an absence or reduction in terrorism. . . . Nor is it likely that democratization would end the current campaign against the United States. . . . Nor is there any evidence that democracy in the Arab world would "drain the swamp," eliminating soft support for terrorist organizations among the Arab public and reducing the number of potential recruits for them.[50]

Not only does Gause fail to find support for a relationship between democracy and a reduction in terrorism, but he also argues that, if anything, democratic regimes in the Middle East would actually make matters worse. Democracy in the Middle East would likely "produce new Islamist governments that would be much less willing to cooperate with the United States than are the current authoritarian rulers."[51]

Gause's piece makes an important contribution to the policy debate in that he challenges conventional assertions that have not been adequately supported with analytic reasoning and empirical evidence. His critique also usefully questions the underlying premise concerning the strategic logic of democracy promotion. Gause is right to suggest that if the United States is to launch a major foreign policy initiative, the underlying rationale for such a policy should be sound. In his view, it is not. So even if regional developments appeared more favorable, Gause's critique would still suggest democracy promotion may be a

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[50] Gause (2005).

[51] Gause (2005).

waste of time, perhaps even harmful, at least from a security perspective (he does not question the moral premise of this policy).

Is Gause right? Or is he asking the wrong question? Is his critique any more analytically sound and empirically grounded than the theory he is trying to debunk? Indeed, there are several flaws in Gause's critique. Both the academic literature he cites as well as the anecdotal evidence he draws on could lead to a fundamentally different conclusion, or at least a more ambivalent one.

Gause acknowledges that academic studies of democracy-terrorism links are limited and incomplete, but still asserts, "even these [studies] seem to discredit the supposedly close link between terrorism and authoritarianism." The first study he cites, by William Eubank and Leonard Weinberg, unequivocally finds that not only is terrorism more likely to occur in mature democracies, but that the terrorist perpetuators are more likely to come from democracies than any other type of political system.[52] But the other study Gause cites, by Quan Li—which draws on much more comprehensive data than the Eubank and Weinberg study—suggests a more ambiguous picture.[53] While Li also finds that terrorism is more likely to occur in democracies (in large part because of the institutional constraints that make it easier for terrorists to operate in more open societies), he also finds that democratic participation can reduce terrorist incidents: "It increases satisfaction and political efficacy of citizens, reduces their grievances, thwarts terrorist recruitment, and raises public tolerance of counterterrorist policies."[54] While Gause also cites Robert Pape's work to illustrate the greater frequency of terrorism in democracies—according to Pape suicide terrorists are more likely to target democracies because their central agenda is about ending foreign military occupations[55]—what matters more for

52 Eubank and Weinberg (2001).

53 Like Eubank and Weinberg, Li (2005) draws on the ITERATE (International Terrorism: Attributes and Terrorist Events) database, but his sample of 119 countries spans from 1975 to 1997 (Eubank and Weinberg only draw on data from 1980 to 1987).

54 Li (2005).

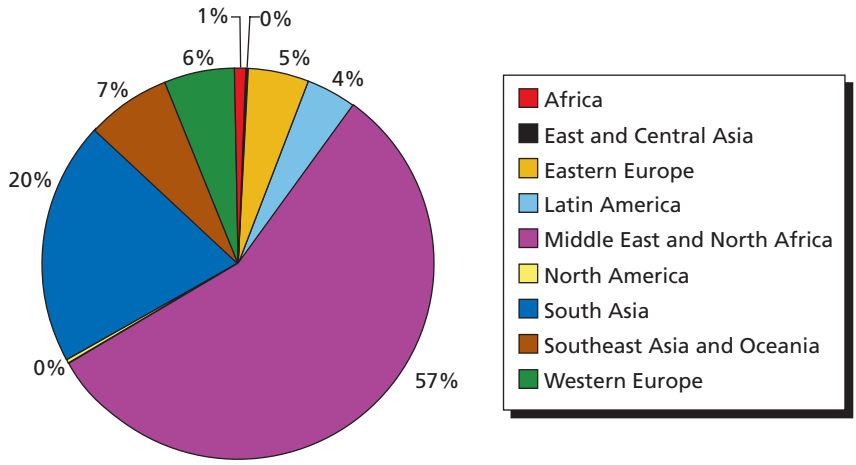
55 Pape (2005).

the democracy-terrorism question is where the terrorists *originate*, not just where they strike.

Thus, one of Gause's central critiques of the "democracy reduces terrorism" thesis—that terrorism occurs more often in democracies (e.g., India) than in authoritarian systems (e.g., China)—misses the point. As noted above, there is broad support in the scholarly literature to date about the greater prevalence of terrorist acts in democracies, and many anecdotal examples can easily support this finding. That said, recent terrorism data following the Iraq war challenges this assumption, as Figure 1.1 suggests—the majority of terrorist incidents after 2003 are occurring in largely undemocratic regions.

But even if we accept that terrorism is more likely to occur in democracies, this critique confuses cause and effect. If we are to understand the absence of democracy as one of the potential underlying causal factors leading to terrorism, we must examine where the perpetrators of terrorism come from, not just where they decide it is best from a tactical perspective to carry out their terrorist acts. In this respect, and in contrast to Eubank and Weinberg, Alan Krueger and

Figure 1.1
Terrorism Incidents, by Region, from the End of Combat Operations in Iraq (May 1, 2003) to December 31, 2006



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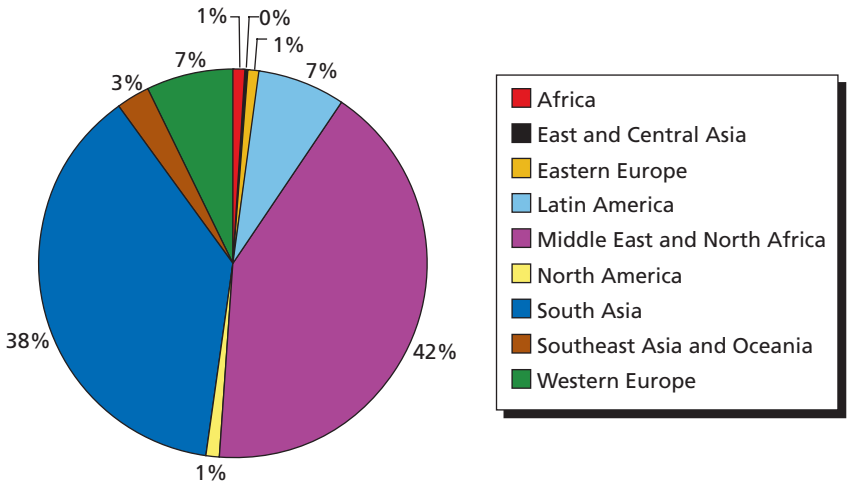
David Laitin, find that while terrorist targets are more economically developed and democratic, terrorists are coming largely from repressive, undemocratic societies, and that the sources of terrorism seem to be more related to repression than to poverty.[56] As they explain their findings, "countries that afford a low level of political rights are more likely to be the springboards of terrorism and less likely to be the targets of terrorism."[57] Drawing on the RAND-MIPT terrorism database, we also find some preliminary evidence to support this view, as shown in Figure 1.2.

Is it just a coincidence that the majority of terrorism seems to come from the least democratic regions in the world? At the very least, we have reason to be much more cautious than Gause in dismissing the moderating effects of democracy. One final limitation of Gause's critique is that it does not adequately distinguish between different types of terrorist groups, particularly as they relate to the Middle East. For

Figure 1.2
Percentage of Claimed Terrorist Incidents by Regional Base of Operations, May 1, 2003, to December 31, 2006



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56 Krueger and Laitin (2008).

57 Krueger and Laitin (2008).

Gause and other democracy skeptics, the group that receives the most attention is al-Qa'ida, and for obvious reasons. To be sure, al-Qa'ida and other groups affiliated with Salafi jihadi ideology[58] are arguably the greatest terrorist threat to U.S. and Western interests, so it is only fair to consider the effects of democracy on such groups. And it may well be true, as Gause and others argue, that political reforms will have no effect on these types of transnational actors because they have already checked out of their respective political systems. If anything, such groups will only be further galvanized to stop democratization, because they view democracy as a deviant Western system used to challenge Muslim identity. As Douglas Borer and Michael Freeman argue, the spread of democracy is irrelevant to al-Qa'ida's goals and grievances, which include perceived foreign occupation of Muslim lands and a desire to restore Shari'a law and the caliphate over the entirety of the Islamic world.[59]

But what about domestic-based groups that have not yet checked out of the political system? Or resistance groups with more local objectives? Can reform efforts affect these groups differently? And what about the possibility that repressive and exclusive state policies may lead local groups to radicalize and support (or even merge with) transnational, al-Qa'ida–linked groups? Can we completely separate al-Qa'ida from more local, domestic groups in the region? And finally, even if reform processes have no effect on transnational groups themselves, can reforms delegitimize such groups among the populations in which they operate? In cases such as Saudi Arabia, for example, politi-

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[58] Broadly defined, Salafism is a strand of Sunni Islam that seeks to emulate, in all spheres of human activity, the example of the "pious predecessors" (*al-Salaf al-Salih*)—the Prophet Muhammad, his companions, and the first three generations of his followers. Salafism's doctrinal tenets include scriptural orthodoxy based on the Qur'an and hadith, a focus on the unity of God (*tawhid*), an abstention from innovation (*bid'a*) in religious practice and an aversion to polytheism (*shirk*). In practice, Salafism posits a universalized and highly idealized "culture-free" form of Islam that has proven attractive to certain disaffected population segments.

[59] Borer and Freeman (2007). For similar arguments critical of democracy promotion as a strategic element of U.S. policy, see Freeman (2008). These scholars do concede, however, that democracy may have more of an effect on other types of terrorist actors with more national or territorial objectives.

cal reform has helped generate societal support for counterterrorism measures against extremist groups.

Studies of other types of terrorist groups in other regional settings suggest that liberalization measures can have a moderating influence and delegitimize terrorism among the broader population even if it cannot completely eradicate the terrorists themselves. For example, in a case study of Basque separatists (represented by the terrorist organization Euskadi Ta Askatasuna (ETA) operating during Spain's democratic transition from 1975 to 1992, scholars find that the government's inclusive policies to address Basque grievances bolstered its legitimacy and thus marginalized the ETA over time.[60] The study finds that although political violence increased as Spain developed more robust democratic practices, support for the ETA steadily declined and opposition groups rejected violence to achieve their political goals as the government gave Basque parties, leaders, and people a stake in the democratic system.[61]

Can such effects play out in a region such as the Middle East, where the conditions for democracy are significantly less ripe than the case of Spain, and where the regional context is a destabilizing rather than stabilizing force?[62] Some scholars are beginning to examine Middle East cases based on this distinction between local and transnational terrorist actors, recognizing that the limited focus on al-Qa'ida does not fully address the potential effects of even more limited reform efforts in this region. Indeed, Paul Pillar argues that the effects of political reform will depend in large part on the type of terrorist group under discussion,

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60 See Chapter One, "The Basques in Spain and Repercussions in France: Case I," in Jebb et al., (2006).

61 Jebb et al., (2006).

62 In *The Fight for Legitimacy* (2006), Jebb et al. also raise this question and consider other cases in less favorable contexts, including the Kurds in Turkey, Albanians in Macedonia, Russia, and Chechnya, and Palestinians and Israelis. Still, while acknowledging the greater challenges in other contexts, the study ultimately concludes that democratization is a fundamental element of counterterrorism: "A core assumption of this study is that combating terrorism and promoting democracy are not mutually exclusive goals, even in unstable transitional polities. . . . Security and liberty need not be locked in a zero-sum struggle for control of the political agenda of a transitional regime" (p. 1).

and are likely to have a more moderating influence on groups that have a chance to win support and power through democratic means (e.g., HAMAS or the MB branches in Egypt and Jordan) than those groups less likely to abide by democratic norms (e.g., al-Qa'ida).[63] Mohammed Hafez suggests that more accessible political systems will lead to more moderate and accomodationist positions among opposition groups in the Islamic world, and vice versa (depending in his view on levels of repression by the state).[64] This explains why, in Hafez's analysis, Algeria developed into a perfect storm for terrorism: thwarted political inclusion combined with reactive state repression.

Katerina Dalacoura usefully distinguishes between three different types of terrorist actors in her study of terrorism and democracy in the Middle East: transnational terrorism of al-Qa'ida, Islamist terrorism linked to national liberation movements (e.g., HAMAS and Hizballah), and Islamist terrorism related to domestic insurgencies (e.g., Egyptian Gama'a Islamiyya or the Algerian Armed Islamic Group).[65] However, she finds the links between political inclusion and terrorism to be ambiguous in all cases, including those groups operating in a domestic context. In some cases, exclusionary policies by states led to terrorism (e.g., Egypt) while in other cases it did not (e.g., Tunisia). As she concludes, "there is no conclusive evidence of a necessary causal link between the democratic deficit in the Middle East and Islamist terrorism."[66] In other words, because there is so much variation between levels of political inclusion and terrorism (i.e., in some cases terrorism increases with political reforms, in others it decreases), she suggests we cannot make a determination about a definite relationship between democracy and terrorism.

However, not only is her empirical examination limited, but she, like Gause, may be asking the wrong question. What may be more significant than finding a definitive correlation between democracy and

63 Pillar (2008).

64 Hafez (2003 and 2005).

65 Dalacoura (2006).

66 Delacoura (2006, p. 522).

terrorism, or as Paul Pillar puts it, a "new grand social science law,"[67] would be to assess whether, how, and under what conditions reform efforts might be affecting calculations regarding political violence, positively or negatively, over time and in different contexts.

Democracy-Terrorism Hypotheses

Based on the literature outlined above, we have identified several hypotheses regarding the relationship between democracy and terrorism, which we will then apply to the more limited reform efforts that are apparent across our case studies from the region. We recognize, however, that empirical assessments of these hypotheses in cases of functioning democracies may produce different results. The hypotheses relate to the following areas:

1. *Norms:* Democracy fosters positive attitudes and values (e.g., tolerance and respect for opposing opinions and minority groups) that will steer people away from extremism and political violence. Just as in the case of normative approaches to democratic peace theory, the "live and let live" normative framework that democratic systems generate will lead to more tolerant and peaceful behavior.
2. *Institutions:* Democratic systems can address grievances and power imbalances related to political repression and exclusion, giving all actors a stake in the system. Democratic institutions (such as competitive political parties and elections) provide an outlet for all citizens, including minority groups, to voice and address their grievances through nonviolent means and allow for authentic power sharing among different societal groups. Other democratic institutional mechanisms that foster such a pacifying effect include referenda, plebiscites, confederations, and limited-autonomy agreements that can provide nonviolent solutions to address minority grievances.
3. *Legitimacy:* Democracy can enhance the legitimacy of the state and therefore reduce support and recruitment for terrorist net-

[67] Pillar (2008).

works. According to this logic, even if the terrorist networks themselves are not affected by national political openings, the enhanced legitimacy a democratic process provides to the governing regime and state system will dampen support and even delegitimize terrorism among the wider population. As Jebb et al. argue, "The ultimate determinant of the struggle between nascent democracy and violent extremism is how successful either side is in generating political legitimacy. . . . The democratizing regime must foster policies that generate legitimacy among disaffected groups within the population."[68]

4. *Destabilization:* Democratization in transitional societies can be destabilizing, and can lead to more, not less, political violence. The negative effects may emerge across all types of rationales outlined above. In other words, incomplete and transitional democratization processes can produce exclusive rather than inclusive norms, may create institutional imbalance and political exclusion of key political actors, and may lead the public to view the system as less, not more, legitimate. This destabilization logic stems from Mansfield and Snyder's thesis about the greater likelihood of transitional democracies to go to war because state institutions are absent or weak, leaving more incentives for leaders to resort to violent national appeals and repression, particularly if governing elites feel threatened by premature democratic processes (e.g., elections). Extending this logic to terrorism would suggest that the greater repression brought about through destabilizing democratic transitions would be more likely to produce higher levels of political violence in response. Indeed, Mansfield and Snyder argue that quick democratic transitions in the Islamic world are likely to lead to more violence and that "democratizing the Arab states is a major gamble in the war on terror."[69]

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[68] Jebb et al. (2006, p. 2).

[69] Mansfield and Snyder (2005, p. 278).

Empirical Application to the Arab World: Case Selection and Methods

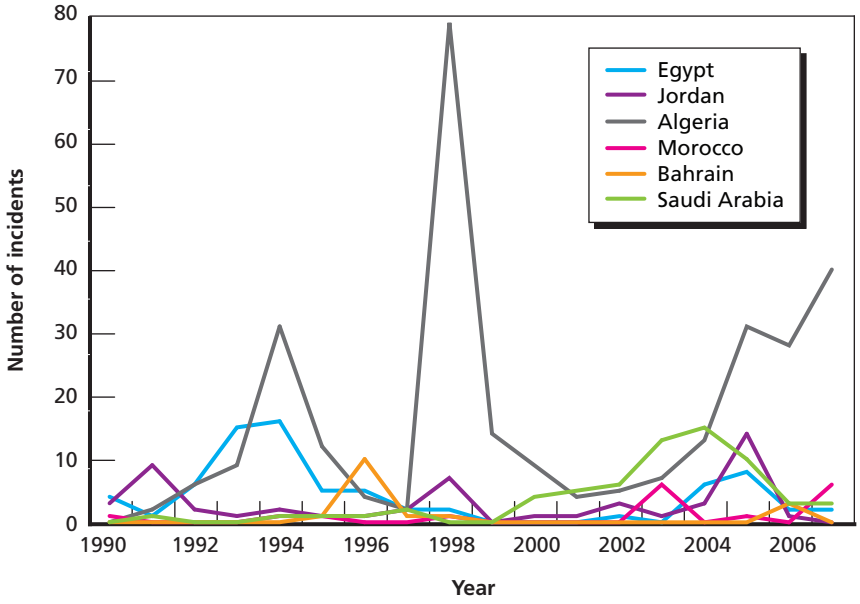
We adapt the above hypotheses to empirically explore the effects of political reform processes in six Arab case studies, in large part because the extremism that produced 9/11 and most directly influenced this policy debate came from this part of the Muslim world. Naturally, we would encourage future work to explore other cases in the Muslim world and other regions, including regions that have functioning democracies. But limiting our cases to the Arab world also helped us control—at least to some extent—for cultural and political differences and to generate more region and case-specific policy prescriptions that are relevant and useful.

In terms of the case selection within the Arab world, we had several criteria. First, we wanted our cases to reflect variation both on levels of reform and levels of terrorism, across time and place. As Figures 1.3 and 1.4 illustrate, our cases illustrate such variation over the 15-year time period we cover (1991 to 2006).[70]

We also selected cases from different subregions within the Arab world (the Levant, the Maghreb, and the Gulf) where at least one of the countries is viewed as a major regional player. Finally, we did not choose cases that are complicated by ongoing or recent hot wars and foreign occupation (e.g., Palestine, Lebanon, or Iraq), as it would be more difficult in such cases to discern the effects of political reforms as opposed to other factors that could be fostering extremism (e.g., Arab-Israeli conflict, sectarian conflict). That said, it appears obvious that the Iraq war is not only complicating the internal dynamics within that country but is also having a broader regional spillover effect on reform processes across the region. Still, despite the destabilizing regional context of Arab-Israeli violence and the Iraq war, the cases we explore in

[70] It is important to note that the data on terrorist incidents drawn from the RAND-MIPT database only accounts for international terrorism until 1998; after 1998, the database began including information on both international and domestic incidents. Consequently, the levels of terrorism before 1998 reflected in the data likely underrepresents the levels of terrorism taking place in the Arab cases covered in the study. That said, the type of data drawn on for all cases in the study is consistent.

Figure 1.3
Total Number of Terrorist Incidents for Case Study Countries, 1990–2006



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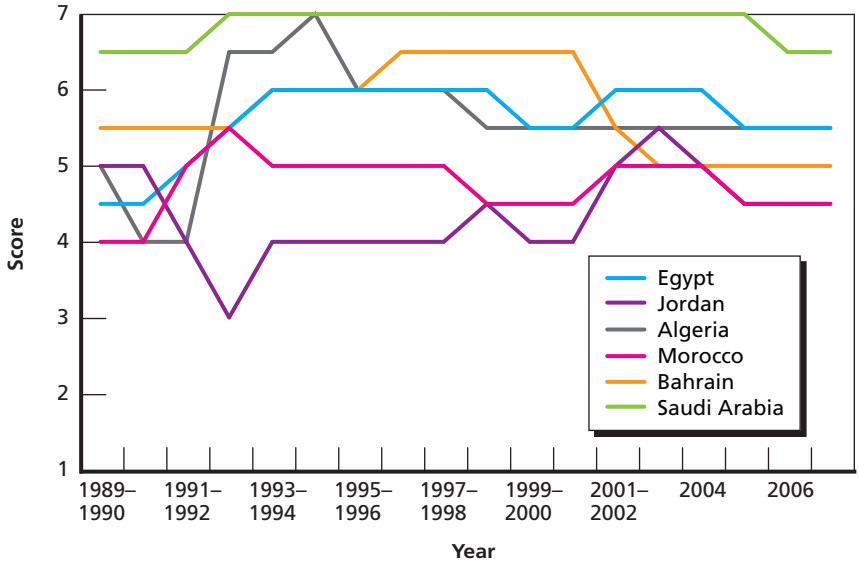
the following chapters illustrate dynamics more independent of these conflicts.

To make assessments regarding the effects of reform processes on terrorism and political violence, the following case chapters all rely on extensive fieldwork in each country. Collectively, we interviewed over 130 experts in the region (analysts, officials, journalists, military personnel, academics, and activists). Some authors also observed election rallies, political debates, and other civic forums. We also drew on extensive secondary literature and primary source materials (such as surveys), including Arabic sources.

After reviewing both liberalization and terrorism trends in each country, each chapter subsequently turns to an assessment of potential correlations between the two based on quantitative data. The case chapters then address the various effects of reforms through a deeper empirical examination, assessing how the various hypotheses presented in this introductory chapter play out in these cases of more limited and

Figure 1.4
Freedom House Scores for Case Study Countries, 1989/1990–2006



NOTE: A score of 1 indicates the highest degree of freedom, and 7 the least.

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controlled liberalization processes. The concluding chapter summarizes the case study findings and suggests recommendations for U.S. policy.

CHAPTER TWO

Egypt

Introduction

While Egypt has been a relatively stable authoritarian state since the assassination of President Anwar al-Sadat in 1981, the regime of his successor, President Hosni Mubarak, has witnessed a sometimes contentious (and not always forward-moving) process of political liberalization, as well as significant incidents of terrorism. This study is, for the sake of comparison between cases, mainly interested in the 15-year period from 1991 to 2006, which excludes the first ten years of Mubarak's reign.

However, Egypt suffered the greatest number of terrorist attacks during the first third of that date range, from roughly 1991 to 1997. To understand the relationship, if any, of Egyptian liberalization to the terrorist attacks perpetrated within its borders, this chapter will therefore use an expanded time line, analyzing both the liberalizing practices and repressive actions of autocracy in Egypt from the late 1980s through the beginning of the 21st century.

Liberalization in the Mubarak Era

Egypt's political liberalization in the late 1980s reveals a "mixed picture," with important and unprecedented political openings occurring against an antidemocratic background of repressive laws and an illib-

eral regime.[1] Similar to the Egypt of today, the Egypt of this period was constrained by a framework of authoritarian legal strictures, a widespread patronage network, and a reliance on coercion—all designed to keep the regime in power. The emergency laws enacted after the assassination of Anwar al-Sadat were the most pernicious of these legal strictures; these laws allowed (and continue to allow) for the suspension of citizens' rights under the constitution.

However, despite this background of repression, a series of changes in election laws and a considerable expansion of civil society at this time reinvigorated opposition parties. The impetus for these changes appears to have come mainly from opposition groups within Egypt, as opposed to later political liberalization efforts that were influenced more by outside actors. Several scholars have argued that the pressure exerted on the regime to make the political landscape more competitive followed from Mubarak's actions on ascending to the presidency, namely his continuation of al-Sadat's policy of a multiparty system and the relatively free rein given Islamists as part of the process of consolidating power.[2] By certifying several new opposition parties and allowing the moderate MB to act as a counterweight to more radical Islamist groups, Mubarak empowered the opposition, whose steady calls for political change generated some small reforms that resulted in an increase in parliamentary representation. The creation of a "party list" system in 1987 allowed opposition groups to gain a considerable number of seats in the lower house of Egypt's bicameral legislature; the New Wafd party garnered 36 seats, while an alliance of the MB, the Socialist Labor Party, and the Liberal Party (al-Ahrar) took 62. Opposition parties thus represented roughly 20 percent of the seats in the 444-seat People's Assembly.[3]

In addition, civil society expanded significantly during this period. As an example, the late 1980s witnessed the emergence of

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1 Perry (2004).

2 For a discussion of opposition groups during this period, see Bianchi (1986, pp. 71–72) and Makram-Ebeid (1989, p. 435). The analysis of the regime's relationship to the MB is best formulated in Campagna (1996).

3 Brownlee (2003, p. 49).

Egypt's first independent human rights group: the Egyptian Organization for Human Rights (EOHR). Of course, this group formed in an extralegal manner, as it was denied a license to legally operate by the Ministry of Social Affairs; this is a clear indication that liberalization at this time was still limited.[4] The MB also made inroads into civil society at this time, increasingly penetrating the leadership of professional syndicates, national associations, and student unions; by the mid-1990s, they would control the leadership of several syndicates.[5]

The resurgence, however restricted, of opposition groups constituted a threat to the Mubarak regime. Shortly after the electoral triumph of the New Wafd and the MB, the regime sought ways to better contain its opponents. One method involved legal action. A court ruling in May 1990 declared Egypt's electoral system unconstitutional. President Mubarak therefore returned the system to its original form, where individual candidates, as opposed to party lists, vied for votes. The opposition, seeing that this change would not lead to a free and fair election, boycotted the election.[6] In 1993, after members of the ruling party lost control of the major professional syndicates to the MB, the state changed the rules governing this process, effectively bringing these organizations back under government control.[7]

Another method involved a security crackdown on Islamists and opposition parties. The mass arrests of MB members, as well as Islamists belonging to more radical groups, such as al-Gama'a al-Islamiyya (GAI), started a short time before the elections of 1987 and intensified afterward. Confrontations began in 1986, when security forces in Aswan used tear gas and rubber bullets on a crowd gathered to hear Shaykh 'Umar 'Abd al-Rahman. Later that year, the government placed

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4 Zubaida (1992, p. 5). The EOHR was founded in 1987. Other human rights organizations at work in Egypt include the Arab Organization for Human Rights, the Center for Human Rights Legal Aid, and the Group for Democratic Development.

5 Brownlee (2003, p. 49). For a comprehensive review of Egyptian civil society organizations during this period, see Sayyid (1993).

6 Kassem (2004, pp. 60–61).

7 Abdalla (1993, p. 29).

Shaykh ʻUmar ʻAbd al-Rahman and several other radical clerics under house arrest.[8]

While these actions were targeted specifically against a perceived Islamist threat in Upper Egypt, the government moved toward more indiscriminate methods after the elections, a response that Maye Kassem describes as indicative of the regime's "growing anxiety."[9] In May and June 1987, just one month after the impressive opposition gains in parliament, the regime detained 3,000 Islamists in response to the assassination attempt on a former interior minister. Another massive roundup of Islamists occurred three years later, in October 1990, after the assassination of a former speaker of parliament, Rifʻat al-Mahjoub. This trend of mass detentions continued throughout the early 1990s and led Human Rights Watch to comment, "Official efforts to restore the rule of law by systematically flouting it are bound to fail."[10]

After a high point in 1987, the political liberalization process in Egypt faltered, free political space contracted, and the state imposed new restrictions, curtailing an assortment of freedoms. In 1995, Egypt's parliament passed a bill expanding restrictions on journalists; the law elicited a response from the International Press Institute, which condemned its criteria for defamation and libel as "so vague as to include anything."[11] A 1999 law governing nongovernmental organizations allowed the government to dismiss or appoint members to an NGO board of trustees. The law also included penalties for NGOs that functioned in ways that threatened "public morality" or "national unity."[12]

Parliamentary elections in the 1990s clearly indicated a moribund political scene. After the boycott of the 1990 elections, when the only participating opposition party, Tagammʻu, captured five seats, the 1995 elections resulted in little opposition representation in the

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8 See Gordon (1990) for a description of the major political actors involved in this crackdown.

9 Kassem (2004, p. 151).

10 Human Rights Watch (1993).

11 Fritz (1995).

12 Kassem (2004, pp. 120–121).

People's Assembly. The secular parties and the MB claimed only 14 seats in this election.[13] Indeed, by the opening days of the 21st century, opposition politics in Egypt had become so stagnant that one observer commented, "some of the modest political advances made in the previous two decades were reversed in the 1990s. Egypt is arguably less democratic in 2001 than it was in 1981 or in 1991."[14]

A historic court case in 2000, however, injected new life into Egypt's political process. The case resulted in the relatively independent institution of the judiciary monitoring polling places during the 2000 election. This election, characterized as "somewhat cleaner and more credible than the 1990 or 1995 elections," showed the precarious position of the regime.[15] The ruling National Democratic Party (NDP) won only 38 percent of the vote; independents that later rejoined the NDP won 50 percent.[16] While the showing of opposition parties was still limited, new political entities began to emerge in the more energized political space, particularly after the obvious positioning of Gamal Mubarak as heir apparent to the presidency.

The Movement for Change (*Kifaya*) and the Alliance of National Forces for Reform both formed in 2004 to press for political transformation and to resist both the reelection of Hosni Mubarak and the succession of his son, Gamal Mubarak, to the presidency. The Alliance of National Forces for Reform, a collection of the three main legal opposition parties—the Wafd Party, National Progressive Unionist Party (the Tagamm'u Party), and the leftist Arab Nasserist Party—put together a platform of reform that also attracted the support of the Islamist Labor Party and the MB itself. The Movement for Change did not affili-

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13 Kassem (2004, p. 62).

14 Ibrahim (2002a). Ibrahim's comments were reiterated by Egyptian journalists and activists interviewed by the author in February 2006.

15 Dunne (2006, p. 5). Just as with other elections, security services arrested MB candidates and intimidated voters.

16 Dunne (2006, p. 5). Though most of the independents leaned toward the ruling NDP, Egyptian analysts saw this as signifying a "a clear sign of the NDP's weakness and deterioration" (Al-Anani, 2005, p. 3).

ate directly with the Brotherhood, but included some MB members.[17] While parties of varying ideologies have partnered in assorted ways before, the broad level of agreement about needed political reforms was exceptional.[18]

Along with significant international pressure, this unprecedented level of opposition unity for reform played some role in pressuring the regime to change the presidential election process. The amendment of Article 76 allowed for the direct popular election of the president, but established strict conditions on how a party may nominate an individual. The most onerous restriction excludes parties from nominating a candidate unless they hold at least 5 percent of the seats in both the upper and lower houses of parliament, the Shura Council, and the People's Assembly, respectively. No opposition party has held that many seats in over 15 years.[19] This restriction did not apply to the first election, and Ayman Nour of the Ghad Party and Noman Gomaa of the Wafd Party ran against Mubarak. Unsurprisingly, Mubarak won the plebiscite with 88.6 percent of the vote, a result that was contested by both the Ghad and Wafd parties.[20]

The reelection of Mubarak was followed quickly by the most unruly parliamentary election Egypt had witnessed in years. The continued, albeit weakened, supervision of judges, the coalescence of international pressures, and the exceptional opposition unity suggested that there was a true political opportunity to exploit. An emboldened MB put forward more candidates than usual, contesting nearly a third of the 444 seats.[21] According to observers in Egypt at the time, the first

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17 During its most active period prior to the 2005 Egyptian presidential elections, Kifaya had offices in several cities across Egypt and managed to organize coordinated protests. These protests were often met with police interference. For more information on Kifaya, see Al-Din Sha'ban (2006).

18 Shehata (2004, pp. 3–5).

19 Dunne (2006, p. 8).

20 BBC News (2005a).

21 Author interview with former Egyptian member of parliament (MP), February 2006. See also Hamzawy and Brown (2005).

two rounds of voting were relatively violence-free.[22] However, it soon became evident that the MB was winning a significant number of seats; more than anyone expected. Thus, the final of three polls on December 7 was described by Egyptian daily *al-Ahram* as "the most violent day" of the election.[23] Groups of thugs and state security personnel, unable to actually enter polling places because of judicial supervision, arrested opposition candidates and blocked opposition supporters from reaching the polls, sometimes violently.

Despite these countermeasures, the new People's Assembly included 88 members of the MB, while the other opposition parties together took 11 seats. Only 26 percent of eligible voters participated in the election; 74 percent of Egyptians did not vote.[24] The outcome demonstrated the organizational strength and popularity of the MB, though democracy activist Saad Eddin Ibrahim pointed out that "this MB ascendance is partly a function of very low voter turnout."[25]

The response of the regime to the MB's ascendance in the People's Assembly echoed repression of years past. The repression of the MB started with targeted legal changes and continued with coercive measures. After the surprising results of the 2005 poll, the ruling National Democratic Party postponed municipal elections scheduled for spring 2006.[26] This delay was significant not only because it suggested a fear that the MB could take control of municipal councils, but also because the legal changes to the presidential election process included requirements for an independent candidate to collect a specific number of signatures from Egyptian officeholders. If the MB were to take control of these councils, it would be in a much better position to field a candidate

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22 Author interview with a scholar at an Egyptian university, February 2007.

23 Shukrallah (2005, p. 4).

24 "Egypt: Parliamentary Election Results and Nour Trial" (2005).

25 Ibrahim (2006). In 2005, the MB garnered 20 percent of the vote. Its 88 seats are a result of receiving the votes of only 5 percent of the Egyptian public. It is Ibrahim's contention that more political participation in Egypt would reduce, not increase, the MB's representation.

26 Slackman (2006a).

for the presidency in 2011. The regime also froze the bank accounts of the organization and many of its senior members and benefactors.[27]

Coercive measures mainly involved the arrest of MB leaders and lay members. According to Human Rights Watch, more than 1,000 Islamists were detained between March and December 2006, many of them during protests related to the emergency laws or the independence of the judiciary.[28] In December 2006, when al-Azhar University student members of the MB demonstrated in military-style marches, the regime intensified its crackdown. As of early 2008, over 40 MB members, including some top leaders, such as Khayrat el-Shater, one of the group's chief strategists, now face charges in state military tribunals—these charges are far more serious than those usually leveled against MB members.[29] Throughout 2007, the arrests continued. In early May 2007, ahead of elections for the upper house of the Egyptian Parliament (the Shura Council), the lower house stripped two MB members of their immunity as members of parliament (MPs); this act clears the way for their arrest and prosecution.[30] The elections themselves turned violent in the northern Nile Delta governorate of al-Sharqiya—one man was killed in clashes between ruling party supporters and the opposition.[31] In August and September 2007, Egyptian security forces detained 5 of the 12 officials making up the MB's guidance council.[32]

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[27] Author interviews with a senior member of the MB and a senior analyst of Egyptian politics, February 2006. It appears that the regime is targeting businessmen and other moderate members of the MB because these elements pose the greatest threat to the regime. The government has also not consented to the legalization of the al-Wasat party, which is composed of moderate Islamists. See also Halawi (2007).

[28] Human Rights Watch (2006).

[29] High-ranking MB members, including Deputy Supreme Guide Khayrat Al-Shatir and Guidance Bureau Member Muhammad Ali Bishr, face charges of terrorism, money laundering, and creating a paramilitary group. An Egyptian human rights activist interviewed by the author (February 2006) asserted that this show of strength sought to dissuade security forces that had been actively suppressing the results of student elections, often with physical force. See also Al-Anani (2007, p. 3).

[30] The two MPs are Sabri Amer and Ragab Abu Zeid. See Associated Press (2007b).

[31] El-Magd (2007).

[32] Knickmeyer (2007).

Arrests continued into 2008, with 800 MB members arrested ahead of municipal elections in April 2008 that also featured the disqualification of thousands of MB candidates.[33]

The regime did not stop with the MB. It also took aim at other opposition figures, journalists, its own restive judiciary, and other activists. Shortly after the final round of parliamentary elections, former presidential candidate Ayman Nour of Hizb al-Ghad lost his seat in the People's Assembly and was convicted of forging signatures on his party's application for a license to operate.[34] An *al-Jazeera* journalist, Howaida Taha, was detained for 24 hours and charged with "practicing activities that harm the national interest of the country" and "possessing and giving false pictures about the internal situation in Egypt that could undermine the dignity of the country."[35] Two reform-minded judges, Hisham Al-Bastawisy and Mahmoud Mekki, faced impeachment by the Supreme Judicial Council for accusing other judges of committing election fraud; a demonstration and sit-in protesting these charges resulted in hundreds of arrests.[36] In the first case of its kind, an Internet blogger, 'Abd al-Karim Nabil Sulayman, was convicted of inciting hatred of Islam and defaming the president; in February 2007, he was sentenced to four years in prison.[37] Another blogger, 'Abd al-Mun'am, was arrested in mid-April 2007 and held for nearly six weeks before being released.[38]

Other legislative measures rolled back the small amount of progress made from 2000 to 2005. In late April 2006, the regime pushed a two-year extension of the emergency law through parliament.[39] This was rendered superfluous the next year, when 34 constitutional amend-

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33 The MB was allowed to run 20 of the 5,000 candidates it had hoped to field for the approximately 52,000 seats. See Al-Kubra (2008).

34 BBC News (2005a).

35 Associated Press (2007a).

36 Hawthorne and Nasr (2006, p. 3).

37 Wheeler (2007).

38 Associated Press (2007c).

39 Slackman (2006b).

ments became law in an April 2007 referendum; independent monitors put voter turnout at 5 percent, despite official government assertions that the turnout was 27 percent. Bahey al-Din Hassan, director of the Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies, commented that the amendments "represent the constitutionalization of measures intended to undo the modest gains of the limited political opening of 2004–2005."[40] The amendments roll back judicial supervision of elections and ban political parties that use religion as a "frame of reference" (*marja'iyya*), effectively closing any possibility for the MB or Hizb al-Wasat to operate legally. The referendum also instituted an antiterrorism law that effectively codifies the emergency laws that have been in place since the assassination of President Anwar al-Sadat in 1981.

This raft of measures and coercive action in 2006 and 2007 represents a significant closure of political space. While the MB capture of 88 seats in the People's Assembly meant very little in terms of tangible legislative or political reform, the presence of a sizable opposition bloc in the parliament gave opposition groups a larger platform, greater prestige, and reinforced legitimacy. These gains are now threatened, if not already significantly diminished, by the state's repressive response. From this review of the liberalization process in Egypt, it is possible to discern two stories of widening political space and heightened expectation, which are followed by regime retrenchment, repression, and coercion.

Trends in Violent Activity

Egypt's problems with terrorism did not start with Mubarak; his predecessor, Anwar al-Sadat, dealt with a coup attempt by radical Islamists in April 1974, and Egypt contended with significant waves of radical Islamist violence throughout the mid-to-late 1970s. In fact, the history of Islamist violence in Egypt is a relatively long one: The MB

[40] Al-Din Hassan (2007, p. 3).

included an underground paramilitary group that fought the British in the 1940s.[41]

The modern radical Islamist organizations involved in terrorism from the 1970s onward emerged from groups that splintered off of the MB after the Brotherhood adopted a peaceful, gradualist approach. In addition, President Anwar al-Sadat relied on Islamists in the first years of his regime, establishing student organizations that provided an organizational base, particularly for GAI.[42] Saad Eddin Ibrahim, a sociologist and democracy activist, conducted over 400 hours of interviews in the early 1980s with 33 militants jailed by the Egyptian government. He discussed their relationship to the MB in a paper describing his findings:

> But these militants took some exception to the current practices of the surviving members of the Brotherhood. They consider some of these surviving members as weak and "burned out" or bought off. Some of the early members of the Military Academy group reported having gone to visit older members of the Brotherhood, to seek advice and offer support. They were advised to mind their individual businesses, to stay out of trouble, and to worship God. Quite disillusioned, the youngsters then decided to form their own organization.[43]

The MB was therefore an incubator for these groups, and Ibrahim comments that his interviewees all revered its founder, Hassan al-Banna, and shared many of the Brotherhood's aims, if not its methods; some individuals eventually found the environment of the MB inhospitable to their tactics. Two of the most active organizations in the early 1990s are associated with this phenomenon, the GAI and Egyptian Islamic Jihad (EIJ). Both of these groups formed from cells that split from the main body of the MB, though there is a key difference between them. The GAI did not begin as a violent organization; it

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41 Nedorosick (2002).

42 Gerges (2000, p. 593).

43 Ibrahim (1982, p. 10).

developed an organizational base, created social programs, and sought to promulgate its particular version of Islam before choosing violence and terrorism as a means of furthering its aims. This is one of the main reasons the GAI was able to transform itself back into a nonviolent entity, as will be discussed below.

The GAI and EIJ committed a wide range of attacks during their confrontation with the Egyptian state; these attacks occurred at low levels (at most, four or five a year) during the 1980s and with much greater frequency in the early to mid-1990s. Targets included tourists, businesses, Egyptian officials and police, writers and journalists, and foreign embassies.[44] The GAI and EIJ differed slightly in their choice of targets—the EIJ focused mainly on Egyptian government officials and claimed responsibility for attacks on General Hasan al-Alfi, a former Egyptian minister of the interior, and former Prime Minister 'Atef Sedky, both in 1993. Some of the most notorious GAI attacks included the murder of commentator Farag Foda in 1992, the 1994 assassination attempt on Nobel laureate Naguib Mahfouz, the shooting of 18 Greek tourists in Cairo in 1996, and the massacre of 58 foreign tourists at the Temple of Queen Hatshepsut in Luxor in 1997.

The violence between the Egyptian state and the radical Islamist groups peaked in 1993–1994; the RAND-MIPT database records a total of 31 terrorist attacks for that period. However, the overall scale of the political violence during that period is not adequately described by that figure. The Ibn Khaldun Center for Development Studies has recorded indicators of social unrest since the 1952 Free Officers' Revolution for each of Egypt's three rulers. Most of the indicators of political violence are considerably higher during the Mubarak regime, and the number of casualties is no exception: 1,557. However, a closer examination of those figures shows that more than 92 percent of those casualties occurred in the last four years on record. In other words, the number of casualties from 1990 to 1993 is roughly four times higher than the total from the preceding eight years combined.[45]

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[44] See the RAND-MIPT Terrorism Knowledge Base (2008) for more information on these groups and their attacks.

[45] Saad Eddin Ibrahim (2002b, p. 72).

This level of casualties is not solely due to radical Islamist attacks; the level of violence also reflects the regime's response. Whereas the 1980s saw what some observers have termed an Egyptian regime policy of "permissive repression"[46] and what others have described as "a blind eye to Islamist grassroots power,"[47] the 1990s witnessed an all-out assault. As the regime clamped down on overall political freedoms in order to block the MB, it also conducted a more brutal and more violent campaign against the GAI and EIJ, particularly in Upper Egypt. In Asyut and its surroundings, the regime closed mosques, imposed curfews, and deployed thousands of soldiers. Nearly 50,000 people were arrested from 1992 to 1997, while the torture of prisoners, Islamist or not, provided a justification for why the regime should be violently confronted and toppled. The regime even adopted a shoot-to-kill policy that arguably could have increased the killing and encouraged radical Islamists to resist.[48]

It is likely that the regime's escalation and heavy-handedness only hardened its enemies and lengthened the conflict. However, the radical Islamists, unable to capitalize on the state's indiscriminate repression, were not able to build a strong base of support within Egyptian society; their focus on toppling the Mubarak regime, rather than on promoting a broader political and social program, resulted in decreasing support from the populace. Moreover, Egyptian society could not condone the bloodiness of the strategy employed by EIJ and GAI, with random killings of Egyptians and tourists; the Luxor massacre in particular was a significant turning point vis-à-vis Egyptian public opinion.[49] In the end, the two organizations simply did not have the resources to continue a long confrontation with the Egyptian state.[50]

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[46] Hafez and Wiktorowicz (2004, p. 76).

[47] Abdalla (1993, p. 29).

[48] Abdalla (1993, p. 29) and Hafez and Wiktorowicz (2004, pp. 78–79).

[49] For a discussion of the international and Egyptian response to the Luxor attack, see Gerges (1999, pp. 118–120), Ghalwash (1997), and Hirst (1997).

[50] Gerges (2000, pp. 593–594).

Thus, in 1997, many GAI leaders in prison called for a cease-fire. This caused a split within the group, with some members suggesting that the imprisoned leaders no longer had any credibility to issue directives.[51] However, many of these individuals, including Ayman al-Zawahiri of EIJ and Rifa'i Ahmed Taha of GAI, were no longer in Egypt and their power to conduct attacks within Egypt was negligible. It was also during this time that al-Zawahiri's EIJ set itself apart from its sister organization GAI by declaring war against the United States and aligning itself more closely with al-Qa'ida in Afghanistan.[52] The infighting and the pressure employed by the Egyptian state on key leaders spelled the end of this particular surge of violence, and Egypt enjoyed a relative period of calm from 1998 to 2003. Lastly, it is worth noting that the success of the Egyptian government in using repression to quell terrorism within its borders may have inadvertently sent the problem elsewhere. Several Egyptians, including Ayman al-Zawahiri of the EIJ and al-Qa'ida, fled Egypt for fear of arrest, torture, and execution. Their influence on acts of international terrorism is both manifold and continuing.

Terrorism returned to Egypt in 2004. Most of the attacks since that time have occurred on the Sinai Peninsula. On October 7, a series of coordinated bombings in and around the resort city of Taba resulted in 34 dead and over 100 wounded. In 2005, attacks targeted Sharm al-Shaykh and the Multinational Force and Observers (MFO) in the northern Sinai. In 2006, three bombs struck Dahab, a resort on the Gulf of Aqaba, killing 19 and injuring nearly 90.[53] A former head of state security, Fouad Allam, announced that the perpetrators were not of the GAI or EIJ, stating that the militant groups of the 1990s targeted government symbols, whereas this new group targeted civilians: "They are choosing locations and times when it is mostly locals and Egyptian tourists who are around."[54] Allam's comments point to the

51 Al-Shaf'il (1999).

52 Dawoud (1998).

53 RAND-MIPT Terrorism Knowledge Base (2008).

54 Wahish and Abdel-Razek (2006).

fact that the Sinai attacks did not explicitly target tourists; in both the Sharm al-Shaykh and Dahab attacks, the victims were predominantly Egyptians.

The government's official response to the bombings was similar to actions undertaken in the 1990s. Mass arrests and torture prompted outcries from Egyptian and international human rights groups.[55] The International Crisis Group characterized the North Sinai governorate, one of the poorest in Egypt, as being "under a quasi-state of siege."[56] Eventually, the Egyptian Ministry of the Interior announced that it had identified and charged 15 members of a group calling itself Tawhid wa-Jihad as being responsible for the attacks. While information on the suspects is not readily available, it appears that the perpetrators were of Bedouin or Palestinian origin, suggesting a link to both the specific conditions of a minority group in Egypt and to the network of Palestinian radical Islamist organizations in the Gaza Strip.[57]

Thus, a closer look at the recent attacks in the Sinai suggests that they are specific to a particular region in Egypt and perhaps influenced in part by international conflicts. Several observers, including an analyst of radical groups at Egypt's al-Ahram Center for Political and Strategic Studies, suggested that while the attacks in the early to mid-1990s had few links to a particular international issue, there was also a regional component to the struggle, in that Upper Egypt, a culturally distinct region of Egypt, was the main locus of support and recruitment for the GAI.[58]

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55 Human Rights Watch (2005).

56 International Crisis Group (2007, p. 3).

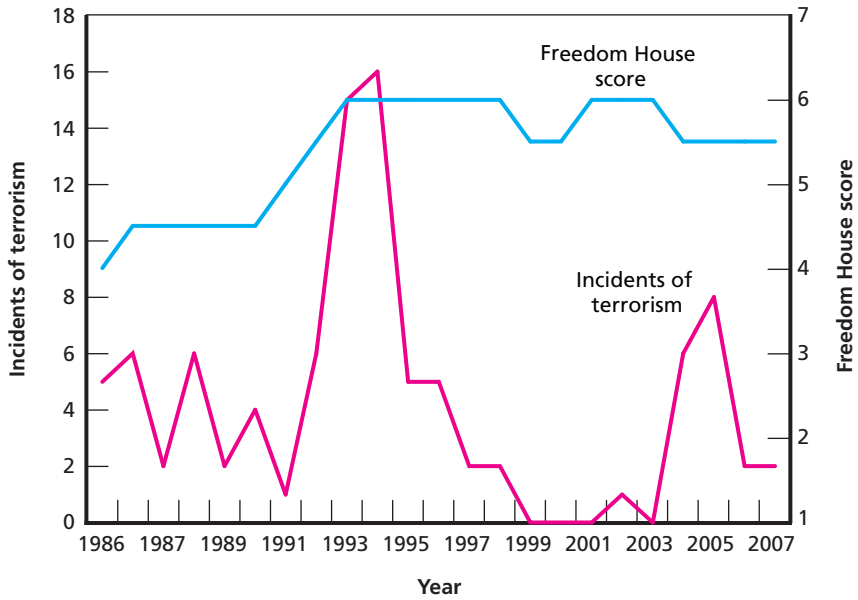
57 International Crisis Group (2007, pp. 4–5).

58 Author interviews with Egyptian analyst, February 2006. Fawaz Gerges and Saad Eddin Ibrahim have also commented on the conditions in Upper Egypt in several of their articles. An article by J. A. Nedoroscik (2002) on this topic is detailed later in this chapter.

Comparing Levels of Freedom and Terrorism

An examination of Freedom House democracy indicators and incidents of terrorism in Egypt suggests that there is some correlation between a decline in freedom and a rise in terrorism. Figure 2.1 shows these two variables, the Freedom House score and the number of incidents of terrorism, graphed by year from 1987 to 2006. On the Freedom House scale, Egypt moves from a 4.5 in the late 1980s and starts a significant downward trend, to a score of 6 by 1993. At the same time, the number of incidents of terrorism greatly increases, from an average of 2.6 incidents per year for the five years from 1987 to 1991 to an average of 9.4 incidents per year from 1992 to 1996. Moreover, the downward trend in the Freedom House indicator begins in 1990, while terrorism does not significantly increase until 1992.

Figure 2.1
Egypt: Freedom House Score and Number of Terrorism Incidents, by Year



NOTE: A score of 1 indicates the highest degree of freedom, and 7 the least.
RAND *MG772-2.1*

Still, terrorism does eventually fall off in Egypt, as the militant groups are unable to sustain their insurgency against the state—there is a small rise in the Freedom House score in 1999, but the historical record suggests that the reason these groups ceased their attacks had more to do with the negative tenor of public opinion following the Luxor massacre and the state's success at killing or imprisoning many of the leaders and members of these groups than any kind of liberalization program. The graph illustrates how the Egyptian state essentially dealt with its terrorism problem not by opening its political process to nonviolent types of competition, thereby further marginalizing the violent groups, but by implementing a systematic closure of political space and resorting to coercive measures to enforce its will. Thus, the data suggest that, just as antidemocratic processes may have influenced a rise in and prolongation of terrorism, antidemocratic processes may have also had an influence in quelling that type of violence.

Then there is the period from 2004 to 2006, when the number of terrorist attacks increases at the same time that Egypt's Freedom House score rises by 0.5 points. These attacks occurred during a period when there was significant optimism about the liberalization process and the rise of a viable opposition. As noted above in the discussion of terrorism trends, most of these attacks occurred in the Sinai Peninsula and involved a minority Bedouin component—it is plausible, if not probable, that many of the national political processes that led to an increase in the Freedom House score had little influence on the Sinai.

These regional variations do not register within the context of this quantitative analysis. This is a major critique of aggregate data, such as Freedom House's, and is as operative for the earlier period of violence in Upper Egypt as it is for the later attacks in the Sinai. J. A. Nedoroscik provides an effective description of this regional variability vis-à-vis Upper Egypt. Nedoroscik connects the violence and militancy that originated in Upper Egypt in the early 1990s to a set of deplorable development indicators and the historic neglect of this region by the central government. In his view, the "rise of militant factions" is a product of how people "react to the adverse socio-economic conditions and neglect that they face in their everyday lives with no hope

for the future."[59] While Nedoroscik acknowledges the role of ideology, he emphasizes the geographic, political, and economic isolation of Upper Egypt from the rest of the country. The militant movements situated in Upper Egypt "resorted to acts of violence to bring attention to the plight of Upper Egyptians and to the disparity that exists in the country."[60] Nedoroscik's socioeconomic argument still refers to political liberalization, in that the lack of government accountability and institutional response to the plight of Upper Egyptians resulted in radical militancy. A more open, democratic system would theoretically provide a more just allocation of resources and protect the rights of a culturally distinct region. As noted in an earlier section, similar arguments have been made about the relationship of the Sinai to the Nile Delta region; it appears, then, that a closer look at the conditions in these outlying regions might reveal more as to the relationship of political and socioeconomic conditions to the phenomenon of terrorism.

Thus, while a correlation between the level of liberalization and the level of terrorism for the years from 1987 to 1997 could be surmised from the quantitative data, these data do not represent regional variations that could be vital to a full understanding of this relationship. Moreover, the quantitative data become less clear later in this 20-year period. The inconsistencies suggest that a simple story about the influence of liberalization on terrorism is hardly possible, as the data cannot capture a range of influential factors or suggest how these factors act on the phenomena of political violence and terrorism.

Assessing Effects

While the quantitative data illustrated above offer a mixed picture, a qualitative review of the effect of liberalization on terrorism may suggest more about the relationship between these phenomena. We begin with the primary logical arguments provided for the effects of political liberalization on terrorism that were explained in Chapter One.

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[59] Nedoroscik (2002).

[60] Nedoroscik (2002).

The first hypothesis is the "norms-based" argument, which suggests that democratization fosters positive attitudes and values that make extremism and political violence less likely to occur. It appears that this aspect of liberalization has yet to substantially influence the Egyptian case. Egypt still suffers from significant tension and violence between its Muslim and Coptic communities, suggesting that what liberalization has occurred in Egypt has not instilled tolerant and peaceful political behavior.[61] Moreover, there appears to be little appetite for further liberalization in some minority communities at the present time; Copts are generally opposed to any changes that would give Islamist groups further power, as they are unsure about whether political liberalization would actually lead to further protection of minority rights.[62] A former leader of an Egyptian human rights group made similar comments regarding the state of secular parties, suggesting that Egypt "does not need free and fair elections now," but would be better off continuing a "national dialogue" that would reduce violence between various communities and parties. This national dialogue would also lead to greater political breathing room for secular opposition parties and generate more effective political competition.[63] A nongovernmental organization, the Group for Democratic Development, conducted a poll that also indicated that political tolerance may not run particularly deep in the Egyptian populace. The 1996–1997 poll included 5,100 respondents; of those, 33.96 percent believed that some groups should be excluded from political participation.[64]

In terms of the second hypothesis, the "institution-based" argument, the case of Egypt presents some support. This argument posits that democratic institutions, such as political parties and elections, provide an outlet for citizens to address their grievances through nonvio-

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[61] Coptic Christians make up about 10 percent of Egypt's 80 million people (Central Intelligence Agency, 2008).

[62] Author interview with an Egyptian sociologist, February 2007.

[63] Author interview with a former leader of an Egyptian human rights group, February 2007.

[64] Group for Democratic Development, "Before It's Too Late: Field Study on Political Participation in Egypt," public opinion poll prepared by Hafez Abu Saada, Cairo, Egypt, 1997.

lent means. An example of how this hypothesis functions in the Egyptian case relies on the perspectives of participants in Egypt's elections and parliament, including a member of the MB and former member of parliament interviewed by the author. This MP was ousted from his seat in parliament a few years after his election. When asked about his political campaign, the former MP argued that the key to his popularity was his responsiveness to his constituents. His success was more about "what he could do" for his constituents than his academic or religious credentials. A review of a book by another Egyptian parliamentarian, *Mudhakarat Na'ib min Misr* (Memoirs of a Representative from Egypt), relates the zeal with which opposition lawmakers tackled corruption and crime within the political system.[65] However, the former MP interviewed by the author noted that his efforts mainly involved questioning officials before parliament, which was "one of the weakest means of supervision."[66] While the government would eventually relieve the implicated individuals of their duties, it would delay and deny any link between the removal and the embarrassment of the parliamentary questioning. Without other types of oversight, the ability for citizens and their representatives to create and manage effective, responsive democratic institutions is quite limited in Egypt.

Still, limiting these weak means of public involvement has often resulted in violence. Significant acts of violence occurred during both the 2000 and 2005 elections, though observers noted that the 2000 poll was quieter than the 1995 election. Reports on the 2000 election noted a significant increase in violent confrontations in regions of Egypt not normally associated with clashes with security forces. While Upper Egypt was quiet, Lower Egypt saw more overt cases of violence, as security forces attempted to prevent opposition supporters from reaching polling stations.[67] Eyewitness reports from the 2005 elections noted widespread police intervention, with security forces occupying buildings near polling places and either barring voters from entering polling locations or using tear gas and rubber bullets to intimidate vot-

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65 Masoud (2006, pp. 85–87).

66 Author interview with a member of the MB and former Egyptian MP, February 2007.

67 Ouda et al. (2001, p. 75).

ers.[68] An attempt by the ousted MP to regain his seat in 2005 involved a great deal of frustration, anger, and violence when voters in his district were barred from entering the polls by thugs from the security services. Later, when it became clear that the ousted MP had won the poll despite the interference, security forces removed the poll workers and announced a different result.[69]

The experience of this and other opposition candidates, both in office and in attempting to gain office, is instructive. The ability of opposition groups to use the tools of democratic institutions to participate in the political process and generate change, however small, appears to be a component in their electoral success. This poses a threat to the regime, however, which seeks to maintain control over all of the instruments of power, and its repression of these participatory institutions has led to violence in the Egyptian case.

It is important to note that the violence surrounding the 2000 and 2005 elections has not yet led to particular acts of terrorism, though similar acts of widespread and indiscriminate repression in the early 1990s previously led to that type of political violence. Mohammed M. Hafez and Quintan Wiktorowicz provide a highly lucid and detailed analysis of the political violence in early 1990s Egypt in an article on the subject. The authors argue that viewing radical Islamism as a "response to the realities of everyday life" or the result of "something rooted in the traditions and sources of Islam itself" misses important aspects of why Islamic movements choose violence as a tactic in their "repertoires of contention." To Hafez and Wiktorowicz, the key to understanding these choices lies in the role of certain exogenous factors acting on the social movement, namely the accessibility of the political system and the nature of state repression. In respect to Egypt's radical groups in the 1990s, the inability of the MB to effect change through the political system helped to justify their turn to violence. Moreover, the character of state repression played a role in the move toward violence. When President Anwar al-Sadat allowed the GAI the space to organize and make certain gains within society, the regime set up a situa-

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[68] Hassan (2005, p. 24).

[69] Author interview with a member of the MB and former Egyptian MP, February 2007.

tion whereby any policy seeking to limit or eliminate the group would give the group few options outside of a violent response if it wished to maintain its standing. By removing options for peaceful coexistence with the regime, the state pushed the GAI to choose another tactic. Later, as the state became indiscriminate in its repression, rounding up large numbers of people and torturing prisoners, the radical groups found further justifications for a violent reaction to state power.[70] In these arguments set forth by Hafez and Witkorowicz, the process of liberalization would give organized groups a stake in the policymaking system, a way to substantively compete for power through an institutional process. In addition, a government that respects the rule of law and human rights would reduce the likelihood of both reactive and indiscriminate repression.

The final hypothesis is the "legitimacy-based" argument. Of all the hypotheses discussed in the first chapter of the report, the argument that liberalization can enhance a state's legitimacy and reduce support for violent groups is the most operative in the Egyptian case. According to Maye Kassem and her study of Egyptian authoritarianism, a vital feature of the Egyptian system is that "as a dominating and oppressive political system it can never be fully institutionalized." In other words, the political uncertainty associated with an illegitimate regime causes the regime to act in an "insecure and repressive manner."[71] Such insecure and repressive actions—state coercion, the mismanagement of elections, legal restrictions on citizens' rights, etc.—only lead to less legitimacy, not more.

There are a number of indicators that suggest that this lack of legitimacy has an influence on violent groups. Close observers of Egyptian politics and the state's struggle with violent groups view legitimacy as an important component in influencing the appeal of these groups.[72] Specifically, these individuals view key elements of political liberalization—namely the protection of human rights and the rule

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70 Hafez and Wiktorowicz (2004).

71 Kassem (2004, pp. 188–189).

72 Author interviews with a leader of an Egyptian human rights group, a member of the MB and former Egyptian MP, an Egyptian sociologist, a senior analyst at the al-Ahram Center

of law—as particularly important in boosting the legitimacy of the regime and consequently reducing the impetus for violence and its extent. These ideas are bolstered by opinion polls that give a view as to general Egyptian support for democracy and the rights that generally accompany liberalization. It can be inferred from these polling results that the Egyptian populace sees democracy as a legitimate form of government, and that the way that "democracy" is practiced in Egypt has very little to do with actual democratic practices. A 2006 Pew Research Center poll indicated that 65 percent of Egyptian respondents believed that "democracy can work well" in Egypt.[73] A November 2006 Zogby poll found that 82 percent believe that democracy is at least a "fairly good" way to govern the country.[74] A 2006 Gallup poll also found that Egyptians strongly support freedom of speech and assembly.[75] On the other hand, an earlier poll by *al-Ahram Weekly* of 1,505 men and women showed how Egyptians view the democratic framework of their own country. In this poll, a majority 48 percent of respondents felt that the multiparty system under Mubarak was "not useful"—only 36 percent found it useful.[76] These numbers give some idea as to the Egyptian perspective on democracy and liberalization and indicate how anti-democratic actions have influenced Egyptians' sense of the legitimacy of the governing regime.

Other evidence suggests that this overall lack of legitimacy has the potential to influence the choices that groups and individuals make about violence as an appropriate response. An incident at al-Azhar University shows how the regime's disregard for the rule of law can encourage militant behavior. The incident took place on December 10, 2006, when, in response to the involvement of security forces in students' association elections, student members of the MB staged a march and

for Political and Strategic Studies and former Egyptian military officer, and an American scholar with long-term research interests in Egyptian politics, February 2007.

73 Pew Global Attitudes Project (2006).

74 Pollack (2007, p. 12).

75 Gallup World Poll (2006, p. 2).

76 Shukrallah (1994). The poll was prepared under the supervision of statistician Nader Fergany and the Almishkat Centre for Research and Training.

martial arts demonstration. The marchers wore black masks and conducted their demonstration in front of the office of the university president. This behavior earned a stern rebuke from the leader of al-Azhar, Shaykh Muhammad Sayyid Tantawi, who stated that the administration had tried to "embrace these students, even though we knew that they are deviating." He went on to say that it made al-Azhar look like it was "exporting terrorism."[77] Still, the behavior of the students can be seen in a different light. A leader of an Egyptian human rights group suggested that the students were simply warning the security forces against using violent tactics at al-Azhar. According to this observer, the students "expected that the police would come and beat them like at 'Ayn Shams."[78] The association elections at 'Ayn Shams resulted in nearly five days of bloody clashes between security service thugs and students.[79] This incident is a recent example of how the regime's disregard for the rule of law and fair elections has undermined its legitimacy and provoked a violent response. This observer also commented that this situation may just be a precursor to greater strife as "escalation breeds escalation."[80]

Repression and Destabilization

Government repression has played a major role in closing political opportunities for Egypt's opposition and in both fueling and eventually quelling acts of terrorism in the country. If repression is considered a side effect of the destabilizing process of liberalization, then the Egypt case suggests that political liberalization has significant implications for acts of violence and terrorism within the country. Antidemocratic practices by the regime led to conditions whereby groups could not contend peacefully. Looked at in this way, it may be more correct to assert that repression is more a symptom of authoritarianism than

77 Azuri (2007).

78 Author interview with the leader of an Egyptian human rights group, February 2007.

79 Shehata and Stacher (2007).

80 Author interview with the leader of an Egyptian human rights group, February 2007.

of liberalization. At least in Egypt, the creation of weak institutions, the exclusion of major political actors, and the socioeconomic imbalances that one might associate with political liberalization appear to be linked more to a tenacious and unpredictable personal authoritarian regime than to an ongoing process of political openness. Thus, the argument that liberalization results in an unstable political system that provides opportunities and incentives for repression and its associated violence does not hold in this case. This may be because Egypt has not liberalized its political system to an extent necessary for the destabilizing effects to be felt.

On the other hand, the violent periods in the 1990s and the 2000s suggest that, rather than liberalization leading to violence, it is the rolling back of political openings that generates a coalescence of influential factors leading to violence and terrorism. From this perspective, once a nation embarks on political liberalization, it is much more dangerous to alter course through deliberalization and repression than it is to continue along the path toward a full-fledged democratization process. It seems, though, that deliberalization and repression can work to quell terrorism, at least in the short term. As noted by political scientist Adam Przeworski, a "regime does not collapse unless and until some alternative is organized in such a way as to present a real choice for isolated individuals."[81] Consequently, an authoritarian regime would much rather use repression to remove violent and nonviolent competitors rather than risk a democratic transition that, while plausibly removing the conditions for violent contention, could also successfully remove an unpopular government.

Conclusion

This case study of trends in Egyptian political liberalization and terrorism indicates a complex relationship between the two phenomena. A simple quantitative analysis of aggregate statistics is not sufficient to capture a number of operative factors, most importantly regional

[81] Przeworski (1991, pp. 47–63).

variability, which many scholars believe represents a vital component in understanding terrorism in Egypt. The qualitative, empirical analysis of these trends is anything but straightforward. While some of the hypotheses introduced in Chapter One appear to have some influence in the Egyptian case, others do not. The legitimacy argument enjoys the greatest level of support and corroboration; qualified Egyptian analysts, politicians, and activists across the political spectrum agree that true political liberalization increases the legitimacy of the regime and effectively marginalizes those who seek to topple the government or change the political framework through violence. The process of institutional change appears to be the avenue whereby the Egyptian regime could achieve this legitimacy—in the highly legalistic system created by Egypt's constitution and reinforced by the authoritarian regime's labyrinthine bureaucracy, the path toward real political openness in the country appears to be tied closely to institutional reform.[82]

On the other hand, there is little evidence that the norms-based hypothesis is operational in Egypt; there are few indications that democratic norms are functioning in such a way as to reduce animosity and violence between various groups. In effect, the fact that this hypothesis seems to hold no weight may indicate a major stumbling block (among many others) to any further liberalization. The fissures between religious and secular groups, between different confessions, and between different socioeconomic groups are both obvious and active.[83] The regime has also played an active role in encouraging these fissures. As noted in previous sections, the government has blocked the formation of both secular and religious parties, arrested moderate members of

[82] A useful analysis of Egypt's legal structure and the relationship of the authoritarian regime to its constitution and judiciary can be found in Moustafa (2007).

[83] The author's field research in Egypt in February 2007, as well as much writing on Egyptian society and culture, bears this out. A Coptic Christian lawyer suggested that Egypt was not ready to have elections so long as the MB remained a significant force. A scholar at the American University of Cairo who examined the creation of the Kifaya movement, which included many different political groups, noted the struggle between secular and religious members regarding the use of religious rhetoric in the movement's statements. The differences in socioeconomic class and the potential for political strife between classes have received significant attention from an American scholar, Joel Beinin, in his books on the subject.

groups to encourage less appealing ideas, and allowed both state organs and independent groups to use violence and other extralegal means to circumscribe the rights of others.

Moreover, while a debate about the influence of democracy on terrorism in the United States has significant importance to the conduct of American foreign policy, there is a similar debate in Egypt, and this discussion involves domestic policy and is highly informed by these aforementioned fissures. Thus, those individuals belonging to the establishment, for instance, the ruling National Democratic Party or other state-funded institutions, engage in a kind of double-speak regarding this issue.[84] To start, there is a denial that political conditions or reforms have any influence whatsoever on the phenomenon of terrorism in Egypt; ideology and, possibly, poverty are considered the influential factors. However, after some discussion, many of those in the establishment will admit that human rights and the rule of law are vital components to mitigate political violence and terrorism, while still being unwilling to admit that democratic political reforms, which would ostensibly lead to the better protection of human rights and the more effective application of the rule of law, could enhance these two components.

Leaders of secular organizations and social movements are quick to suggest that democratic political reforms could positively influence political violence and terrorism in Egypt.[85] These organizations would, of course, benefit from a more tolerant and open political space. Nonetheless, an important aspect of political reform for these groups is that it be secular in nature. Secularists point to how Egypt's problems with terrorism are mainly linked to religious extremists. Thus, they argue, any political reform in Egypt should be based on enhancing and securing the secular nature of the government. Terrorism becomes a political weapon of secularists, and their antidote is not necessarily an open

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[84] Author interviews with a member of the National Democratic Party and several analysts at the government-supported al-Ahram Center for Political and Strategic Studies, February 2007.

[85] Author interviews with leaders and observers of secular organizations, including leaders of NGOs (human rights groups and political movements) and scholars at the American University in Cairo, February 2007.

system, but an open, avowedly secular system. This is, of course, anathema to another set of political actors in Egypt: the Islamists.

Members of the MB also view democratic reform as an antidote to extremist violence.[86] One MB member mentioned how American pressure on the Mubarak regime was an important factor in the group's electoral success; without American pressure, the electoral playing field would not have been as favorable to the group. When asked whether this pressure had anything to do with terrorism in the Middle East, the answer was in the affirmative—the MB member agreed with President Bush that political stagnation was extremely influential in encouraging radicalism and hoped to see more pressure from the American government on the Mubarak regime. In the calculations of the MB, as with the secular groups, connecting a reduction in terrorism and political violence to liberal political reform is partially about survival, about achieving the political space they need to achieve their aims.

Pointing out the politics of the debate in Egypt regarding the connection between terrorism and political liberalization is important for two reasons. First, it indicates the stakes involved with this debate—the importance of it to various actors and the care that must be taken by Western policymakers when pursuing policy in this area. Second, the varying stances taken in regard to the liberalization-terrorism connection in Egypt indicate that, even when taking into account some of the objections of the establishment, there is something of a consensus on the importance of democratic reforms to reduce the threat of terrorism and other types of political violence, but very little consensus on how to actually make these reforms happen. Indeed, the different orientations of these groups suggest that instances of terrorism feed into a greater game of political competition that can have a highly deleterious effect on any kind of democratic political progress or compromise. Various groups use an act of terrorism for their own purposes, not necessarily as a means for achieving consensus or compromise. The government can use a terrorist act or other manifestation of political violence as an indication of criminal or radical Islamist activity and, consequently, as a legitimizing excuse to crack down on its opponents.

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86 The author interviewed three senior members of the MB in Cairo in February 2007.

Secular organizations can blame the government for the conditions exacerbating political violence in the country and also lambaste the MB for the ideological roots it shares with some of these extremist groups. The MB can use terrorism as a foil to reinforce its image as nonviolent and moderate and appeal for outside intervention in anti-democratic practices that it suggests fuel conflict. The end result is not a political framework pushed by the exigency of violence toward compromise, peaceful contention, and legitimate action, but rather toward greater splintering and incoherence.

CHAPTER THREE

Jordan

Jordan may be among the most open countries in the Arab world, but its record of political reform exemplifies many of the trends common in other cases: limited openings tightly controlled by the regime, promises for reform with little substantive action, and backtracking on reforms in the name of stability and security. Because Jordan is considered to be a model of inclusiveness relative to many of its neighbors, the gap between expectations and reality is often wide, breeding frustration and disappointment. Indeed, many Jordanian analysts worry that recurrent backtracking on political and civil liberties may put Jordan at greater risk for political violence in the future.

To better illustrate the effects of limited reforms on political violence, this chapter first reviews key trends in liberalization and terrorism in Jordan. It then assesses some quantitative measures to highlight potential correlations between levels of "freedom" and terrorism. Noting the shortcomings of such measures, the chapter concludes with a qualitative analysis of the effects of liberalization, examining in particular how political openings (or their absence) since 1989 have influenced political tolerance and pluralism, the nature of new institutional arrangements, and the legitimacy of the existing system itself.

Liberalization Trends

Although expectations for democracy in Jordan are high (89 percent favor a democratic system, according to one Jordanian poll),[1] the initial impetus for reform did not stem from societal pressure. The trigger emerged in 1989 with a state economic crisis, as International Monetary Fund (IMF)–mandated reforms cut subsidies for key staples and led to riots in areas traditionally supportive of Hashemite rule. Beyond the economic rationale also lay political discontent and a sense of marginalization. As one study argues, "The violence of April 1989 stunned King Hussein and the Hashemite leadership. The monarch instinctively recognized that while economics . . . had triggered the violence, the basic complaints were about political issues such as corruption, autocratic governance, abuse of authority and the periphery's sense of abandonment."[2] The monarchy's acknowledgment of the political underpinnings of homegrown violence became apparent as King Hussein responded with a series of significant liberalization measures, leading to a "golden era" of political reform from 1989 to 1993[3] intended to reduce political pressure and violence in order to continue with economic reforms.[4] These included[5]

- the first full parliamentary elections (in November 1989) since the 1967 war
- the legalization of political parties[6]

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1 Center for Strategic Studies (2006).

2 International Crisis Group Briefing (2003a, p. 11).

3 Author interview with Jordanian analyst, January 15, 2007.

4 As Schwedler (2006b, p. 50) argues with respect to King Hussein's decision to hold parliamentary elections in 1989, "The objective was to provide political dissent—present and future—with an outlet for legal expression as a means of preventing both further violence and the emergence of an organized opposition front that favored radical confrontation with the regime."

5 For further details on reforms during this period, see Ryan and Schwedler (2004). For another overview of Jordan's reform record and periodic backsliding, see Choucair (2006).

6 The main Islamist opposition party, the Islamic Action Front (IAF), formed in 1992. For a detailed overview of the IAF and its relationship to the MB, see Schwedler (2006b),

- the lifting of martial law
- the Press and Publications Law (1993) leading to the emergence of dozens of new media outlets
- the adoption of a new National Charter (1991) that provided a foundation for political pluralism and free expression.

While these initial reforms were indeed expansive, they were tightly controlled by the regime and designed to protect and solidify Hashemite rule, essentially another component of a regime survival strategy. Analyst Glenn Robinson coins this strategy "defensive democratization," a preemptive process whereby the regime tightly controls political openings in order to protect its main pillars of support: the monarchy, the army and security forces, the wealthy business class (dominated by Palestinians interested in maintaining economic reforms in order to limit the influence of the trans-Jordanian-dominated public sector), and East Bank tribal leaders.[7] The 1989 parliamentary elections, for example, while widely welcomed, were largely viewed as a "mechanism for political control" as seats were distributed disproportionately to prevent Palestinians (believed to constitute over half of Jordan's population) from gaining a majority.[8] Even the growth of civil society in Jordan has been largely controlled by the state, because in a "political context characterized by political liberalization from above, civil society may act to reify regime power by creating a constellation of visible organizations that can be carefully monitored and managed."[9]

Jordan historically allowed greater inclusion of Islamists than elsewhere in the region, allowing, for instance, the MB to function legally since the 1940s. Still, the strong showing of Islamists in the 1989 par-

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particularly pp. 95–96. Another Islamist party in Jordan, al-Wasat, presents itself as a more moderate Islamist alternative to the IAF and is more inclined to engage with American democracy activists; however, the party plays a minor role in Jordan's political system and has limited popular appeal (it currently does not hold any seats in parliament). See Yacoubian (2007), particularly p. 8.

7 Robinson (1998). For other arguments on the utility of democratization for regime survival strategies, see Greenwood (2003a) and Wiktorowicz (1999a).

8 Schwedler (2006b, p. 50).

9 Wiktorowicz (2000b, p. 58).

liamentary elections led the regime to weaken the liberalization process by 1993.[10] The most visible sign of such control was the 1993 elections law, popularly referred to as the "one person, one vote" system because it allows each voter only one vote regardless of the number of parliamentary seats in the district. The effect of the law is that it limits the influence of political parties in densely populated urban areas (most notably the Islamists) and favors rural, tribal areas, all of which contribute to Hashemite dominance. As one analyst explains, "although the two governorates of Amman and Irbid hold 57 percent of Jordan's voting population, they have only 38 percent of the parliamentary seats. It is no coincidence that underrepresented urban governorates have a large population of Palestinian origin, and that overrepresented largely rural governorates are considered mainstays of support for the regime."[11] Frustration with this law contributed to the Islamic Action Front (IAF) boycott of the 1997 parliamentary elections, and there are few indications that the law will change anytime soon.[12]

A number of other setbacks to Jordan's reform process ensued in the 1990s, including new press and publication laws that led to a deterioration of civil and political liberties, particularly following the 1994 peace treaty with Israel. In addition to the IAF boycott of elections in 1997, repressive laws on press freedom forced many opposition papers to close. Regional developments, particularly the second Palestinian *intifada* in 2000 and the 9/11 terrorist attacks in the United States, further limited liberalization efforts, despite hopes for renewed openings following the succession of King 'Abdullah to the throne in 1999. The new king postponed the November 2001 parliamentary elections, dissolved parliament, and passed 250 emergency and temporary laws limiting liberalization.[13] Elections were finally held in 2003, but they continued to represent the managed liberalization process that some

[10] For an argument attributing the backsliding on political liberalization to foreign policy concerns, particularly those related to the peace process and the regime's desire to limit popular voices opposing normalization with Israel, see Brand (1999).

[11] David DeBartolo (2007a).

[12] DeBartolo (2007b).

[13] For further details, see Ryan and Schwedler (2004, p. 139).

analysts have termed a "hybrid" regime, which is "neither typically authoritarian nor meaningfully democratic."[14] Frustration with representation issues, as well as allegations of election fraud, also contributed to an IAF withdrawal of its candidates from municipal elections in the summer of 2007.[15]

The November 20, 2007, parliamentary elections continued similar trends of a controlled and highly managed political process to ensure regime dominance and minimize political opposition forces, particularly the IAF. While the IAF did not boycott the elections, reports suggest that the government negotiated a deal with the group's moderate faction to pursue fair elections in exchange for the IAF limiting the number of candidates it would field and excluding hard-liners from its slate.[16] The election results proved a serious setback for the IAF, which captured just 6 of the 22 seats they sought (far lower than the 17 seats they won in the 2003 election). In the government's view, the decline of the Islamists was a result of their eroding popularity among the Jordanian public,[17] but the IAF (and many analysts) maintain that the low numbers resulted from government rigging and election fraud.[18] Allegations included vote buying, ballot stuffing, and the busing of military men to polling stations, which NGOs were prohibited from monitoring.[19] The "parliament of loyalty" that emerged was dominated by tribal candidates, wealthy business elites, and former military officials—a worrisome development, according to some democracy observers: "the retreat of the Islamists has not been counterbalanced by the rise of a rival political force, but rather by the emergence of a serious political vacuum. . . . The de-politicization of the Jordanian parliament

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14 Ryan and Schwedler (2004).

15 For a government view of the election results, see "Jordan: Judah, Municipal Affairs Minister Address Reporters on Election Results," (2007).

16 Al-Rantawi (2007).

17 A high-level former Jordanian government official presented this view in a meeting with the author, February 2008, Amman.

18 Farawati (2007).

19 For further details, see the section "How to Rig Elections: A Jordanian Manual" in Susser (2008), especially pp. 5–6.

is an unhealthy feature and is likely to lead to a decline in transparency and accountability."[20]

Jordanian liberalization has faced additional setbacks in the human rights area since the security crackdown following the November 2005 hotel bombings and the January 2006 HAMAS electoral victory in Palestinian national elections. For example, the government issued an antiterrorism law in August 2006 that is opposed by many human rights groups. In this security climate, even a former head of the Royal Court and close advisor to King Hussein, 'Adnan Abu Odeh, was investigated for allegedly insulting the king in television interviews.[21] In response to increasing clampdowns and backtracking since 2005, Human Rights Watch issued a scathing report in late 2007 criticizing the growing restrictions placed on NGOs and more general freedoms related to assembly and association rights.[22] As the report states, "The Jordanian government has abused the current laws on assembly and association to sharply curtail the rights of those perceived to be its political opponents or critics."[23]

Whether in the political or civil society domain, external instability (emanating from a number of fronts) is now routinely used as a justification for the crackdown at home. The backtracking on reforms and emphasis on security has led to great disappointment among the country's reformers. As one Jordanian analyst put it, "democracy is decoration" in Jordan today.[24] Polls of Jordanian experts and public opinion appear to support such skepticism.[25]

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20 Hroub (2007).

21 On this incident, see Sabbagh-Gargour (2006).

22 Human Rights Watch (2007).

23 Human Rights Watch (2007, p. 4).

24 Author interview with Jordanian analyst, Amman, Jordan, January 15, 2007. Such sentiments were reinforced in author interviews with other Jordanian analysts in February 2008 in Amman, Jordan.

25 See Arab Center for the Development of the Rule of Law and Integrity (ACRLI) and International Foundation for the Election Systems (IFES) (2007a, 2007b).

Trends in Violent Activity

Jordan has experienced relatively low levels of terrorism and political violence compared with other Arab states, which is conventionally attributed to its inclusion of the mainstream Islamic opposition. That said, analysts such as Jillian Schwedler argue that Jordan's Islamist opposition was never radical to begin with, so the question is not about how inclusion creates moderates but rather how inclusion makes moderates more moderate and marginalizes extremists.[26] Indeed, more radical elements in Jordan, particularly Salafi jihadi groups, are still limited, even if their support base is expanding as frustration grows within mainstream Islamist ranks and the broader population. The November 2005 hotel bombings in Amman—the deadliest act of terrorism on Jordanian soil to date—highlighted the growing strength of extremist groups, but such groups began emerging in Jordan long before these horrific attacks (which were carried out by Iraqis, not Jordanians).

The Salafi movement emerged in Jordan in the 1970s as individuals studying in Egypt, Lebanon, and Syria became exposed to Salafi ideas, and by 1979 a renowned Salafi shaykh (Muhammad Nasir al-Din al-Albani) moved to Jordan after fleeing Syria. Although all Salafis follow a strict interpretation of Islam, not all Salafis endorse violence and the overthrow of existing political systems (such Salafis are often referred to as reformists and tend to focus on education and religious change in stages).[27] However, Salafi jihadi groups (of which al-Qa'ida is most well known) adopt militant postures and are responsible for the types of terrorist incidents that threaten regional regimes and Western interests. The Salafi jihadi groups gained considerable strength after fighters returned from the Afghan war in 1979, but it was in the aftermath of the 1991 Gulf War that several militant groups emerged in Jordan and carried out a number of attacks on symbols of Western cultures, such

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[26] Schwedler (2006b).

[27] Salafis follow a strict interpretation of the Quran and sunna, and when actions are not allowed by original sources of Islam, they are rejected as "not Muslim." For a fuller explanation, see Wiktorowicz (2000a, p. 219).

as American schools, Western hotels, and nightclubs.[28] Such militant Salafi jihadi leaders as Abu Muhammad al-Maqdisi and Abu Musʿab al-Zarqawi (named after the town of Zarqa, where Salafi activism in Jordan began) rose from these ranks.[29] Maqdisi and Zarqawi both found fertile recruitment ground while in prison in the 1990s until both were released under a general amnesty issued by King ʿAbdullah in 1999. Still, despite the growth of Salafi extremists and the spreading of their radical ideas in the 1990s, terrorist attacks remained limited, and Jordan did not experience any large-scale attacks or suicide bombings until the November 2005 incident.

Potentially large-scale attacks were thwarted in large part by the effective monitoring of the Jordanian security service (the General Intelligence Department, or GID) as well as the cooperation of Jordan's MB. Indeed, the MB has a long history of cooperative relations with the Hashemites and, despite growing tensions with the regime, has been a loyal voice opposition, protesting policies (especially Jordan's peace treaty with Israel) but not the regime itself. Nonetheless, the Salafis have been able to recruit steadily in poor cites, such as Zarqa and Salt, and have contributed to militant campaigns outside Jordan in Afghanistan and Iraq. Indeed, the decision to launch attacks within Jordan sparked significant debate and division among the jihadi network (Maqdisi opposed attacks within Jordan, while Zarqawi actively pursued them).

But it was only in the aftermath of the war in Afghanistan and particularly the U.S. invasion of Iraq[30] that there was a significant increase in terrorism in Jordan (carried out by Salafi jihadi groups with transnational links and goals) and a widespread government crack-

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28 Wiktorowicz (2000a, p. 222).

29 On the rise of Salafism and Salafi jihadis in Jordan, including a discussion of some of the internal rivalries among factions led by Maqdisi and Zarqawi, see International Crisis Group (2005b), particularly pp. 3–12. Also see Rosen (2006).

30 For a broader discussion of global jihadi activism, drawing on Iraq as a new focal point, see Hegghammer (2006a).

down on suspected Islamic militants.[31] In October 2002, a senior U.S. Agency for International Development administrator, Laurence Foley, was fatally shot outside his home in Amman, and, in August 2005, there was a rocket attack on two U.S. Navy ships in Aqaba. A thwarted attack that would have inflicted widespread damage if successful was the 2004 plan for a truck filled with explosives and chemical agents to hit GID headquarters, the prime ministry, and the U.S. embassy.

The effectiveness and pervasiveness of the GID and its ability to infiltrate broad sectors of Islamist extremists and potential supporters help explain the limited nature of attacks in Jordan (until the 2005 hotel bombings) and the preference of violent extremists in Jordan to focus their attacks in Iraq and elsewhere. Indeed, foreigners carried out the successful attacks in Jordan, likely because of concerns about GID infiltration into the plots if they relied on Jordanians. The particular nature of the November 2005 bombings (occurring during a wedding party) and their scale (killing 63 people and injuring over 100 others)[32] generated disgust among Jordanians and, at least temporarily, marginalized violent extremists and reduced their support among the broader population.

But escalating regional instability and economic pressures at home continue to provide fertile ground for jihadi recruitment and support. Many Jordanians even believe that the hotel bombings were an Israeli or American plot to justify American intervention in the region. Jihadi recruits are now no longer just coming from uneducated and impoverished backgrounds; even the educated and middle class are joining violent extremist forces in Iraq.[33] Given this level of frustration and support for radicalism, the GID may find it difficult to stave off future attacks as successfully as it has done in the past, particularly when the extremists fighting in Iraq return home. That said, popular support for Osama bin Laden (and, by implication, the transnational jihadi

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[31] In 2000, 16 Islamists were detained on suspicion of belonging to al-Qa'ida, 50 in 2001, and hundreds following the Iraq war in 2003 (International Crisis Group, 2005b, p. 12).

[32] BBC News (2005c). Also see the RAND-MIPT Terrorism Knowledge Base.

[33] Rosen (2006, p. 14).

agenda) has declined significantly since the Iraq war, with 56 percent trusting him on world affairs in 2003 but only 20 percent in 2007.[34]

Comparing Levels of Freedom and Terrorism

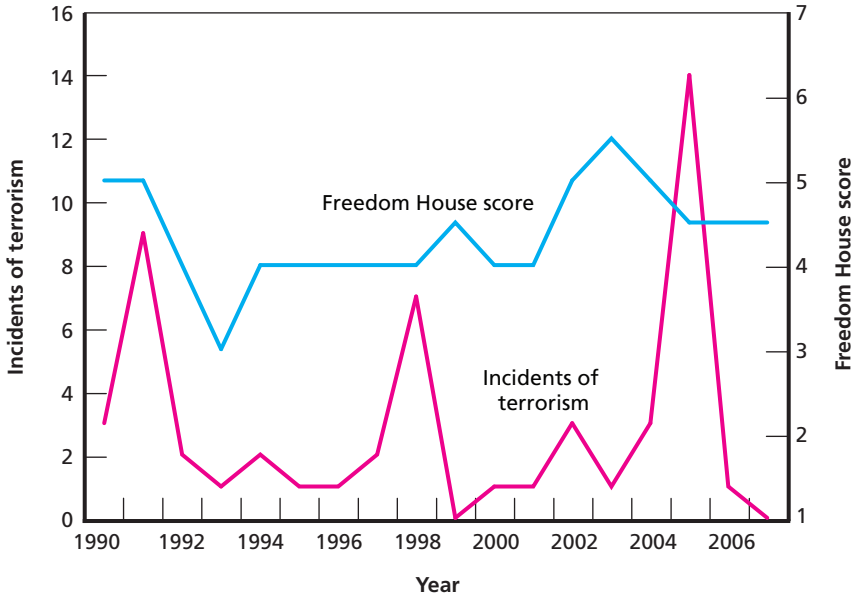
Quantitative measures of levels of "freedom" and terrorism in Jordan (drawing on Freedom House data and the RAND-MIPT database) can only suggest possible correlations and have limited value in identifying a causal relationship between the two variables. And, as suggested in Chapter One, this is in any case not the goal of this study. That said, it is useful to examine whether quantifiable data could suggest any consistency among the levels of liberalization and terrorism in specific cases. As is apparent in Figure 3.1, we find that the pattern varies over time and is indeterminate.

In some instances, lower levels of terrorism accompany higher levels of liberalization, as the transition from 1991 to 1993 suggests. In 1993, Jordan received its best Freedom House rating to date, a 3, and experienced only one act of terrorism that year (in contrast to 1991, when Jordan's FH score was considerably lower, a 5, and nine acts of terrorism occurred that year). And in some years, such as 1998, a lower FH score (a 4) correlated with higher levels of violence. But similar FH scores in other years (Jordan's score remained at 4 from 1994 through 1997) correlated with lower levels of violence, suggesting a spurious connection. Moreover, in 2003, Jordan's worst year on the FH scale (a score of 5.5), terrorism levels remained low. And when FH scores improved to 4.5 by 2005, Jordan experienced its highest level and most dramatic act of terrorism in its history, the November 2005 hotel bombings.

The correlations are not only inconclusive; they also cannot account for the variety of other causal factors that influence levels of terrorism and violence in the country, particularly broader regional developments (e.g., radicalization after the wars in Afghanistan, Iraq, and Lebanon) and the effectiveness of the GID in thwarting terrorist

[34] Pew Global Attitudes Project (2007, p. 68).

Figure 3.1
Jordan: Freedom House Score and Number of Terrorism Incidents, by Year



NOTE: A score of 1 indicates the highest degree of freedom, and 7 the least.
RAND *MG772-3.1*

attacks. Moreover, these data also miss other important elements that one can only capture through a more qualitative assessment. For example, terrorist data does not address domestic political violence (such as large-scale rioting) that may signal discontent with the economic and political system but which may not result in actual acts of terrorism as defined by terrorism databases.

Indeed, Jordan has experienced several episodes of such domestic violence, particularly in the southern city of Maan. Since 1989, four instances of political violence have erupted in Maan (in addition to clashes between security forces and locals in other southern cities, such as Kerak and Tafileh).[35] The most recent clashes occurred in November 2002, when tribal leaders in Maan refused to hand over Muhammad

[35] For an overview of these domestic-based sources of unrest, see International Crisis Group (2003a).

Chalabi, an Islamic activist who had organized a rally supportive of Osama bin Laden during the Afghanistan campaign and who the Jordanian authorities were attempting to arrest (Jordanian officials claim this was a local incident aimed to protect Maan's population from criminal elements, while others argue it was an attempt to crack down on Islamic militants before the onset of the Iraq war in 2003).[36]

According to the ICG, recurrent unrest in Maan is related to both local and national factors. As one ICG report argues, while Maan is in many ways a distinct entity and the 2002 violence did not spread in part for that reason, it would be "a mistake to interpret Maan events through a purely local lens and so conclude that they are isolated from broader national issues. . . . Problems of economic development, deficiencies in Jordan's local and national systems of political representation, law enforcement issues, anger about the ongoing conflict in the Palestinian territories, and the Iraq crisis are matters that affect all Jordanians."[37]

In addition to failing to capture the type of domestic political unrest outlined above, quantitative data also do not reveal the terrorism that does not occur and that is not attempted, often because of cooption techniques that decrease the incentives for domestic groups to move toward violence to express their grievances. The data also cannot depict the marginalization effects that are widespread in the Jordan context, whereby the legitimacy produced through more political inclusion (discussed further below) limits the effectiveness of more radical voices in garnering support among broader segments of the population, and vice versa. Indeed, although to date Salafi extremists are largely marginalized, many Jordanian analysts worry this may be changing, in part because of growing frustration related to political exclusion and strong-arm practices by the state. The low levels of violence represented by the data at a given time may also be misleading; as we know in the Jordanian case, low levels of violence in the mid-1990s were accompanied by growing radicalization among Salafi jihadi groups, many of

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36 Greenwood (2003b, pp. 102–103).

37 International Crisis Group (2003a, p. 1).

which ended up exporting their violent acts abroad, including to the United States.

In order to capture these more complex connections between political reform and extremism, we must move beyond the numbers toward a qualitative assessment of the study's hypotheses regarding the types of effects reform measures may have on calculations regarding political violence.

Assessing Effects

Normative Effects

Has Jordanian liberalization enhanced norms of tolerance and inclusion that, in theory, are supposed to reduce terrorism or other acts of political violence? There is little evidence to support this hypothesis, perhaps because democratic norms are far from established in "liberalized autocracies" such as Jordan. Indeed, fears of growing Islamic power (and Palestinian representation) gained through the political process are in some ways increasing intolerance of opposing groups and opinions. For example, we see growing curbs on freedom of expression, a good indicator for the levels of tolerance in any society. In one survey, only 22 percent of respondents believed that, to a large extent, journalists enjoy freedom of expression without fear of reprisal, while 81 percent said that reforms are needed to enhance the independence of the media.[38] And while another poll suggests that Jordanians believe public freedoms are improving, the majority of respondents still do not believe that such freedoms are guaranteed to the extent that they can be practiced without fear of the authorities.[39]

But political reforms may have affected Islamists themselves, at least the mainstream Islamists represented by the IAF, which has accepted and participated in the political system. Jillian Schwedler

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[38] Arab Center for the Development of the Rule of Law and Integrity and the International Foundation for the Election Systems (2007a, 2007b).

[39] Center for Strategic Studies (2006). Indeed, according to this poll, three-quarters of respondents were fearful of criticizing the government in public.

argues that political inclusion led the IAF to move from closed worldviews to a movement tolerant of alternative perspectives (her definition of "moderate"), even if it still holds radical positions on some issues and is socially conservative.[40] Although political inclusion did not convert the IAF from radicals into moderates (because, in Schwedler's view, the IAF was never radical to begin with), playing the political game did force the IAF toward greater tolerance for opposing views and groups as new political coalitions emerged. While reform in Jordan may be controlled and limited, it has opened political space in a way that will be difficult to reverse entirely, as diverse opposition groups now cooperate across ideological and religious lines. After the mid-1990s, for instance, the IAF began working with groups that were previously its ideological and political rivals, such as leftists, liberals, and even former security officials, in order to protest regime backtracking on reform and policy issues, such as peace with Israel. But even this example does not support the notion that greater tolerance contributed to a reduction in political violence, as the IAF—and the Jordanian MB—had never been a violent movement.

Institutional Effects

The effects of new institutional arrangements generated through political reform are mixed, as reform in cases such as Jordan does not always address imbalances of power in the ways traditionally envisioned in the democracy literature. To be sure, opening up the process to allow for new institutional mechanisms, such as political parties and elected parliaments, did have some moderating effects on opposition forces and, most critically, preventing the formation and support for more radical voices. Indeed, Jordanian analysts have argued that the absence of institutional means—parliament, judiciary, political parties—to convey grievances in the local context of Maan was an important factor in the outbreak of violence there in 2003.[41] The emergence of such institutions at the national level strengthened moderate groups and weakened the hand of hard-line elements, both within the Islamist opposition

[40] Schwedler (2006a).

[41] Center for Strategic Studies (2003, p. 15).

and among groups working outside the system. As many analysts have argued, allowing the MB and the affiliated IAF to operate openly and participate in the political process has helped prevent radicalization and the emergence of violent splinter groups—in contrast to the Egyptian model—even if friction between the Islamist opposition and the government continues.[42] Indeed, some IAF activists worry that if the government resorts to repressive measures (such as the detention of IAF members), the moderating effects of political inclusion could be threatened. As former IAF secretary-general Abd-al-Latif Arabiyat warned: "Nasser's crackdown in Egypt led to greater resistance. People left the MB and formed [the radical] *Al-Takfir wa-l-Hijra*. We fear that this could happen here."[43]

Moreover, the institutional openings accompanying Jordanian political reforms have always been tightly controlled and limited, with election laws that ensure the dominance of the monarchy's political allies. Despite some moderating effects, the way in which opposition groups have been systematically excluded and marginalized is breeding resentment. The 2003 parliamentary elections, for example, brought about protests from the IAF alleging widespread vote rigging and electoral fraud.[44] Similar allegations of voter fraud resulted in the IAF's withdrawal from the July 31, 2007, municipal elections, leading to increased tension with the government (which claims the IAF withdrew because of diminishing public support and fear of losing the election). Although the IAF participated in the November 2007 parliamentary elections, allegations of election rigging and fraud were again widespread, resulting in a parliament dominated by regime loyalists, with diminished Islamist or other opposition party representation. To date, the resentment surrounding political exclusion has not translated into violence, as the opposition has found nonviolent means to express discontent (e.g., boycotting elections). But there is no guarantee that this will hold, and, of course, for the extremist Salafi groups, such political

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[42] See, for example, Wiktorowicz (1999b) and Brown (2006), particularly pp. 21–22.

[43] Quoted in International Crisis Group (2005b, p. 15).

[44] International Crisis Group (2003b, p. 16).

institutions, even if genuinely democratic, will never offer a solution, as these groups fundamentally oppose the democratic process itself.[45]

Surveys of experts and public opinion seem to support the opposition's belief that political reforms have not improved the institutional outlets for expressing discontent. In response to the statement "The Parliament truly represents the social and political forces in the society," only 23 percent of respondents agreed, 44 percent disagreed, while 71 percent believe reforms are needed to enhance representation and participation in parliamentary elections.[46] So while political institutional outlets may have in some ways contributed to the prevention of radicalization and violence in Jordan, the limited and controlled nature of these institutions may lead some domestic actors to check out of the system and resort to violence in the future.

Legitimacy

Does the reform process enhance the legitimacy of the ruling elite and the broader political system so that, even if it will not turn radicals into moderates, it will at least reduce support for terrorism and marginalize extremists over time? As discussed above, many analysts and activists, both within and outside Jordan, have found that a belief in the system, even if imperfect, has at least indirectly reduced radicalization and a resort to violence. While liberalization is unlikely to have any direct effect on existing radical terrorist groups, many Jordanian analysts believe that genuine democratization could change the *domestic* context by decreasing support for such radical, primarily transnational, groups, giving them "less material to play with."[47] In other words, real

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[45] More radical Jordanian Islamist groups outside the MB have often criticized the MB and its political arm, the IAF, for participating in state institutions, accusing them of being coopted by the government for political power at the expense of their ideological and religious agenda. Some hard-line elements within the MB also hold such concerns, although they do not advocate violence (Wiktorowicz, 1999b).

[46] Arab Center for the Development of the Rule of Law and Integrity and the International Foundation for the Election Systems (2007a, 2007b).

[47] Author interview with Jordanian analyst, Washington, D.C., January 12, 2007.

reform can help "pull the rug" out from under the extremists.[48] The dilemma, however, is that such genuine reform has not taken place. Still, a number of Jordanian analysts assert that even limited reforms and the inclusion of Islamists in the political system have bolstered the legitimacy of the state and have had a moderating effect that ultimately reduces terrorism.[49] Although some Jordanians worry about democracy "rocking the boat" too much and the dangers of imposing democracy from the outside,[50] many nongovernmental Jordanian analysts believe that movement toward genuine democratization will have a positive effect on reducing support for political violence in Jordanian society.[51]

That said, the legitimacy of the system is under serious strain, in large measure because of backtracking by the government on reforms, particularly as security concerns generated by regional instability have led to increasingly repressive measures by the state. A good indicator for eroding legitimacy is low election turnout. In the 2007 parliamentary elections, general turnout reached around only 54 percent, and numbers were even lower in Amman districts (where Jordanians of Palestinian descent as well as Islamists are largely concentrated).[52] As one

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48 Author interview with Jordanian analyst, Washington, D.C., January 12, 2007.

49 This sentiment was widely expressed in several author interviews in Amman, Jordan, January 2007. Also see quotes by Jordanian analysts in ICG (October 8, 2003, p. 15).

50 In an author interview with a Jordanian military official, for example, the official expressed a preference for security before democracy and his concern about the imposition of democracy by external powers and the dangers and instability that has created (e.g., Iraq). As he put it, "democracy which results from outside parties leads to terrorism" (author interview with Jordanian military official, January 14, 2007, Amman, Jordan). However, Jordanian military intelligence officials have said that "democracy couldn't be stopped in Jordan" and that the king "wouldn't resist it [democracy]" (author interview with military intelligence officials, January 15, 2007, Amman, Jordan). Another military official also expressed a preference for spreading democracy from within (i.e., not through the use of force) and his belief that factors other than democracy were more critical in explaining terrorism, such as occupations, U.S. double standards, U.S. support for corrupt regimes, and American neglect of international norms and law (author interview with military official, January 15, 2007, Amman, Jordan).

51 Such sentiments were expressed in dozens of author interviews in both January 2007 and February 2008 in Amman, Jordan.

52 Farawati (2007).

Jordanian analyst explained the low turnout: "Voters were disillusioned by the ineffectiveness of parliament and by their inability to participate in the Jordanian political process. . . . The upcoming parliament will only deepen the general public's apathy towards democratization in a country that suffers internal economic woes and sever external pressures."[53]

The government's growing confrontation with the Islamist opposition is another indicator of weakening legitimacy. Indeed, the cooperation between the government and the MB (originally built on mutual dislike of communists and Baathists) is fracturing,[54] even if the government still seeks to co-opt the party's more moderate faction, as evidenced in the lead-up to the November 2007 elections. Of course, such friction is not new. Since Jordan's signing of the 1994 peace treaty with Israel, the Islamists and the government have taken different positions on all major issues.[55] Although neither side is eager for a major confrontation (as the MB benefits from its participation in the system, politically and economically, while the state can use the MB's inclusion to burnish its "democratic" and Islamist credentials), many regional analysts are concerned that the relationship is reaching a critical point. As one analyst put it, the government and the MB are "like a couple that knows it's going to divorce."[56]

Regional developments have only exacerbated this already tense situation. For example, after the Lebanon war in summer 2006, the MB increasingly shifted its focus from domestic, social issues toward regional ones, taking on strongly anti-American and anti-Israeli positions and launching harsh rhetorical attacks against the government.[57] The ascent of HAMAS after the Palestinian elections has further exacerbated government fears given the common MB affiliation between

53 Farawati (2007).

54 Author interview with Jordanian analyst January 14, Amman, Jordan, 2007.

55 Based on author interview with Jordanian analyst, Amman, Jordan, January 15, 2007.

56 Author interview with Jordanian analyst, Amman, Jordan, January 15, 2007.

57 Hamzawy and Bishara (2006).

Jordanian and Palestinian Islamists and their growing association with the so-called Syrian-Iranian axis.[58]

Meanwhile, al-Qa'ida is gaining appeal among younger Jordanians, while the MB is viewed as compromised or co-opted by the government, even if Osama bin Laden's popularity has declined since the peak of his support following the 2003 Iraq war.[59] And al-Qa'ida has now targeted Jordan itself. The branch of al-Qa'ida based in Iraq claimed responsibility for the November 2005 coordinated attacks on hotels in Amman and was responsible for the attack during the summer of 2005 on a U.S. vessel in the port of Aqaba. Jordanian security analysts fear new splinter groups may emerge.[60] Some worry that a weakened IAF will be even more dangerous, because the alternatives are much more radical. According to this logic, Jordan is even more dangerous when Islamists are not popular, because "where will its former supporters go?"[61] Given the declining strength of Islamists in the November 2007 election, this question is particularly disturbing. Studies have shown that Salafi extremist groups often feed off other Islamist groups, including the MB.[62] The potential for hard-liners within the MB to radicalize and move toward violent tactics is a serious concern among Jordanian analysts and government officials.[63]

But some in the government, especially the security forces, dismiss such concerns and favor a hard-line approach toward Islamists. Even the king has taken a hard-line position, favoring a security, rather than engagement, approach. Among the king's closest advisers, for example, is the director of intelligence (to whom he gave the rank of minister for the first time). Some worry that this is making Jordan more dangerous, because this heavy-handed approach can lead to abuse and alien-

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58 Abu-Rumman (2008).

59 Author interview with Jordanian analyst, Amman, Jordan, January 14, 2007.

60 Author interviews in Amman, Jordan, January 2007.

61 Author interview with Jordanian analyst, Amman, Jordan, January 14, 2007.

62 As Wiktorowicz (2000a, p. 230) argues, "The majority of new recruits and converts [to Salafi jihadi groups] come from other Islamic-movement groups."

63 Author interview with Jordanian writer and political analyst, Amman, Jordan, January 14, 2007.

ation. Allegations of corruption and nepotism to maintain key bases of regime support further fuel anger toward the government.[64] And continued regional instability can foster support, or at least toleration, for radicals among the broader population, which has not otherwise been inclined toward supporting extremism. As one Jordanian analyst put it, "After the U.S. attacked Iraq, the shameful Salafis suddenly became the mujahidin again."[65]

That said, attacks such as the 2005 hotel bombings have eroded public support for Salafi extremists, and concerns over preventing the instability in Iraq from spreading to Jordan have generated a growing appreciation among Jordanians for their security services and the regime's need to maintain stability. As one Jordanian reformer put it, Jordanians now see the their security services as "protecting, not just watching."[66] Moreover, the regime has not yet lost the support of its key tribal base and can still depend on the support of the military and key segments of the Palestinian population, particularly the Palestinian-dominated business sector, with its vested interest in continued stability.[67] Despite growing frustration and resentment of King 'Abdullah and his government, Iraq stands as a stark reminder that the alternatives could be worse.

Still, even if regime stability is not threatened, the eroding legitimacy of the system resulting from halting reforms and growing repression could breed radicalism and lead to increasing pockets of instability and sporadic acts of violence. As one Jordanian analyst sees it, "dysfunctional systems breed radicals."[68] Some Jordanian analysts worry that further crackdowns on Islamists will strengthen hard-liners and reduce support for the system more generally, moving many of them under-

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[64] For example, King 'Abdullah uses the economic benefits of privatization (e.g., setting aside shares of privatized companies at reduced rates for current and former members of the security forces) to keep the regime's support base content (Ryan, 2005).

[65] Quoted in International Crisis Group (2005b, p. 19).

[66] Interview with Jordanian analyst, Amman, Jordan, February 2008.

[67] For an overview of the factors contributing to the Hashemites staying power, see Tal (1992–1993).

[68] Author interview with Jordanian analyst, Amman, Jordan, January 14, 2007.

ground.[69] If the MB participates in the system but the government still attacks the movement, critics may argue that Salafis are right and that "democracy" does not advance their goals. They may then view the military option as a better way to bring about results.[70] Although MB supporters are more educated and middle class than Salafis and worry about losing everything if they work outside the system,[71] if they are continually excluded, some could radicalize.[72] Jordanians do not want to follow the Egyptian example, in which extremist splinter groups emerged from imprisoned MB members.[73]

Conclusion

Although Jordan's liberalization process has proved limited, sporadic, and halting, it has allowed for a degree of political inclusion that has had some moderating effects. The political process helped co-opt moderate factions of the Islamist opposition and undercut support for more radical elements within and outside the party. But growing confrontation between the government and the Islamist opposition, in addition to significant government backtracking on reforms, is providing ammunition for more hard-line elements who question the benefits of participating in a political process which is viewed as corrupt and illegitimate. Government-controlled and manipulated political reform has largely led to intolerance of opposing groups, exclusionary political institutions, and a general perception that the system lacks legiti-

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[69] Author interview with Jordanian writer and political analyst, Amman, Jordan, January 14, 2007.

[70] Author interview with Jordanian writer and political analyst, Amman, Jordan, January 14, 2007.

[71] Author interview with Jordanian writer and political analyst, Amman, Jordan, January 14, 2007.

[72] Author interview with Jordanian writer and political analyst, Amman, Jordan, January 14, 2007.

[73] A number of Jordanians alluded to the Egyptian model (interview with Jordanian analyst, January 15, 2007, Amman, Jordan and author interview with a Jordanian analyst and former official, January 16, 2007).

macy, dynamics that undercut the moderating effects that some limited reforms initially produced.

Widespread expectations for genuine democratization in Jordan increase frustrations surrounding its absence. Many Jordanian analysts fear that a political system designed to exclude Islamists may only generate more radical alternatives down the road, leading to pockets of instability and increased political violence. While government cooption techniques and effective security services have spared Jordan significant political violence to date, controlled liberalization may not be able to contain forces of radicalization if there is a widespread perception that the system has lost legitimacy.

Regional instability and growing security concerns only worsen the situation. In some ways, such regional instability leads to greater tolerance for repressive measures by the state. This is not only the case among government officials but also among some progressive Jordanian groups in the NGO community. For example, Jordanian NGOs have cautioned the United States on pushing too hard on political openings, because they worry that Iraqi NGOs could flourish, and they do not want to see Jordan used as a platform for Iraqi opposition causes.[74] The Jordanian public is also more appreciative of their security services in the wake of the 2005 hotel bombings in Amman and regional instability emanating from Iraq.

However, while most Jordanians do not want to see Jordan face the fate of Iraq and are somewhat supportive of security measures to maintain stability, overly repressive measures, particularly blatant violations of human rights and the rule of law, are breeding resentment. To be sure, there is broad acceptance that Jordan's reform efforts will need to move slowly and will always be controlled to some extent to maintain regime security, from which other actors also benefit, including opposition forces. Yet continued reversals of key liberalization measures (particular in the areas of free expression and association) combined with a sense of overly aggressive security measures by the state may only increase the prospects for political violence over time.

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[74] Author interview with U.S. official, Amman, Jordan, January 16, 2007.

CHAPTER FOUR

Bahrain

Introduction

Among Gulf monarchies, Bahrain is arguably the most vulnerable to political unrest and violence. Marked by corruption, nepotism, and a lack of transparency, the rule of the Sunni al-Khalifa family has engendered widespread distrust by the country's 70 percent Shi'a population. Bahraini Shi'a have long suffered from political exclusion, economic marginalization, cultural repression, and accusations of disloyalty, giving antiregime dissent a strong sectarian dimension.[1] Compounding these indigenous drivers is Bahrain's location in the shadow of an increasingly assertive Iran, which played an important, though not critical, role in animating Shi'a political violence until the mid-1990s and which obliquely laid claim to ownership of the island as recently as July 2007.[2] In addition, the country's financial significance as a hub for regional banking, its hosting of the U.S. Sixth Fleet, and its close alliance with the United States would appear to make it an attractive target for al-Qa'ida–inspired extremists.

Nonetheless, the country has enjoyed relative stability and an absence of domestic terrorism, compared with its neighbor, Saudi

[1] As will be discussed later, sectarianism offers a framework for assessing the roots of antiregime activism that is only partially satisfactory. Bahrain has a long tradition of leftist, class-based, and cross-sectarian opposition. Indeed, one of the principal founders of the main, Shi'a-dominated militant group al-Haq is a Sunni leftist.

[2] The Iranian claim took the form of a July 9, 2007, editorial in *Kayhan* by its editor-in-chief, Hoseyn Shari'atmadari, who asserted that the island was separated illegally from Iran. For background on the *Kayhan* article and the resulting backlash, see O'Rourke (2007).

Arabia. It has also garnered vocal praise from the United States for its progress on liberalization and openness, reflected most recently in the November 2006 multiparty parliamentary elections. Closer inspection, however, reveals a cyclical pattern of carefully calibrated reforms, obfuscation, and retraction on the part of the regime, fueling increased Shi'a cynicism and support for militancy. This skillful mix of preemptive accommodation and repression bears all the hallmarks of a "liberal autocracy," making the kingdom a useful case study for assessing the effect of political liberalization—even if purposefully flawed—in mitigating terrorism.[3]

To fully understand these dynamics, this chapter examines several dimensions of the liberalization-terrorism quandary. First, it explores the cyclical and halting nature of reform in Bahrain, offering explanations for this ebb and flow. Next, it highlights the trends of political violence and terrorism, with a particular focus on whether the motives and ideologies of militant actors make them receptive to offers of inclusion and participation in governance. This section also highlights the popular basis for this violence, to determine later whether liberalization steps that bolster the legitimacy of the ruler can staunch public support for radicalism. Having set this foundation, the chapter shifts toward a quantitative approach to determine possible correlations between reform and levels of violence, using a chronological display of Freedom House rankings and terrorism incidents from the RAND-MIPT database. Finally, on the basis of extensive fieldwork in the country, this chapter explores whether liberalization and reform, however flawed and contrived, can mitigate the long-term wellsprings of terrorism by bolstering regime legitimacy, providing an institutional framework for the peaceful airing of grievances or fostering societal norms of toleration, pluralism and openness. We must also consider in each case whether these dynamics, despite their potential long-term benefit, could result in short-term destabilization during the transition from absolutism to greater openness.

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3 Brumberg (2003).

Liberalization Trends

In understanding the nexus between liberalization and political violence in Bahrain, it is important to note the effect of disappointed expectations stemming from the country's brief democratic experiment in the early 1970s. The creation of Bahrain's 1973 constitution and the opening of a full parliament with legislative power created a flowering of participatory politics that has become the touchtone for much of the opposition in the country—both moderate and militant, especially during the waves of unrest from 1994 to 1999.[4] In 1975, the emir closed the parliament because of a burgeoning alliance between leftist and religious blocs that would have effectively overturned a repressive state security law. As Bahraini scholar 'Abdulhadi Khalaf has argued, the first parliament was never a truly democratic body, but rather a form of institutionalized tribalism and sectarianism with certain rules of conduct; once those rules were breached by an emerging nationalist coalition that sought to erode the al-Khalifa's absolutism, the experiment was ended.[5]

Democratic reforms during the first half of the 1990s were mostly cosmetic, designed to address post–Desert Storm U.S. concerns about popular participation. In 1993, the emir created an appointed consultative council, which possessed no legislative power and did not lead to any significant policy changes. The outbreak of major political violence in 1994 and extending through 1999 (the roots of which will be discussed in greater depth below) injected an economic urgency to the demands for more substantial political reforms. Aside from Saudi oil subsidies, Bahrain's economy is largely dependent on financial services, offshore banking, tourism, and some heavy industry; many of these sources have proven volatile in times of unrest. Moreover, the coun-

[4] For accounts of the uprising, see Fakhro (1997), Lawson (2004), and Fuller and Francke (1999). On the continued importance of the 1973 constitution, see Herb (1999). This sentiment was also borne out during the author's discussions with Shi'a and liberal activists in Bahrain on the eve of the November 2006 parliamentary elections.

[5] Khalaf (1998).

try's industrial base is situated near the impoverished Shi'a suburbs of Manama that have commonly been the loci of antiregime violence.[6]

The role of other Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries as both an impetus and a check on liberalization processes in Bahrain should also be noted.[7] This is especially true for Manama's main financial and political patron in the region, Saudi Arabia.[8] Riyadh has exerted a highly calibrated form of pressure on the al-Khalifa to affect enough political liberalization to ensure a degree of economic autonomy, without endangering the Bahraini rulers to the point where Saudi intervention would be warranted or Saudi Arabia's own Shi'a in the strategically important Eastern Province would be emboldened toward greater activism.[9] Discussions with Shi'a activists in Bahrain certainly highlighted Saudi pressure as barrier to reform, with one figure noting that, for the Saudis, "liberalism in Bahrain means the 'Iranization' of Bahrain and the end of tribalism of Saudi Arabia."[10] Moreover, a senior Saudi diplomat in Bahrain told the author that Riyadh was "watching the elections very carefully. . . . Iranian influence is very strong."[11] However, this same official earlier acknowledged that his government could ultimately live with an elected Shi'a prime minister in Manama

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6 Niethammer (2006, p. 2).

7 Kuwait continues to be regarded by Bahraini reformists as an exemplar of Gulf democracy. The 1973 Bahraini constitution was reportedly based on the Kuwaiti one, and the Kuwaiti restoration of parliament in 1992–1993 after the eviction of Iraqi troops inspired several Bahraini petition initiatives in the mid-1990s. A comparative study of reform priorities in Gulf states is found in the work of the prominent Bahraini scholar 'Abd al-Nabi al-Ekri (2006). Crystal (2005) has also noted, "Pressure for political reform also comes from other Gulf States. The Gulf States have significant influence on each other. This is, after all, one cultural lake with many tribes and families stretching across borders and with many GCC nationals (more than the governments would like to acknowledge) discreetly possessing multiple GCC passports."

8 Herb (1999, p. 177) and Fuller and Francke (1999, pp. 152–153).

9 Herb (1999, p. 177). Author discussion with senior al-Haq leader, Manama, Bahrain, November 11, 2006.

10 Author discussion with a senior leader in the al-Haq movement, Manama, Bahrain, November 7, 2006.

11 Author discussion with a senior Saudi diplomat, Embassy of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Manama, Bahrain, November 7, 2006.

because Bahrain's continued dependence on Saudi oil subsidies would preclude the development of hostile bilateral relations.[12] Also, several activists in Bahrain noted that Saudi opposition to Bahraini liberalization was exaggerated and provided the al-Khalifa with a useful pretext for avoiding real reforms.

It was not until the 1999 accession of Crown Prince Hamad to the throne that more substantial reforms began to take shape. Here again, the driver appears to have been largely economic and preemptive; the country was in the throes of a recession.[13] The new reforms, framed by the emir as "concessions," included the right to form political parties or "associations," the curtailment of state security laws, the release of 320 political prisoners—including a revered Shi'a cleric who had been a major inspiration for the dissent of 1994—the pardoning of dissidents abroad, and the creation of a 40-person elected parliament.[14] The removal of the despised British chief of the Bahraini security services, Ian Henderson, and the disbandment of the security agency responsible for the mid-1990s crackdown were greeted with particular applause.[15] In 2001, the emir introduced the National Action Charter, which called for the creation of a constitutional monarchy, an elected parliament, an independent judiciary, and women's political participation. The document was widely endorsed in a national referendum in February 2001. The net effect of these initiatives was to create a state of near euphoria, particularly among lower-class Shi'a, who hoisted Shaykh Hamad on their shoulders during one particular visit.[16]

However, by 2002, these reforms had either stalled or evaporated, fueling new levels of cynicism and resentment. In October 2002, the emir—having now designated himself as king and his son Salman the crown prince—issued a restrictive Press and Publication Law, which

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[12] Author discussion with a senior Saudi diplomat, Embassy of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Manama, Bahrain, March 12, 2006.

[13] 'Abd al-Nabi al-Ekri (2005).

[14] Author discussion with Bahraini scholar, November 11, 2006.

[15] Peterson (forthcoming).

[16] International Crisis Group (2005a, p. 7).

gave the regime widespread censorship power. More importantly, the king unilaterally revised the 1973 constitution, subordinating the elected parliament to an appointed upper house, or *Majlis al-Shura*, and depriving it of any ability to formally introduce new legislation or exert financial oversight over government ministries.[17] The effective neutering of this body, along with electoral gerrymandering designed to ensure Sunni dominance, spurred a widespread Shi'a and leftist boycott of the 2002 parliamentary and municipal elections. The result was a National Assembly that was disproportionately dominated by Sunni Muslim groups.

Today, activists and dissidents refer to the 2002 abrogation of the 1973 constitution as a watershed event, creating a parliament that is a powerless "debating society." For their part, government officials and members of the al-Khalifa see the appointed Majlis al-Shura as a critical "buffer" against an "immature and fractious parliament that is prone to religious extremism," i.e., a Shi'a challenge to the throne.[18] A Bahraini government official told the author,

> The parliamentary structure is designed so it couldn't be hijacked by extremists. We don't want a 40-person elected house composed of religious clerics who will ban alcohol, forbid women from driving, take Bahrain backwards and drive away the foreigners who enjoy our liberal society.[19]

By 2005, the question of whether to participate in such a structure created significant splits in the Shi'a opposition, between a pro-participation bloc, led by the Islamist al-Wifaq society, and the more militant, grassroots al-Haq movement, which broke off from al-Wifaq

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[17] Niethammer (2006, p. 5). A leading candidate for the liberal National Democratic Action Society (NDAS) noted that the new constitution "gives too many safety valves to the regime" (author discussion, Manama, Bahrain, November 8, 2006).

[18] Author discussion with a Sunni Majlis al-Shura member, Manama, Bahrain, November 12, 2006.

[19] Author discussion with senior Ministry of Foreign Affairs official, Manama, Bahrain, November 13, 2006.

in November.[20] This dilemma reached its apex with the holding of the November 2006 parliamentary elections, in which al-Wifaq, with the backing of senior Shi'a clerics, such as Sayyid 'Isa al-Qasim, decided to field candidates, while al-Haq boycotted it.[21] The elections were seriously marred by the disclosure of a semi-official government study, termed the "Bandar Report," which outlined an elaborate plan to rig the elections and ensure continued Sunni dominance through the co-option of Salafi and MB candidates and, more egregiously from the Shi'a point of view, the rapid naturalization of foreign Sunnis of Syrian, Saudi, Jordanian, Yemeni, and Pakistani origin.[22] Without a clear parliamentary majority and faced with structural limitations on the parliament's power, al-Wifaq has been steadily losing support to the al-Haq movement since the elections.[23]

Trends in Violent Activity[24]

The most serious organized terrorist threat to Bahrain has been Iranian-backed Shi'a groups, such as Bahraini Hizballah and, in the early

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[20] As will be discussed later, al-Haq has been responsible for much of Bahrain's street violence, bombings, and acts of provocation, and the waxing and waning of its popular base offers important indicators for assessing the effect of Bahraini liberalization on public perceptions of regime legitimacy and support for violence (*Gulf States Newsletter,* 2006, p. 4).

[21] A Bahraini intellectual called 'Isa al-Qasim the "third government" of Bahrain, after the king/crown prince and prime minister (see Niethammer, 2006, p. 10). Frustrated with the influence of these clerics, al-Haq leaders called it "demeaning" (author discussion with senior al-Haq leader, Manama, Bahrain, November 5, 2006).

[22] In particular, the regime has extended citizenship and set up special voting booths along the Saudi-Bahraini causeway for members of the al-Dawasir, a Bahraini tribe that was ejected from the kingdom in 1923 by the British and fled to Saudi Arabia. Riyadh reportedly accepts dual citizenship for this tribe, arguing that they were dispossessed of their land by "imperial aggression" (author discussion with Bahraini scholar, Manama, Bahrain, November 6, 2006). Also, see 'Abd al-Nabi al-Ekri (2005).

[23] 'Abd al-Nabi al-Ekri (2007).

[24] The categorization of political violence in this chapter includes attacks intended to undermine or overthrow the regime, violent agitation against the regime's alliance with the United States, and sectarian violence between Sunnis and Shi'a.

1980s, the Islamic Front for the Liberation of Bahrain (IFLB), which mounted an attempted coup d'etat in 1981.[25] In 1996, the government arrested and displayed on television members of a Bahraini Hizballah cell, whom it alleged had received training from Lebanese Hizballah and were conspiring to commit acts of terrorism under the direction of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps–Quds Force (IRGC-QF). That this plot occurred during the apex of the Shi'a social unrest and political violence of the mid-1990s is probably secondary as an explanatory motive to Iran's geostrategic maneuvering against the growing U.S. presence in the region. In July 1995, the United States announced that its naval forces headquarters in Bahrain were to be upgraded to the status of a full fleet, and one of the terrorist conspirators confessed on television that he had been instructed by his Iranian handlers to collect intelligence on U.S. military assets in Bahrain.[26]

The subsequent decline of Iranian-backed terrorism was probably more rooted in Bahrain's external rapprochement with Iran and policy shifts inside Iran than in internal liberalization. In 1999, the new king invited Iranian President Muhammad Khatami to visit Manama, the first such visit by an Iranian leader.[27] With the loss of an external patron, the IFLB's successor organization, the Islamic Action Society (IAS), may have had more incentives to respond to the promise of political opening and reform that coincided with Bahrain's mending of relations with Iran. With the recent spike in U.S.-Iranian tensions over the nuclear issue, regime accusations of Bahraini Shi'a sleeper cells beholden to Iran have once again resurfaced.[28] However, some analysts have pointed out that, with the relative proximity of U.S. forces and assets in neighboring Iraq, Bahrain's traditional attractiveness as an arena of Iranian retaliation or subversion has declined.

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25 Byman and Green (1999, p. 126).

26 Byman and Green (1999, pp. 32–35) and Pollack (2004, p. 281).

27 Bahry (2000, p. 141).

28 Author discussion with Bahraini Ministry of Foreign Affairs official, Manama, Bahrain, November 13, 2006. This official noted that "there is no doubt that Iran and Hizballah are instigating something we've never seen. But we can absorb it through economic reforms."

A serious threat from Salafi-jihadi terrorism, both homegrown and foreign, has not yet afflicted the island kingdom, despite the attractiveness of a number of economic and U.S. military targets, the liberalization of the country's social mores, and the notorious corruption and lavish lifestyle of the al-Khalifa—all of which have provided rich ideological fodder for al-Qa'ida in neighboring Saudi Arabia. The principal reason for this has been the competence of the security services and the absence of Bahraini veterans from the Afghan jihad or other conflicts.[29] Moreover, the majority of Bahrain's Salafis reject the more severe interpretations of *takfir* (excommunication) that have legitimated al-Qa'ida attacks in Saudi Arabia, adhering instead to the teachings of bin-Baz, which emphasize loyalty to a Muslim ruler.[30]

Aside from organized terrorism, the cyclical nature of social unrest and political violence also needs to be addressed, particularly in the period of 1994–1999. The demands for a return to the 1973 constitution provided the framing of the revolt, and the arbitrary arrest of a charismatic young cleric, 'Ali Salman, lit the spark. The protests appear to have been also rooted in new economic and social policies that affected small shopkeepers, industrial workers, and Shi'a women.[31] The shift from violent opposition tactics, such as bombings, to a more peaceful repertoire of mass demonstrations beginning in April 1998 was not directly the result of reforms, but rather because the regime allowed these expressions of dissent, while it simultaneously eroded popular support for the "fringe" by inflicting collective punishment on entire villages beginning in the fall of 1997.[32] By late 1997, a Shi'a trader lamented to a visiting researcher, "I don't give a damn about

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[29] Author discussion with Bahraini Foreign Ministry official, Manama, Bahrain, November 13, 2006.

[30] Author discussion with a leading Bahraini Salafi cleric, Manama, Bahrain, November 10, 2006.

[31] Lawson's study (2004, pp. 91–94) of "repertoires of contention" in Bahrain attaches primacy to these economic drivers and downplays perceptions of a democracy deficit, sectarian motives, or views of regime illegitimacy.

[32] Lawson (2004, p. 105). Government strategies against the uprising provoked international condemnation. By the time of Hamad's accession, one percent of the population was in jail or exiled.

parliament, Islamic republic or Shura. I want to reopen my shop."[33] As will be discussed later, the uprising's suppression via mass punishment coincided with the ascension of the new emir to the throne, raising expectations and offering hope.

It is important to recognize the prominence of this uprising and its motives in Bahraini Shi'a historical memory. Author discussions with several prominent Shi'a activists and militants, one of whom was a major inspirational force for the 1994 outbreak, indicated that the cycle of cynicism has once again swung full circle, with a level of crushed expectations that approximates that of 1994. Tellingly, these figures noted that the ability of the newly elected parliament to deliver tangible benefits to the Shi'a populace will determine, in large measure, popular perceptions of democratic institutions as expressions of regime legitimacy, with a corresponding propensity for social unrest and violence.

Today, Bahrain's main agent of political violence and street protests, the al-Haq movement, depends largely on its ability to mobilize grassroots support among disaffected Shi'a by portraying these institutions as illegitimate.[34] In leaflets distributed in mosques during a wave of bombings in mid-April 2006, it stated that violence would continue until Shi'a were better represented in a parliament that was fully endowed with legislative power.[35] Recent banners and posters in al-Haq strongholds of Manama's suburbs echo this ambition (one such banner is shown in Figure 4.1).

In several interviews, leaders of al-Haq told the author that Bahraini Shi'a would endure roughly one year of no movement from the

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[33] Darwish (1999, p. 86).

[34] In addition to its own assessment of Bahraini participatory structures, al-Haq's goals and tactics appear to be at least partially conditioned by those of region's most prominent Shi'a militant group, the Lebanese Hizballah. Author's interview in November 2006 indicated that al-Haq leader Hasan Mushaima had met with Hizballah's Deputy Secretary General Shaykh Na'im Qasim during the 2006 Hajj in Mecca to solicit his advice about participating in the upcoming parliamentary elections. Qasim was reportedly noncommittal, arguing that participation was an internal Bahraini matter for al-Haq to decide itself. Author discussion with al-Haq activist, Sitra, Bahrain, November 14, 2006.

[35] *Gulf States Newsletter* (2006, p. 4).

Figure 4.1
Banner in the Shi'a Suburb of Sitra, Outside Manama

The banner reads, "Our demands are not hidden from anyone; there is no substitute for a parliament with full legislative and oversight authority."

RAND *MG772-4.1*

new parliament before Shi'a public opinion would once again swing back toward al-Haq's confrontational militancy.[36] As of May 2007, a prominent sociologist and analyst of Bahraini affairs was already arguing that disappointment with al-Wifaq's parliamentary performance was fueling increased support for al-Haq.[37]

Comparing Levels of Freedom and Terrorism

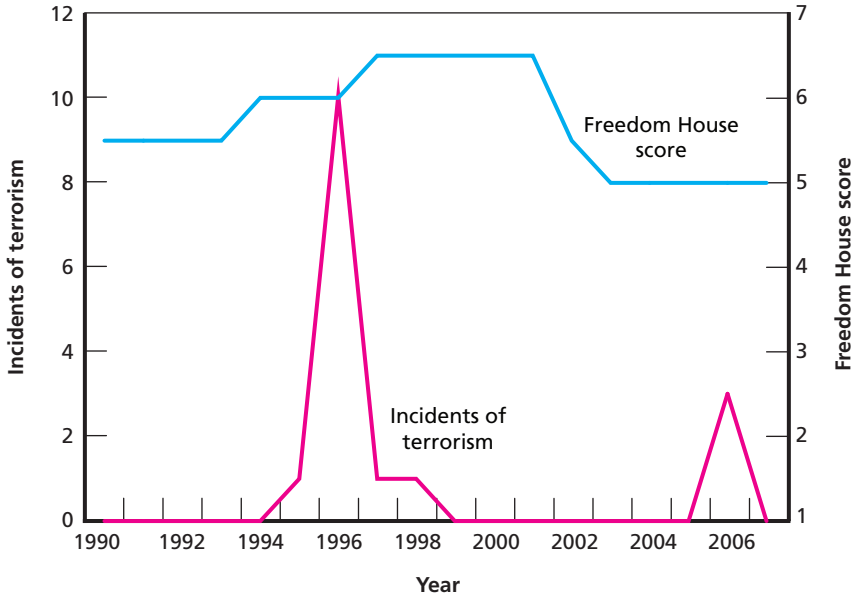
If fieldwork among Bahraini activists and Shi'a clerics reveals a mixed prognosis for the ability of Bahraini democratic processes to mitigate future political violence and radicalism, what does the record tell us from 1991 to 2006? Freedom House scores and attack data from the MIPT terrorism database offer insightful, if incomplete, clues. According to the database, the greatest number of incidents occurred from 1996 to 1997 (Figure 4.2). Beginning in February 1996, local businesses increasingly were targeted with bombings, whether in the form of vehicular-borne attacks, bombs hidden in cigarette packs, firebombs, or Molotov cocktails. The spike continued until March 1997.[38] On

[36] Author discussion with leader of al-Haq, Manama, Bahrain, November 11, 2006.

[37] 'Abd al-Nabi al-Ekri (2007).

[38] Lawson (2000, p. 101).

Figure 4.2
Bahrain: Freedom House Score and Number of Terrorism Incidents, by Year



NOTE: A score of 1 indicates the highest degree of freedom, and 7 the least.
RAND *MG772-4.2*

June 3, 1996, the government announced the disclosure of the aforementioned plot by Bahraini Hizballah which, although not reflected in the database, is a significant incident in terms of shaping government and popular perceptions of the Shi'a population. FH scores during this period deteriorated from a 6 to a 6.5, reflecting the imposition of martial law throughout the Shi'a areas of Manama, the absorption of civil and public cases by a Special State Security Court, and routine collective punishments of entire villages.

The terrorism-FH correlation has limited value for this discrete period, because the precipitous decline in bombings had more to do with regime security tactics than democratic openings. By 1998, security forces began using more discriminatory punishments, targeting just those perpetrators of violence, while allowing the mass of Shi'a to engage in popular, nonviolent forms of dissent, such as protests. The effect was to drive a wedge between moderates and radicals. The ulti-

mate termination of acts of violence and terrorism in 1999 was largely due to the sense of hope and relief that accompanied the ascension of the new emir and his accompanying gestures of good faith. FH scores during this period remained at a low 6.5, but subsequently improved to a 5 by 2003, reflecting the successive reforms the emir undertook. Significantly, FH scores for 2002 do not account for the king's unilateral revocation of the 1973 constitution, his subordination of the elected parliament to the Majlis al-Shura, and the resulting Shi'a shock and disappointment.[39]

Despite this outrage, there were no acts of terrorism. Arguably, this was because the holding of the 2002 parliamentary elections presented aggrieved Shi'a with a democratic framework to register their discontent—in the form of a boycott. 2006 saw a spike in terrorism incidents, with a series of bombings of hotels and security targets in mid-April 2006.[40] Here, again, FH scores remained at 5, their highest since King Hamad's ascension, but they fail to take into account widespread furor over the Political Societies Law, which forbids any political associations based on class, profession, or sect and which mandated the registering of all political parties or "societies"—a requirement that many Shi'a viewed as a surreptitious means of securing their endorsement of the new 2002 constitution.

FH scores for this period also do not reflect the "Iraq effect" in exacerbating the likelihood of antiregime Shi'a protests. In March and April, there were Shi'a protests in support of their co-religionists battling U.S. troops in Najaf; the February 2006 destruction of the al-Askariyya Shrine in Samarra saw similar expressions of solidarity, spurring tensions with Bahraini Sunnis and provoking clashes with security forces.[41] Finally, there was also widespread hand-wringing and

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[39] Focus groups conducted prior to the October 2002 parliamentary elections by the National Democratic Institute for International Affairs noted a "looming sense of disappointment" about the elections, with the most frequently cited complaint being the structure of the parliament and its subordination to the Majlis al-Shura (Melia, 2002).

[40] *Gulf States Newsletter* (2006, p. 4).

[41] One telling example of these tensions is popular perceptions of the Bahraini media. A Bahraini scholar noted that different transnational media outlets in Bahrain display a decidedly sectarian bias: *Al-Jazeera* is regarded by many Bahrainis as a "Sunni channel,"

debate among Shi'a activists about political participation, with al-Wifaq announcing later in May 2006 that it had decided to field candidates in the November 2006 elections. The spike in incidents in the run-up to this announcement were probably part of an intra-Shi'a struggle, with the newly formed al-Haq group demonstrating its capacity to play a spoiler role and mobilize street support through bombings and organized riots. In this sense, the FH-MIPT correlation supports the destabilizing logic of liberalization, with political openings forcing new debates and dilemmas on oppositionists, in which more radical factions may be tempted to employ violence to subvert their opponents.

Assessing Effects

Perceptions of Regime Legitimacy

The precipitous decline in violence in 1999 that accompanied the ascension of the new emir and his promises of reform suggests that liberalization or even the hope of democratization has an effect on reducing support for violence by increasing perceptions of regime legitimacy. The author's field interviews with Shi'a and opposition activists, as well as works on the "Manama Spring" by scholars such as J. E. Peterson and Naomi Sakr support this contention.[42] Of note, the most important, tangible initiative that bolstered the credibility of the new ruler appear to have been reforms in the judiciary, particularly the removal of the despised British chief of Bahraini security and increased freedom of the press.[43] As Peterson notes, perhaps the initial

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while the Lebanese Hizballah's popular TV station *al-Manar* helps promote Shi'a identity. *Al-Arabiyya* appears to be the most balanced in its sectarian orientation. More locally, the newspaper *al-Watan*—dominated by a Salafi board of advisors—serves as a counterweight to the Shi'a-dominated *al-Wasit*. *Al-Watan* is heavily influenced by Saudi Arabia and, the scholar asserted, frequently tries to inflame Sunni opinion. One example of this newspaper's purported indifference to Shi'a concerns was its failure to mention the February 2006 Samarra mosque bombing (author discussion with Bahraini scholar, Manama, Bahrain, May 10, 2006).

[42] Peterson (2002) and Sakr (2001, pp. 229–231).

[43] Peterson (forthcoming, p. 2).

euphoria about assurances for future reforms had raised expectations too high—the king had promised a return to the 1973 constitution and a fully elected Majlis al-Shura within five years.[44] However, as the constitutional committees began to take shape, the lack of transparency in their meetings and their vagueness on delineating the actual power of the new parliament fueled increased suspicions.

The most severe blow to the legitimacy of the new king and, by extension, the regime, was the unilateral revocation of the 1973 constitution and his dissolution of the Majlis al-Shura in February 2002. Other erosion of the new king's political capital occurred with the passage of anti-assembly and antiterrorism laws. By 2006, particularly after the exposure of the Bandar Report, Shi'a and opposition respondents in the field painted parallels to the pre-1994 period, in terms of popular seething against the regime. "Parliament is cosmetic, a decoration. The real problem is the ruling family," said an interviewee in the Shi'a neighborhood of Bilad al-Qadim.[45]

So far, the disillusionment with reforms and the resulting decline in perceptions of regime legitimacy has taken the form of organized opposition activity, with only minimal outbreaks of violence, such as the April 2006 bombings. But many respondents warned that the expiration of the "grace period" of al-Wifaq's parliamentary tenure without any tangible benefits could push many Shi'a into the ranks of al-Haq and toward more violent expressions of dissent.[46] Already, there appear to be signs that al-Wifaq is being co-opted into the Sunni-dominated parliament, forming a tactical alliance with Salafis against its main challenger to the Shi'a masses.[47] In May 2007, a Salafi MP announced

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[44] Peterson (forthcoming, p. 3).

[45] Author interview, Bahrain, November 14, 2006.

[46] Author discussions with Shi'a in Sitra, 'Isa Town, Bilad al-Qadim, Muharraq, Senablis, November 14, 2006. Also see Herb (2002).

[47] Durham University, Centre for Iranian Studies (2006, p. 5). Collusion was alleged by a prominent women's rights campaigner, who noted tacit cooperation between Salafis and al-Wifaq over morality issues and social matters, such as inheritance and divorce laws (author discussion, Manama, Bahrain, November 13, 2006). A prominent al-Haq leader also accused al-Wifaq of "flirting" with the Salafis (author discussion with al-Haq activist, Manama, Bahrain, November 5, 2006).

the formation of a new, grassroots Sunni organization, Ila al-Watan (Only for the Homeland), that was specifically designed to counter al-Haq's street-level mobilization. Moreover, as of June 2007, al-Wifaq's ability to affect substantial reforms or address the core grievances of its constituents appeared limited. For example, it proposed a revision to the state's budgeting system, but on the day of the parliamentary vote, pro-regime MPs—many of whom were Sunni Islamists—failed to show.

One reason that Shi'a reaction to this failure has not yet taken the form of violence is because the regime was able to use the parliamentary structure to reach a quid pro quo with Shi'a clerics, who in the past have played an important role in either encouraging or dampening Shi'a support for militancy.[48] In return for agreeing not to introduce legislation into parliament on a Family Law that would reduce clerical authority over the country's civil courts governing divorce, inheritance, and other social matters, Shi'a clerics such as 'Isa al-Qasim issued statements supporting Shi'a electoral participation.[49] A telling indication of the effectiveness of this maneuver is seen in the comments of a senior al-Haq leader. In seeking to mobilize disaffected Shi'a against the elections, this figure lamented that "al-Haq's job has been difficult" because of the pro-election rulings of Grand Ayatollah 'Ali al-Sistani and Bahraini Shi'a clerics. "In principle, we are not in favor of elections, but we don't want to be seen as being opposed to clerical rulings. We know that religion plays an important role in social movements" this figure acknowledged.[50] Thus, in an indirect way, liberalization enabled the regime to co-opt Shi'a clerics and harness their authority, thereby raising its legitimacy in the eyes of the populace.

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[48] A representative for Grand Ayatollah 'Ali Sistani in Bahrain told the author, "We (the clerics) can quiet Shi'a youth on constitutional problems, but not on poverty. . . . Our support for elections actually cost us credibility; a lot of young people are upset" (author discussion in Manama, Bahrain, November 11, 2006).

[49] Author discussion with Bahraini human rights activist, Manama, Bahrain, November 13, 2006.

[50] Author discussion with senior al-Haq activist, Manama, Bahrain, November 6, 2006.

Somewhat indirectly, the holding of parliamentary elections may have also cemented Salafi ties to the al-Khalifa by a creating a shared adversary in the form of Shi'a political ascendancy. To counter the liberal-Shi'a parliamentary coalition, the Salafis, with regime encouragement, were pushed into a tactical alliance with the more moderate MB, which may have marginalized hard-liners in the Salafi camp.[51] These measures may have had the net effect of mitigating, in the short term, the potential for violent Sunni opposition.

Ironically, however, this "sectarian balancing" of the country's democratic structures may be setting the stage for more extremism in the long term. Specifically, it is creating distrust among Shi'a activists, who perceive the co-option of Salafis by the al-Khalifa as a Faustian bargain that will unravel to produce terrorism once Salafi power ambitions grow too large.[52] Outside of political channels, there is greater fear that the staffing of Bahrain's security services with foreign Sunnis from the tribal areas of Pakistan, Yemen, and Syria is creating a backdoor channel for the institutionalization of al-Qa'ida ideology and intolerance of Shi'a.[53]

Norms of Tolerance and Pluralism

The author's field visit to Bahrain on the eve of the November 2006 parliamentary elections revealed a mixed record for liberalization's

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[51] A leading MB candidate told the author that the reason al-Asala and al-Minbar cooperated was because of the liberal-Shi'a coalition (author discussion with al-Minbar candidate, Manama, Bahrain, November 14, 2006). Separately, a Salafi candidate acknowledged on November 10, 2006, that this cooperation occurred because the MB "needed" the Salafis. A key difference separating the two is the MB's more conciliatory posture toward the Shi'a and its willingness to swear allegiance to the Bahraini constitution, which the Salafis regard as doctrinal heresy.

[52] Author discussion with Shi'a activist affiliated with the Bahrain Center for Human Rights, Sitra, November 14, 2006. Since the author's fieldwork, the media has reported on divisions within the Bahraini ruling family over this strategy. One faction, led by Crown Prince Salman ibn Hamad Khalifa has advocated a more conciliatory policy toward Shi'a, pushed for economic reform, and rejected the embrace of Salafi hard-liners reportedly advocated by Khalid ibn Ahmed Khalifa, minister of state for royal court affairs (Daragahi, 2007).

[53] Author discussion with liberal parliamentary candidate, Manama, 'Isa Town, Bahrain, November 6, 2006.

effects on bolstering social norms, such as respect for dissenting opinions and minority voices, which in theory mitigates terrorism. Many contacts argued that the holding of elections, particularly in the context of ongoing sectarian strife in Iraq, Hizballah's war with Israel, and the disclosure of the Bandar Report, actually exacerbated sectarian tensions and intolerance of "the other."[54] The preelection period was largely peaceful but was marked by sporadic acts of harassment and violence, such as the burning of election tents.[55] More explicitly, there was intense sectarian mudslinging, with liberal Sunni candidates allied with al-Wifaq being tarred as "traitors to the Sunni cause."[56] Interviews with Sunni Islamist figures revealed widespread perceptions that elections were a "Trojan Horse" for Shi'a ascendancy, with one MB candidate arguing that "elections opened this country to sectarianism."[57] At a preelection MB rally in the Manama suburb of 'Isa Town attended by the author, an audience member asked a question of a candidate, "Why do we have Sunni and Shi'i parties? 'Isa Town is mixed."[58]

Institutional Logic

In the Bahrain case, liberalization appears to have had a moderate effect on deterring incipient political violence, by providing an institutional framework for aggrieved population segments or potentially violent organizations to push their agendas in a nonviolent manner. This is

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[54] A Sunni member of the Majlis al-Shura told the author, "al-Haq and al-Wifaq are part of Hizballah. At every rally they fly the flag" (author discussion, Manama, Bahrain, November 12, 2006). A leading official in al-Wifaq told the author that Bahrain could ultimately "weather the storm" of Iraq (author discussion, Manama, Bahrain, November 8, 2006).

[55] One example was the burning of the election tent of Adel al-Ma'awda, a prominent Salafi candidate. There was some speculation that the perpetrators were hard-liners within his own society, the al-Asala, who opposed his participation (author discussion with an al-Wifaq candidate, November 6, 2006).

[56] Author discussion with Majlis al-Shura member, Manama, Bahrain, November 12, 2006.

[57] Author discussion with al-Minbar candidate, also a prominent Sunni cleric, November 14, 2006.

[58] Author's field observation at a pre-campaign rally for Salah 'Ali, head of the al-Minbar (MB) Society, 'Isa Town, Bahrain, November 6, 2006.

especially true in the case of the IAS, the successor organization to the aforementioned IFLB, the Iranian-backed group that attempted the 1981 coup d'etat. Although continually viewed with suspicion by Bahraini Sunnis, the IAS has largely abandoned its radical agenda since the 1990s, has participated in elections, and has pushed for political reform via peaceful channels. In arguing for participation in democratic structures, a prominent IAS leader told the author, "We are working within the system, because if you have a system, you can make corrections. The problem is when that system becomes dominated by a family (the al-Khalifa)."[59]

In addition, the regime convened a series of multiparty debate forums, the *muntadyat*, on topics related to economic reform, civil liberties, and media freedom. According to the forum's organizer, these sessions were designed to implement the regime's "incremental" approach to "change management"—equipping parliamentary candidates and voters in the skills of consensus-building, debate, and tolerance for opposing viewpoints.[60] Yet while attending these sessions, the author noted a conspicuous absence among the debate participants—the two key Sunni Islamist societies, al-Asala (Salafi) and al-Minbar (MB). Subsequent interviews with Bahraini analysts and a MB member indicated that this lack of attendance was because they did not have well-developed campaign platforms to address the forum's issues and, moreover, their candidates were intellectually ill-equipped to debate them.[61] Inevitably, this absence has fueled the perception among Shi'a and other oppositionists that the muntadyat—while appearing on the surface to promote the norms of civil debate and pluralism—were simply an artfully concocted device to allow liberals and Shi'a to blow off steam.

Taken collectively, these incidents paint the picture of an increasingly fractious body politic in Bahrain, whose divisions are being care-

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[59] Author's discussion with an IAS leader, Manama, Bahrain, November 12, 2006. This figure noted that if the elections yielded no results, there "could be an intifada."

[60] Author discussion with an organizer of the muntadyat, Manama, Bahrain, November 13, 2006.

[61] Author discussion with a Bahraini scholar, Manama, Bahrain, November 13, 2006.

fully managed—some would say manipulated and encouraged—by the ruling al-Khalifa family, using democratic institutions. By cultivating sectarianism via elections, the royalty appears to be trying to bolster its legitimacy as an indispensable mediator and benevolent patron. "Without the al-Khalifa," a MB member argued, "this country would go the way of Lebanon or Iraq."[62]

Conclusions and Implications

Liberalization in Bahrain since the uprising of the late 1990s appears to have an effect in terms of mitigating terrorism and political violence in Bahrain, yet only as part of a larger strategy of repression and accommodation.[63] As noted in the case of the IAS, democratic openings, combined with the loss of an external patron, were effective in forcing a formerly violent group to work within the system. Similarly, parliamentary elections offered the promise of change, raising perceptions of regime legitimacy and marginalizing more militant voices, such as al-Haq. Elections also provided a vehicle for the regime to close ranks with Salafi Islamists who, while not having engaged or condoned anti-regime terrorism in the past, may have the future propensity to do so, given the prominence of radical voices in their camp.

These are most likely short-term fixes. As this section has highlighted, liberalization has done little to improve the underlying norms of pluralism and tolerance of the other, particularly in the context of growing sectarian tensions due to regional developments in Iraq, Lebanon, and Iran. Indeed, the perception that the parliamentary structure is actually a socially engineered mechanism to exploit these tensions to the al-Khalifa's benefit—as illustrated in stark detail by the Bandar Report—

[62] Author discussion with MB activist, Manama, Bahrain, November 14, 2006.

[63] This strategy is one of several traditional options available to regimes facing contentious social movements, as covered in the research of Sidney Tarrow (1998, p. 3).

has resulted in a precipitous decline in perceptions of regime legitimacy, which may ultimately produce more extremism and violence.[64]

However incomplete and blatantly contrived these processes may seem, they appear to be effective when pursued in tandem with a number of other initiatives distinct from liberalization (and because of some features unique to the Bahrain case). These include the co-option of key Shi'a clerics, as well as Salafis, the presence of an extremely competent security services and surveillance system, the country's small size and island geography, the lack of a strong, indigenous Salafi-takfiri ideological current,[65] the absence of returning Bahraini veterans from the Afghanistan conflict who possess the requisite technical skills to execute sophisticated attacks, an improvement in bilateral relations with Iran, and Iran's own diminished view of Bahrain as an arena of retaliation against the United States.[66] Among regime advocates, a widespread sense of Bahraini nationalism is frequently cited for the absence of terrorism, with one minister arguing that "people believe in Bahrain more than al-Qa'ida or Shiism. Reform has given them hope."[67]

Yet as Bahrain's turbulent history in the mid-1990s has shown, hope is a finite quantity, and hope without results makes for a poor counterterrorism strategy. Bahrainis themselves perceive that U.S. policymakers have failed to take note of this insight. Liberal and Shi'a oppositionists point to the U.S. administration's loud applause for Bahrain as an exemplar of Arab reform as actually emboldening the al-Khalifa to

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64 Current sentiment does not differ from perceptions of the October 2002 parliamentary elections, as reflected in a series of focus groups conducted by the National Democratic Institute (Melia, 2002). A senior official in al-Wifaq noted that the regime has deliberately "played the Iran card" against the Shi'a in parliament to diminish their national loyalty, much as it accused them of being Nasserist sympathizers in the 1950s (author discussion, Manama, Bahrain, November 8, 2006).

65 Al-Moawda (2006). The absence of a strong takfiri current was also noted by a senior al-Wifaq official in discussions with the author, Manama, Bahrain, November 8, 2006, and a revered Shi'a leader of the mid-1990 uprising, Sitra, Bahrain, November 14, 2006.

66 For the al-Khalifa's strategy of accommodation and repression and shifts in Iranian views toward political violence as a policy tool, see Byman and Green (1999, pp. 32–35, 66).

67 Author discussion with a Ministry of Foreign Affairs official, Manama, Bahrain, November 12, 2006.

halt or backtrack on its promises of liberalization.[68] U.S. policy has also served as a useful scapegoat for sectarian tensions on the island, reflecting a broader sentiment throughout the region. According to this logic, the United States is cultivating sectarianism in Iraq to give itself an honorable exit strategy, and the ripple effects of this policy are cascading across the Arab world.[69] In Bahrain, liberalization is seen by some as the corollary to this approach—either as a deliberate U.S. ploy to encourage Shi'a ascendancy or to keep the island's populace fractious, divided, and unable to challenge America's clients, the al-Khalifa.

U.S. diplomacy on the eve of the November 2006 elections provides an important illustration for how expressions of support or nonsupport for democratic processes can be detrimental to their participants. The author attended preelection rallies for candidates from nearly all the major political societies, yet U.S. embassy political officers were present at only one type—liberal, non-Islamist candidates. In one election tent for a liberal, unaffiliated candidate, the officers were given an honored seat at the head table, next to the candidate himself.[70] While the full effect of this sort of endorsement remains unknown, liberal candidates faired poorly in the election, and some observers have blamed their defeat on America's vocal and overt patronage.[71]

Thus, Bahraini activists perceive that U.S. policy toward liberalization on the island is marked by the twin sins of omission and commission: inattentiveness to the cosmetic, superficial nature of the al-Khalifa's reforms and highly partisan expressions of support for the candidates with the weakest popular base, which not only damages their credibility, but also that of the democratic institutions themselves.[72]

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68 Author discussion with senior al-Haq activist, Manama, Bahrain, November 5, 2006.

69 This sentiment was borne out in numerous discussions with Shi'a activists and clerics in both Manama, Bahrain (November 2006) and Saudi Arabia's Eastern Province (March 2007).

70 Author's field observations at a pre-campaign rally for an unaffiliated, liberal candidate, 'Isa Town, Bahrain, November 6, 2006.

71 Author phone discussion with Bahraini scholar, December 2006.

72 For an argument against U.S. support to Arab liberals, see Alterman (2004).

CHAPTER FIVE

Saudi Arabia

Introduction

Given its prominence in Western arguments against democracy promotion in the Middle East, Saudi Arabia is an especially instructive case study.[1] Moreover, there are important similarities and connections with Bahrain. Like Bahrain, Saudi Arabia's reform/repression strategy against terrorism appears largely tactical, resulting in few real changes in the governing structure of one of the world's most closed, yet surprisingly resilient, states.[2] Aside from size, key differences include the effect of Saudi Arabia's rentier oil economy in legitimating the rule of the al-Saud, as well as the hotly debated influence of Saudi Arabia's ideological underpinnings (described as Wahhabism, but more accurately termed Salafism) on fostering norms of intolerance and militancy.[3] The latter characteristic has given the kingdom an uncomfortably ambiguous role in U.S. strategy—as both counterterrorism ally and terrorist incubator.

This chapter first addresses key trends in reform and violence, offering an assessment of the roots of this violence that may differ from conventional wisdom. Next, it highlights the shortcomings of relying

[1] Gause (2005).

[2] Many theories have been advanced on the stability of the Saudi regime, from the rentier argument and its critics to explanations of tribal patriarchy. A useful survey is found in Aarts (2004).

[3] For more on Salafism and Wahhabism, see Wiktorowicz (2006), Algar (2002), El-Fadl (2005), Roy (2004), and Al-Nuqaydan (2003a).

exclusively on a correlation of Freedom House scores and terrorist attack data, largely because the FH metric fails to gauge the subtle effect of the monarchy's fledgling reform steps on Saudi Arabia's quietist and religiously dominated society. Finally, the chapter surveys in greater depth the interplay of these openings across a number of dimensions, highlighting their effect on perceptions of regime legitimacy, fostering norms of pluralism and tolerance, and providing an institution for the peaceable voicing of dissent.

Liberalization Trends

The kingdom's first push toward reform began in the aftermath of the 1991 Gulf War. It is important not to overstate these initiatives as truly democratic in character; as we discuss later, the country has been consistently placed at the bottom of the Freedom House rankings and remains one of the most closed, authoritarian states in the world. As Jean Francois Seznec has quipped, "An article on democracy in Saudi Arabia would be very short indeed."[4] Instead, these moves should be viewed as proto-democratic, but significant in the Saudi context, in the sense of opening channels of communication between ruler and ruled in a society where political quietism was both expected and largely embraced.

Ironically, some of the kingdom's initial steps in this direction were the result of pressure from decidedly undemocratic quarters—the grouping of Salafi clerics outside the religious bureaucracy, who later came to be known as the Sahwa or "awakened" clerics.[5] Enraged by the al-Saud's decision to allow U.S. troops on Saudi soil and critical of the clerical establishment's sanctioning of this move, these figures became increasingly politicized, airing their grievances against the regime in public through popular TV programs and sermons and sub-

4 Seznec (2002, p. 33).

5 Al-Qahtani (2002); and Jones (2005).

mitting a set of petitions in 1991 and 1992.[6] Although these petitions sought to bolster clerical primacy in the kingdom's social affairs, they also called for an end to corruption and nepotism, the appointment of a consultative council free from government influence, and increased freedom of expression.[7] This had a ripple effect on subsequent reform initiatives with a more universal focus. As Gwenn Okruhlik notes, "Islamists opened the floodgates of criticism in the kingdom by invoking the Islamically grounded right to advise the ruler."[8] At the same time, petitions emerged from Shi'a clerics and activists, also endorsing a consultative council but with more emphasis on ending sectarian discriminations.

These early petitions are significant for several reasons. First, the very act of submitting them marked the injection of "issues" into the public realm, a radical departure from the closed nature of governance deliberations in the kingdom and the clerical practice of offering *nasiha* (advice or exhortation) to the al-Saud *in private*.[9] Several activists, including a reform activist close to the Sahwa, noted that the establishment of public channels of communication with the ruler—whether through petitions, the series of National Dialogues begun in 2003, or the municipal councils—has increased the legitimacy of the al-Saud and fostered a normative shift in respect for dissenting opinions. Secondly, the clerical nature of these early demands enabled the regime, via quasi-democratic reforms, to co-opt and split the Sahwa clerics, some of whom were a major ideological source for al-Qa'ida, both in its domestic and international manifestations.[10]

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6 Commins (2006, pp. 181–183). The first petition was signed by over 400 religious scholars.

7 It is important to not overcharacterize these early demands as democratic in nature. As Herb (1999) notes, "The writers of the *muthakirrat* (memoranda) did not call for elections and little in their program can be described as liberal."

8 Okruhlik (2002, p. 26).

9 Author discussion with a Salafi legal scholar, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, March 2007.

10 Hegghammer and LaCroix (2007) note that "Ideologically, bin Ladin was at heart a *Sahwist*, whose views were shaped by (Safar) al-Hawali." See International Crisis Group (2004a, p. 6).

Responding to the petitions, in 1992 the king promulgated the "Basic Laws"—a semi-constitutional document that set up the 60-person[11] Consultative Council, or Majlis al-Shura, whose membership is technocratic and geographically diverse and whose statutes include the right to question cabinet members and review government social and economic policies before promulgation. Although this body has fallen short of its original mandate, it provides an aspirational framework for reform activists in the kingdom today; during March 2007 fieldwork, reform activists in Jeddah, Riyadh, and the Eastern Province listed direct elections to the Majlis as one of their top reform priorities. Second, it gave the regime a participatory, proto-democratic institution to co-opt Islamist oppositionists drawn from the Sahwa camp, most notably, Ahmad al-Tuweijieri and 'Abd al-Muhsin al-'Ubaykan.[12]

Although Crown Prince 'Abdullah, who increasingly assumed leadership of the state in the late 1990s, undertook a number of reforms to address budgetary, economic, and unemployment problems, the next major impetus for political reform came after the attacks of September 11, 2001. Fifteen of the nineteen hijackers were from Saudi Arabia, leading to widespread accusations by Western commentators and policymakers that the kingdom's anachronistic, closed, and illiberal political culture was at the root of the al-Qa'ida problem.[13] Saudi Arabia quickly moved to the epicenter of the Bush administration's "drain the swamp" paradigm, with the U.S. Congress introducing the Saudi Arabia Accountability Act and President Bush urging the kingdom's rulers to give a greater role to the Saudi people and warning that "suppressing dissent" would only increase radicalism.[14] Yet the al-Saud appeared slow to acknowledge the extent of the problem, with

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11 Currently, the membership stands at 140.

12 Author discussion with Jedda-based reformist and political science professor, Jedda, Saudi Arabia, March 6, 2007, and an Eastern Province activist, March 15, 2007.

13 For examples, see Baer (2003), Schwartz (2003), and Gold (2003).

14 Bush (2003).

many Saudi citizens reportedly professing a degree of admiration for bin Ladin.[15]

American pressure played a role in spurring subsequent reforms, with many reformists noting today that the easing of this pressure after 2003 has resulted in a stalling of reforms.[16] However, it was not until the arrival of al-Qa'ida terrorism on its own soil in May 2003 that deliberations on improved governance took on a greater urgency and terrorism became the subject of intense public debate. Civilian casualties from the May 12, 2003, suicide bombings of a Western residential compound in Riyadh proved an especially powerful spark for this debate, provoking a series of newspaper editorials on the broader socioeconomic, political, and ideological roots of terrorism.[17] This incident also spurred a concerted push for nondemocratic counterterrorism measures, including increasing the competence of the security services and soliciting greater assistance from the citizenry and clerics—both from the Sahwa and official religious bureaucracy.[18]

Among reformists today, the period of 2003–2004, despite its imperfections, is viewed with a tinge of nostalgia. In 2003, King 'Abdullah received a total of five petitions from Salafi reformists, constitutionalists, women's rights campaigners, and Shi'a activists.[19] The net outcome of these petitions was, by Saudi standards, a flurry of quasi-democratic proposals and initiatives from the regime. These included a modest expansion of the powers of the Majlis al-Shura, the establishment of a quasi-independent National Human Rights Commission, the convening of National Dialogue sessions to address diverse topics related to sectarian harmony, respect for "the other," civil society, and women's rights. In October 2003, the regime announced that

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15 Author discussions in Jedda, Riyadh, and the Eastern Province, March 2007. Also, International Crisis Group (2004a, p. 9).

16 Author discussion with member of the National Human Rights Commission, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, March 13, 2007. See also Hamzawy (2006, p. 10).

17 Author discussion with Saudi analyst, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, March 2007.

18 For background on the regime's use of the clerical establishment to mitigate terrorism and the co-option of key Sahwa clerics, see Jones (2005).

19 Lacroix (2000) and International Crisis Group (2004a, p. 9).

municipal council elections would be held within 12 months, following through with the first round in February 2005.

Despite the elections, by the fall of 2004 the implementation of promised reforms had begun to stall, primarily because of the success of the regime's nondemocratic counterterrorism measures—the improved efficacy of the security services, the capture of a key al-Qa'ida on the Arabian Peninsula (QAP) operational commander, and greater assistance from the citizenry, spurred in large measure by their outrage over the May 12, 2003, attacks. In addition, the sudden influx of oil money in late 2004 gave the regime greater faith in its time-tested strategy of securing loyalty through rents and subsidies.[20] According to the noted reformist and sociologist Khalid al-Dakhil:

> It seems that the Interior Ministry has the upper hand in the war on terrorism, so they think it's about time for them to target reform-minded individuals. . . . To [government officials], reforms are as much of a threat as terrorism, and they are now criminalizing reform activities.[21]

With few exceptions, stagnation on reform has remained constant up to the present. Freedom House improved its score for the kingdom in 2005 from a 7 to a 6, citing "a slight increase in civil liberties due to the proliferation of regional satellite TV channels and other media outlets."

Trends in Violent Activity

To understand the full effect of these halting reforms on terrorism in the kingdom, we need to examine the cycle of terrorist activity in the kingdom since the Gulf War. Bin Ladin's goal of overthrowing the Saudi regime has been well documented, and several commentators

[20] Meijer (2005, p. 300).

[21] Ambah (2004).

have framed the 9/11 attacks as a step toward this objective.[22] Nevertheless, before this period, the domestic scene in Saudi Arabia was marked by the relative absence of terrorism, with notable exceptions being a November 13, 1995, car bomb attack on the Saudi National Guard facility in Central Riyadh. The perpetrators did not claim to belong to any group, although bin Ladin subsequently praised the militants in interviews. Less than a year later, 19 Americans were killed in the bombing of a U.S. Air Force barracks at Khobar; U.S., Canadian, and Saudi investigations pointed to an Iranian-trained Saudi Shi'a Hizballah cell, although the Movement for Islamic Reform in Arabia (MIRA), a Saudi oppositionist group, maintained that the attackers were Sunni Arabs trained in Afghanistan.[23] Despite these attacks, it was not until 2003 that organized Saudi militants began a sustained campaign of attacking domestic targets in the kingdom. From 2003 to 2006, the group responsible for this wave of violence was QAP, which announced its arrival prematurely, when a bomb accidentally detonated on March 18, 2003, in a Riyadh apartment safehouse.

To understand whether democratic openings in Saudi Arabia, which occurred during the peak of QAP's campaign, had any effect on its strategic calculations, we need to consider the ideology underpinning the group, as well as the motivations of its individual members and recruits. The doctrinal aversion to democracy of the Salafi-jihadi current that inspired QAP has been well documented by such scholars as Madawi al-Rasheed, David Commins, and Reuven Paz.[24] Among the writings of senior al-Qa'ida ideologues themselves, Ayman al-Zawahiri's *Bitter Harvest* offers the starkest, most influential example of their animosity to participatory, legislative politics.[25] Yet within QAP itself, this domestic dimension appears to have been largely sec-

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22 Doran (2002) and Gerges (2005).

23 Teitelbaum (2000, pp. 83–95).

24 As will be discussed later, there emerged significant splits among Salafis about the degree to which participation in elections was doctrinally permissible. Those that chose to participate are frequently derided by their cohorts as *harakis* (activists). See Al-Rasheed (2003) and Commins (2006, pp. 157–204).

25 Author discussion with Saudi analyst, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, March 2007.

ondary, as the group's strategic goals never included greater participation in Saudi political life.[26] For QAP's core ideologues and apparently among its membership, the illegitimacy of the al-Saud stemmed more from their external alliance with the United States and their alleged negligence of Muslim suffering abroad than their authoritarianism or corruption.[27]

Given both the strategic orientation of its ideologues and the motivation of its members, it is unlikely that improvements in Saudi governance would have affected QAP terrorism. The group appeared largely impervious to the kingdom's steps toward reform, such as the National Dialogue and the municipal council elections, which occurred during the peak of its campaign of brazen residential compound bombings and assaults. Nevertheless, reform initiatives, such as the announcement of municipal council elections and the National Dialogue, along with public outrage at civilian casualties, may have indirectly aided the Saudi counterterrorism effort by bolstering the legitimacy of the regime at a critical moment in the QAP lifecycle, thus spurring greater assistance from the citizenry. To further test this hypothesis, we need to examine quantitative analysis of Freedom House Scores and attack data from the MIPT database.

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[26] The seminal works sanctioning tafkir against the al-Saud and attacking the official clerical establishment for tolerating their excesses include Abu Muhammad al-Maqdisi (1990 or 1991) and Safar al-Hawali (1985). On takfir more generally, see Nasr al-Fahd (no date) and 'Ali bin Khudayr al-Khudayr (no date).

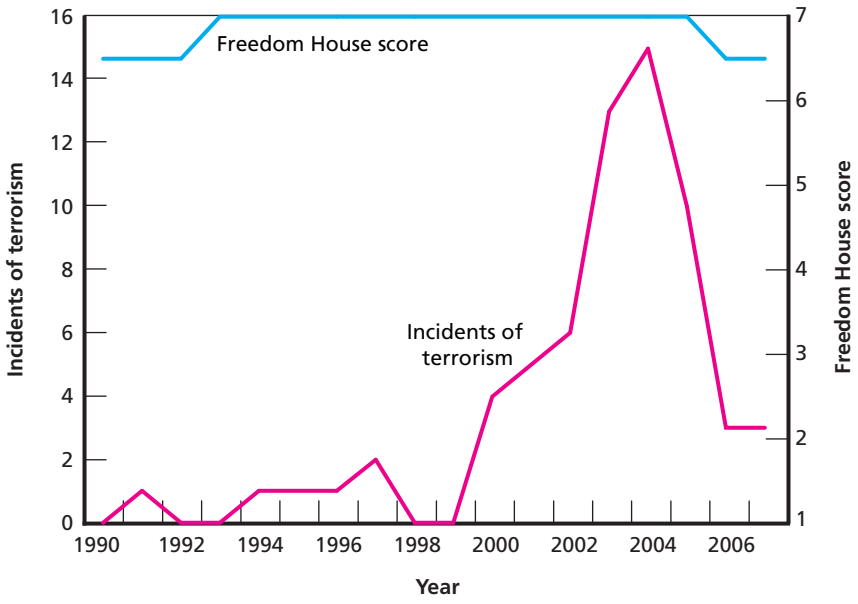
[27] On the perceptions of individual QAP rank-and-file, the work of Thomas Hegghammer (2006b, pp. 42–46) is especially helpful, by illuminating the absence of any tribal, regional, or socioeconomic common denominator in their backgrounds. Contrary to popular belief, QAP does not appear to have been a movement drawn from politically marginalized, economically disadvantaged Saudis in the southwestern provinces of Asir, Jizan, and Baha or elsewhere in the country's periphery. Nor does unemployment offer an explanation; only 3 of the 70 in his sample were unemployed. The remaining thread that connects these individuals is their previous experience in jihad, especially in Afghanistan. Hegghammer notes that by 1999, there was a strong impetus for Saudi volunteerism in Afghanistan and other foreign conflicts, with the principle motive being a sense of altruistic concern for suffering Muslims.

Comparing Levels of Freedom and Terrorism

The FH scores and attack data provide helpful, but ultimately limited, insights. Most significantly, this is because Freedom House rankings never rose above the lowest score of 7 for most of the period under examination (Figure 5.1).

Modest reform initiatives, such as the establishment of the Majlis al-Shura, the convening of the National Dialogue, and the holding of municipal council elections, were highlighted in the author's fieldwork as raising perceptions of regime legitimacy, fostering a degree of tolerance for dissenting opinion, and providing a nascent framework for the peaceful airing of grievances. Yet during the post–Gulf War petition campaign that prompted these openings, Freedom House actually lowered its scores, interpreting the 1992 Basic Law as a stifling of

Figure 5.1
Saudi Arabia: Freedom House Score and Number of Terrorism Incidents, by Year



NOTE: A score of 1 indicates the highest degree of freedom, and 7 the least.
RAND *MG772-5.1*

political and religious freedom, and dismissing the establishment of the Majlis al-Shura as a largely cosmetic device that has "limited powers and does not affect decision making or power structures in a meaningful way."[28] While this is largely accurate, Saudi activists initially greeted these moves as signs of progress. From its initial, bottom-rank scoring, therefore, Freedom House is unable to measure subsequent shifts and swings in popular support toward the regime, as well as acts of violence against it—most notably the period that followed the accession of King 'Abdullah, the so-called "golden age" of reform from 2003 to 2004, and the subsequent backtracking on promises and arrests of key reformists.

At any rate, as has been mentioned, the spike in QAP violence that arose in mid-2003 was largely independent of these domestic developments, and probably resulted more from regional developments, such as the return of Saudi veterans from the Afghan front and the Iraq war.[29] There is, however, some argument to be made that a more democratic, participatory society might have been able to better integrate these returning jihadis or made them less inclined to continue fighting for pan-Islamic causes (or volunteer for them in the first place). But as the work of Thomas Hegghammer has shown, the bulk of the QAP foot soldiers did not hold grievances related to political or even economic marginalization that might have been alleviated through democratic processes.[30]

Many commentators have argued that the forces that set in motion the violence of 2003 to 2006 were deeply rooted in the kingdom's religious and ideological and decades of authoritarian rule—and these causal mechanisms are not easily overcome in the short term through quasi-democratic gestures, such as dialogue sessions and elections. Exploring the normative, institutional, and legitimization logic of liberalization through fieldwork helps shed further light on this argument.

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28 Freedom House (2006).

29 Cordesman and Obaid (2005, p. 4).

30 Hegghammer (2006b, pp. 42–46).

Assessing Effects

Regime Legitimacy

Despite varied perceptions of the effect of reforms on violence, many Saudi analysts have observed a general improvement in popular perceptions of regime legitimacy during times of political liberalization, however modest, contrived, and halting. This was especially true prior to the 2005 municipal council elections. As in Bahrain, however, this perception suffered when promised reforms wilted. Unlike in Bahrain, however, the curtailment of social reforms was not directly attributed to the nefariousness of the ruling family but rather to pressure from Salafi hard-liners in the clerical establishment, as well as the dispersed nature of Saudi decisionmaking.[31]

Many contacts argued that prison reform, rule of law, human rights, freedom of expression, and a general improvement in the judiciary system were a critical first step to legitimizing the rule of the al-Saud. A leading Saudi economist and reformist noted that failure to tackle the judiciary has been the principle reason for the stagnation of the National Dialogue.[32] But reforms in this realm would directly erode the power of Minister of the Interior Prince Naif and the Ministry of the Interior (MOI); hence the MOI's apparent decision set up certain redlines, once improvements in participatory politics and the

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[31] On the dispersed nature of decisionmaking, Crown Prince, and later King, 'Abdullah has often been painted by Saudi activists as pragmatic patron of the citizenry, with their best interests ultimately his goal. "The King has made some symbolic efforts, but they are still important," noted one activist. In contrast, as the Minister of Interior, Prince Naif, is the stern, unyielding hand of the regime, who has kept within his orbit a number of hard-line clerical figures whom he has used as intermediaries with the radical Salafi-jihadi current. Although the dispersed, dichotomous nature of the regime should not be overemphasized, it is important for understanding the nuances of popular perceptions of regime legitimacy. Elections and National Dialogue may reflect favorably on 'Abdullah, but Naif and the clerical establishment cast a long shadow over Saudi governance, and negative views toward them are unlikely to be assuaged by movement toward participatory politics. It should be noted that several outside scholars of Saudi Arabia have portrayed this split as simplistic and artificial, yet what is important for the discussion at hand is the Saudi perception. See Al-Rasheed (2006, p. 188).

[32] Author discussion with Saudi reformist and economist, Jedda, Saudi Arabia, March 7, 2007. Also, see Brown (2001).

goodwill engendered by "dialogue" had given the al-Saud a degree of breathing space. The MOI's March 2004 arrests of liberal activists sent shockwaves throughout the reform community, eroded the morale of the petition lobby, and signaled the effective end of reform's "golden age."[33] "After the March 2004 arrests, we decided to give King 'Abdullah time," noted a Shi'a liberal who routinely coordinates with Sunni reformists on petitions. "But too much time has elapsed."[34]

The February 2007 arrests of reformists as part of a counterterror dragnet against supporters of the Iraq jihad largely shattered whatever lingering acclaim the al-Saud had garnered following the era of elections and dialogue. "The feeling of security is gone; people are worried about corruption more than elections," noted a member of the National Human Rights Commission.[35] Nevertheless, Shi'a activists in the Eastern Province pointed to a lowering of the threshold of arrest as helping to build trust with the regime; after the 1996 Khobar bombing, Shi'a were routinely jailed for possessing cassette tapes and other material of a sectarian nature. Today, it is direct criticism of the regime—in an editorial or a speech, for example—that invites a visit by the *mubahith* (a Saudi state security service) or jail time.[36]

The nexus between legitimacy and judiciary reform appears to be borne out in the writings of Saudi jihadis themselves, who routinely attacked the harshness and human rights abuses of the penitentiary system and demonized Prince Naif in their monthly periodical, *Sawt al-Jihad*.[37] Indeed, much of the kingdom's takfiri ideological current appears to have coalesced in prison. The former Salafi-jihadi turned

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[33] Stephane Lacroix (2006, p. 55) has argued that "faced with the multiplication of political manifestos, the regime wanted to send a signal to all potential drafters that it had enough." The redline that was breached in this particular petition was the call for a constitution (author discussion with Jedda-based journalist, Saudi Arabia, March 8, 2007).

[34] Author discussion with Shi'a activist and reform activist, Qatif, Saudi Arabia, March 2007.

[35] Author discussion with member of the National Human Rights Commission, March 2007.

[36] Author discussion with Saudi Shi'a journalist, Qatif, March 2007.

[37] Author discussion with Saudi analyst, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, March 2007.

dissident-journalist Mansur al-Nuqaydan has traced the evolution of the modern takfiri current led by Ahmad al-Khalidi, Nasr al-Fahd, and ʻAli bin Khudayr al-Khudayr to their detention in the notorious Hayir prison in the mid-1990s.[38] Today, the prison affords the regime a convenient forum for tackling terrorism and bolstering its legitimacy through nondemocratic means, via "counseling committees" led by judiciary clerics who engage in intense re-indoctrination sessions with imprisoned jihadis.[39]

On this last initiative, the co-option of prominent Salafi clerics from the Sahwa current via proto-democratic initiatives, such as the Majlis al-Shura and limited media openings, becomes important. Ironically, it was the simultaneous drive for reforms by liberals in the post–Gulf War era that pushed the regime to reach an accommodation with the Sahwa—opening up avenues of power that were previously closed to designated clerical families from the Najd. This rapprochement with the Sahwa clerics, spurred indirectly by post–Gulf War pressure for liberalization, has borne some fruit on the counterterrorism front.[40]

For example, one of the key leaders of the Judiciary's prison reindoctrination program for jihadis and a vocal opponent of Saudi participation in the Iraq jihad is ʻAbd al-Muhsin al-ʻUbaykan. A former Sahwa cleric who enjoys continued popularity, al-ʻUbaykan might not have cooperated with the government had he not been offered a seat at the Shura Council. Similarly, Safar al-Hawali, a key Sahwa cleric whose imprisonment in the early 1990s fueled bin Ladin's attack on the Saudi state, has been used by the regime to facilitate the surrender of wanted QAP militants from the southwest provinces of Abha and Asir, utilizing his own tribal roots in that region.[41] On May 17, 2003, prominent Sahwa clerics, including al-Awdah and al-Hawali, signed a statement condemning the May 12 Riyadh bombings that left 35 dead. Salman al-ʻAwda, whose imprisonment sparked an uprising in

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38 al-Nuqaydan (2003a).

39 For more on Saudi rehabilitation programs, see Boucek (2008).

40 Field respondents listed the most influential clerics, in terms of countering takfiri radicalism, as Muhsin al-ʻAwaji, Safar al-Hawali, and Salman al-ʻAwda.

41 Al-Ubthani (2006).

the mid-1990s, has attended the National Dialogue meetings in 2003 and reportedly offered tacit support to the December 2003 reform petition signed by other members of the Sahwa calling for the creation of a constitutional monarchy.

The outcome of this co-option was to provide the regime with a powerful clerical base, with greater credibility than the official establishment, to attack the jihadis' ideology, stave off recruits, and possibly foster defections. The efficacy of this strategy is debatable, as these clerics are increasingly being perceived as having "sold out," and they sometimes made decidedly illiberal demands in exchange for their cooperation in counterterrorism efforts.[42] But had they not been enticed into the regime orbit, they might have lent their intellectual weight to the jihadis' efforts, possibly spurring increased recruitment and tacit popular support. More importantly, the incremental politicization of the clerics set the stage for broader Salafi participation in the 2005 municipal elections, which represented the clearing of a major intellectual hurdle in the kingdom.[43] According to a Jedda-based observer: "The elections broke a taboo, especially for the Salafis. Religious scholars joined the game. That was big."[44]

Normative and Institutional Effects: The Municipal Council Elections

As Saudi Arabia's first expression of participatory mass politics since the 1960s, the 2005 municipal elections should indeed be considered a watershed. Unmarked by violence or accusations of gerrymandering, they were relatively transparent, although some commentators

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[42] One example of these demands is from Safar al-Hawali: In a televised debate on November 5, 2003, on *al-Jazeera*, al-Hawali offered to negotiate the surrender of these militants, inviting them to come to his home or telephone him personally. In return, he demanded the following from the al-Saud: rehire fired imams, silence liberal writers, prevent the integration of girls' education, and abolish all laws not in accordance with the Shari'a. In addition, he insisted that Saudi prison officials "who had tortured" be immediately put on trial—a clear attempt at retribution against the Sahwa's former captors during the 1990s. Unsurprisingly, this long list of demands proved untenable for the royalty, and al-Hawali's mediation offer was rejected (Jones, 2005).

[43] Author discussion with a Salafi legal scholar, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, March 13, 2007.

[44] Author discussion with Jedda-based journalist, March 4, 2007.

lamented the lack of television coverage.[45] They also formed the epicenter of a debate about the efficacy of liberalization in fostering openness and toleration of the other.

On the one hand, commentators in both the West and in Saudi Arabia have derided the process as cosmetic and superficial or, worse, detrimental to Saudi security by promoting the ascendancy of Islamists[46] and tribal blocs. Such an institutional framework, the argument goes, is hardly a suitable vehicle to promote the political norms of inclusion and pluralism. According to one activist, the elections were proof that the "Saudi government is more liberal than the people" and what was needed first was the cultivation of non-Islamist, nontribal alternatives, rooted in civil society. Pointing to the Islamists "hidden agenda," this figure went on to warn of direct elections to the Majlis al-Shura, predicting that, based on the results of the municipal council voting, this body would lose its technocratic base to uneducated Bedouin and Islamists.[47] Others warned that the councils would become a Trojan horse for al-Qa'ida, citing the endorsement of Jedda candidates by Safar al-Hawali, whom a prominent Saudi analyst has described as "the Sinn Fein for al-Qa'ida."[48] F. Gregory Gause III, in his article arguing against U.S. democracy promotion, pointed to the success of the Islamist ticket, the so-called "Golden List," in gaining six of seven seats in Riyadh and sweeping the elections in Jedda and Mecca.[49]

In contrast to these views, there are those that take a more optimistic perspective, seeing in the elections the first fledgling steps toward openness and debate in a society marked by quietism and secrecy in

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[45] Many TV stations placed footage of police battling QAP ahead of election coverage (author discussion with Saudi analyst, Riyadh, March 11, 2007).

[46] These election victors actually decried the term *Islamist*; despite their platforms and clerical backing, they maintained that they were representative of Saudi society. One candidate noted that there is "nothing called Islamist and non-Islamist in Saudi Arabia" (Khan, 2005).

[47] Author discussion with a Saudi reform activist and newspaper columnist, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, March 12, 2007.

[48] Author discussion with Saudi analyst, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, March 11, 2007.

[49] Gause (2005).

governance. "Elections widened societal relations. People interacted. The most important result is that for the first time we heard about 'issues' like corruption and health; people made campaign promises," noted a Jedda-based analyst.[50] As Amr Hamzawy has argued:

> The tribal loyalties and confessional affiliations clearly manifested in the municipal elections did not represent incurable elements of backwardness. Rather, they entailed an important moment of pluralism . . . and set a precedent for opening existing consultative bodies for pluralist contestation.[51]

Adding to this logic, a Riyadh-based reformer commented that the elections were a legitimate expression of participatory politics, which reflected well on the ruling family. True, Islamists emerged victorious in the major cities of Jedda, Riyadh, and the Eastern Province, but this was primarily due to their well-greased social services machinery, the provision of cash, and the adroit campaign use of information technology, such as cell phone text messaging.[52] But outside these areas, this figure argued that electoral results were more "representative of society." A remarkable example appears to have been the province of Qasim, long a stronghold for Salafi clerics, where Islamist candidates faired poorly.

Among those Islamists that were elected, most cannot be described as adhering to Salafi-jihadi principles or al-Qa'idism. More commonly, they were technocratic and moderate in orientation. One of them, a specialist in agro-economics, noted to the author that "moderate Islamists are open to the West." This same individual went on to warn of the danger of not allowing Islamists to participate, citing the example of Hizb al-Tahrir, an Islamist group which he described as having originally liberal views, but which underwent a more radical

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50 Author discussion with Jedda-based journalist, March 4, 2007.

51 Hamzawy (2006, p. 12).

52 Coll (2005).

shift and moved underground following its suppression by the Jordanian government.[53]

As noted earlier, the general pace of reforms had stalled by March 2004, largely negating any improvements in regime legitimacy they had earlier engendered and the corresponding positive effects on countering terrorism. There is widespread frustration with the anemic performance of the municipal councils.[54] Reformists remain disillusioned by the failure of the National Dialogue process, with many seeing it as a "gimmick."[55] Even more worrisome than the sclerosis of the councils and Dialogue is the damaging effect of regional events on their viability. As in Bahrain, tensions stemming from the escalation of sectarian strife in Iraq after February 2006, Hizballah's summer 2006 war with Israel, and Iranian nuclear ambitions have had a further chilling effect on liberalization. An oft-quoted phrase attributed to King Fahd has acquired new resonance among activists, especially in the Eastern Province: "Why start fires on the inside when there are fires on the outside?"[56]

The regime's divide-and-rule strategy to fracture and weaken the opposition has proved useful for attacking dissent and deferring on reform. In mitigating the threat from QAP, the regime co-opted the Sahwa clerics but was careful to balance their growing power with concessions to the official Salafi clerical establishment. Proto-democratic structures facilitated this co-option, with some observers attributing the electoral victory of the Islamists as a regime "gift" to the Sahwa. At least in the short term, this appears to have bought the regime breathing space from terrorism. Fortuitously for the regime, the shift from

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53 Author discussion with a Saudi municipal council member, March 13, 2007.

54 Author discussions with contacts in Jedda, Riyadh, and the Eastern Province, March 2007.

55 Author discussion with human rights lawyer and reform activist, Jeddah, March 8, 2007.

56 Author discussions with Shi'a activists and intellectuals, Qatif, Saudi Arabia, March 15, 2007. Interestingly, one reform activist noted that in such an atmosphere, where "centrifugal" forces from Iraq threaten to take hold among Saudi Arabia's disparate identities, elected councils are more important than ever as a locally rooted buffer (author discussion in, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, March 13, 2007).

concerted reforms to a more syncretic mix of co-option and repression occurred at precisely the moment Washington's attention was shifting from counterterrorism to the war in Iraq.

Pressure was eased, much to the dismay of some reform activists. "After the Iraq invasion, we stopped hearing from the State Department," noted a member of the National Human Rights Commission.[57] Echoing this argument, a Shi'a activist in Qatif argued that "U.S. pressure in the form of the Greater Middle East Initiative was good. But now it has been replaced by sectarianism."[58] Similarly, a Riyadh-based reformer pointed to the recent meetings between Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice with the intelligence chiefs of several Arab states as signaling that U.S. counterterrorism priorities had swung from the innovative, if risky, path of reform back to the time-worn paradigms of repression, surveillance, and co-option.[59]

Conclusion

This chapter has shown that even modest, cosmetic, and seemingly calculated reform initiatives had an effect on bolstering perceptions of regime legitimacy in Saudi Arabia. Indirectly, this assisted in mitigating terrorism by making the populace more willing to support the government's counterterrorism initiatives, even if the liberalization steps themselves did not speak to the militants' motivations, with the possible exception of judiciary and prison reform. Similarly, the 2005 municipal elections created an institutional framework for the peaceful airing of grievances and the discussion of issues, which was significant in the context of the kingdom's political culture. By fostering an environment conducive to Salafi participation, these elections, along with the National Dialogue sessions, deprived domestic terrorists of ideological support from key clerics. As noted by Freedom House, these

[57] Author discussion with member of the National Human Rights Commission, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, March 12, 2007.

[58] Author discussion with Shi'a activist, Qatif, Saudi Arabia, March 17, 2007.

[59] Author discussion with Salafi reformist, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, March 14, 2007.

steps were certainly miniscule—but they were not meaningless. There was indeed an indirect and immediate effect on curtailing violence because they came at a key juncture in the regime's counterterrorism campaign.

Yet the regime's backtracking on reform—illustrated most starkly by the early 2004 arrests of constitutional activists—subsequently negated whatever positive perceptions of regime legitimacy had been engendered. Increasingly, the structures for dialogue and participation were seen as contrived and hollow. Over the long term, this growing disenchantment after a period of raised expectations may prove more detrimental to mitigating violence than had the reforms not been started in the first place.

CHAPTER SIX

Algeria

Introduction

As the analysis turns to the Maghreb, this chapter assesses the relationship between the failure to deepen and expand democratization and increases of violence in Algeria. Of all the case studies, Algeria offers perhaps the most dramatic example of what might occur when democracy is steered from its course. The nullification of democratic elections in 1992 in which the populist Islamic Salvation Front (FIS) was poised to win saw the explosion of a civil war that would engulf Algeria in turbulence and violence for nearly a decade. The cancellation of the elections occurred against the backdrop of unprecedented reforms initiated just three years prior. Despite a return to relative stability, accompanied by the revitalization of parliamentary life and constitutional reforms, Algeria is still plagued by bouts of violence waged in repudiation of a regime that rests on what can be called, at best, only fragile legitimacy.

Trends in Liberalization

The year 1989 marks a critical juncture in Algerian politics, as reforms were instituted that dramatically transformed the relationship between state and society. Unprecedented liberalization initiatives—which included a new electoral law allowing for expanded competition and for the creation of civil society actors—opened the terrain to myriad political and social actors, including Islamist groups, creating a shift

in the balance of power.[1] While international pressures were an impetus for reforms,[2] the liberal measures were as much in response to the gross domestic economic inequalities and malaise that plagued Algeria during the 1980s as they were a rejection of political corruption, oppression, and one-party domination.[3] Significantly, the reforms relegated the military[4] to the background of Algerian politics and inadvertently opened the political space—albeit a limited one—for the participation of numerous independent parties and nonpolitical associations in the public sphere. Although there were limitations on which groups and parties would be recognized, this was the first opportunity for a multiparty system, and, by 1991, nearly 60 officially recognized parties populated the political field in Algeria. The implications of multipartyism on the monopoly of the National Liberation Front (FLN), the single dominant party in Algeria, were far-reaching, as the party now had to share the political domain with myriad other organizations, which contributed to further marginalization of the FLN. This included Islamist organizations, which were also allowed to flourish in the more open environment of the regime.

The 1990–1991 Gulf War, however, undermined the democratization experiment in Algeria, as it polarized the relationship between the government and Algeria's Islamist forces, among others. Islamists interpreted Algeria's popular-level support of then Iraqi President

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1 A number of nonviolent Islamist groups were created just before or immediately following the initiation of the 1989 reforms. Most were parties or charitable organizations. Some were independent; others developed linkages with other parties. Though several did not weather the civil war, some would last to become partners with the governing parties. The organizations include al-Rabita; al-Islah wa-l-Irshad, a charitable organization; the Islamic Salvation Front; the Movement for Society and Peace (MSP); al-Nahda and the Movement of National Reform (the latter party was created as a breakout faction from the former); the Movement for Democracy (MDA); and Wafa.

2 For a fuller discussion of the impact of international factors on Algeria's democratization process, see Cavatorta (2004).

3 Like many countries in the Middle East, IMF reforms initiated during the 1980s severely taxed the Algerian economy, producing debt, unemployment, and lowered wages. A plunge in global oil and gas prices only exacerbated the problem.

4 The Algerian military was discredited for its brutal response in 1988 to the famed October riots, launched in protest of economic and political conditions in Algeria.

Saddam Hussein as a rejection of Western models and values. They called for implementation of the Shari'a, suspension of oil exports to countries opposed to Saddam Hussein, and for immediate presidential elections. The Algerian government, for its part, reacted to this new Islamist assertiveness by becoming more intransigent in its position, limiting the range of political opportunities for Islamists.

Further bifurcating political forces in Algeria was the reaction among the broader public to the government's position on the Gulf War. The regime found itself largely out of step with the population, which was supportive of Saddam Hussein. While, on the one hand, the government, in its calculation, needed to align itself with the West in order to continue to reap benefits from democratization, the state, on the other, also needed to be perceived by Algerians as being responsive to the larger population.

The credentials of the regime and the FLN party also eroded throughout the 1980s and 1990s as a result of persistent corruption and by growing internal factionalization. In fact, it is the government's predilection for resorting to corruption to maintain FLN hegemony that proved disastrous for the Algerian polity. Despite stated commitments to multipartyism and pluralism, the new electoral laws accompanying the 1989 reforms were in practice exclusionary and prohibited the participation of parties created along regional and religious lines. Regulations also were frequently manipulated to give the FLN the advantage.[5]

The state's inclination to manipulate elections had a catastrophic outcome for Algeria in 1992—one that would reverberate throughout the region and within Algeria for years to come. Islamists were positioned to win newly scheduled elections in late 1991, but officials, fearing Islamist victory, cancelled the contest. The decision resulted in

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[5] Memorably, both the *local* electoral contests of 1990 and the multiparty elections of 1991 were marred by fraud. In an ironic twist, such electoral engineering failed to shield the state from threats from its main foes, the FIS, which won in the 1990 local contest and posed enough concern in 1991 to again provoke state interference. The seats were apportioned so that representation in rural areas—where the FLN had solid support—increased at the expense of urban districts where the FIS was more popular. In second-round voting, only the top two parties would square off, which immediately marginalized smaller parties.

the most violent period in post-independent Algeria, with the country descending into a civil war that pitted radicalized Islamists against the government, which was supported by secular factions. For Islamists, the Algerian regime was corrupt and unjust. From the perspective of the state, the secular elite, and military, recognition of an FIS electoral victory that would culminate in Islamist control was unacceptable. With the government incapacitated, the military reasserted itself to the forefront of Algerian politics, abandoning the constitution and dissolving parliament. The FIS was also banned, and all other opposition parties were suppressed.

Between 150,000 and 200,000 Algerians are believed to have died in Algeria's nearly decade-long conflagration, during which Islamist oppositionists employed brutal violence that was matched with similar ferocity by Algerian security forces. While most killed were civilians, as many as 10,000 are among "the disappeared," abducted by security services or Islamists. Counterterrorism campaigns brought an end to the most destabilizing period of the civil war by 1999, but did not stop the violence that hardened Islamists have since vowed to continue in their quest to topple what they consider an illegitimate regime.

In an effort to end the violence and promote national integration as well as democratization, Algerian leadership launched a number of liberalizing initiatives aimed toward restoring the credibility of the regime and public confidence. For example, measures to enhance the status of women through revision of the *mudawanna* (personal status code), address Berber grievances, and bring a final end to the Islamist violence through processes of reconciliation have been adopted to ameliorate popular discontent and at the same time credit the state for moving the country once again on the path toward democracy.

Trends in Violent Activity

Algeria's most significant episode with terrorist activity occurred during the period of the civil war from 1992 to 1999, with violence erupting

after the preemption the 1991 elections. The agents responsible for the preponderance of the violence are of the Salafi-jihadi orientation.[6]

Importantly, radical movements did not emerge as a potent force in Algeria until the 1980s. Before then, Islamists represented a reformist voice, reserving most of their activities for *da'wa* (preaching) and the promotion of Islamic culture. During the 1960s and 1970s, the Islamist movement evolved into a more political organization. Socialism, social-economic conditions, and human rights were the main issues that preoccupied the movement. Though state controls severely hindered the activities of groups, domestic political and economic pressures during the 1980s gave militant Islam increased momentum as groups agitated for change. With no other avenues for channeling frustrations, Islamists assumed a more radical posture and sought a re-Islamization of society as a way to alter the regime.

Like elsewhere in the Middle East, radicalization of Algeria's Islamists was aided by major regional events, such as the success of the Islamic Revolution in Iran in 1979 and the Afghan struggle against the Soviets in Afghanistan during the 1980s. While the former provided an inspirational beacon, the latter provided a training ground for returning Algerians who were radicalized in the Afghan theater of combat.

Economic crisis in 1988 provided Algeria's Islamists with an opportunity to harness popular resentment and anger toward the regime as a vehicle for mass mobilization, but large-scale violence was for the most absent. In fact, the FIS was one of the many organizations that were established after the 1989 reforms and was essentially nonviolent.

It was not until the suspension of the 1992 democratic elections that significant Islamic violence materialized and Salafi-jihadi groups came to the fore in Algeria. Violence dramatically escalated in 1994 following the 1993 creation and consolidation of the Armed Islamic Group (GIA), a particularly radical jihadi organization. The GIA in its attacks drew no distinction between noncombatant supporters or

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[6] For Salafis in the Algerian civil war, jihad was the "sixth pillar" incumbent on all Muslims. It was mandated for political and social change and less for political inclusion.

opponents in its jihad against the regime. Anyone in Algeria who did not conform to the GIA doctrine was a potential target.[7]

Violence again surges in 1998, an especially deadly year, as over 2,000 Algerians died as a result of terrorist operations executed in Beni Messous, Bentalha, and Rais. This may be attributed to the entrance of the Salafi Group for Preaching and Combat (GSPC) into the arena of struggle. The organization is thought to have been created between 1996 and 1998 by Hassan Hattab (also known as Abu Hamza), who split from the GIA.[8] Algerian security forces met the attacks with an extremely aggressive response. Since then, counterterrorism strategies have been largely effective in quelling most of the violence in Algeria. The corps of Islamist mujahideen, believed to have been 28,000 strong during 1992 to 1997, dwindled after 1998, and was reduced even further to around 300 to 700 by 2006.

Below is an outline of the groups involved in Islamist violence against the state during the 1990s and during the period of this analysis.

- *GSPC/al-Qa'ida Organization in the Islamic Maghreb:* While this group is far less potent than during the civil war due to aggressive militant measures by the state and internal fragmentation, it remains Algeria's most formidable Islamist group. GSPC-instigated attacks continue—there were six near-simultaneous attacks in February 2007 just east of Algiers—underscoring the sustainability of the group, still capable of executing attacks in the countryside and near Algiers. The GSPC once boasted 4,000 members but has been reduced to several hundred. Still, the group has managed to develop transnational links in Africa, Europe, and the rest of the Maghreb. The group is also an al-Qa'ida affiliate and, in 2006, consolidated this linkage by renaming itself "al-Qa'ida in

[7] The GIA targeted journalists, teachers, school children, civil society leaders, and anyone who was not a supporter of the Islamic cause against the state, including other radicals that did not conform to their doctrine. Importantly, GIA tactics were not embraced by all Algerian groups, as they were divided over issues related to proportionality.

[8] Hattab disagreed on the GIA's use of indiscriminant violence.

the Islamic Maghreb" (AQIM). Thus far, there is little evidence to suggest that AQIM has done more than establish contacts or that it exists as a formal group with any discernable structure. Thus, while the GSPC remains a problematic for stability in Algeria, and a less potent one, its potential for expansion of activities outside of Algeria could place the organization in a position to foment violence and instability in other countries.

Other violent groups on the Algerian landscape are less active or have disbanded.

- *Armed Islamic Group (GIA):* The GIA was once a major terrorist entity in Algeria, but it has been substantially weakened by rupturing from within and surrendered under an earlier 1999 amnesty.
- *Arme Islamiques du Salut (AIS):* The AIS is the armed wing of the FIS and declared a cease-fire in 1997.
- *Free Salafist Group (GSL):* The GSL, which opposed the amnesty, is active, but has been predominantly involved in crime and trafficking rather than terrorism.

Algeria, at present, still faces prolonged, albeit low-intensity, violence that is largely attributable to the sustained insurgency of the GSPC/AQIM,[9] which vows to continue its battle against the state.

A combination of military and political measures has clearly diminished the potency of Algeria's violent extremists, but this also seems to have been a catalyst for the creation of transnational networks. The GSPC/AQIM, for example, has shrewdly adapted to state-imposed constraints and has managed to form linkages with other proximate groups in the Maghreb, including Morocco, Mauritania, Nigeria, and Tunisia, under both its original and new moniker. As recently as last year, members were apprehended in the aforementioned countries, allegedly in the process of training and recruiting for the purpose of carrying out attacks. As the political environment becomes

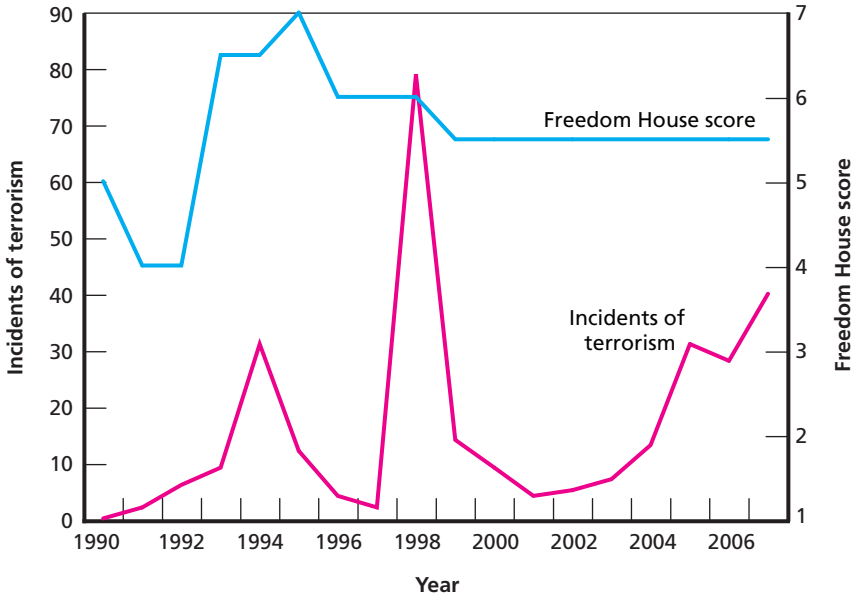
9 The GSPC changed its name to AQIM as of February 2007.

more restrictive, the GSPC/AQIM has begun to look beyond Algeria's borders to expand its mission.

Comparing Levels of Freedom and Terrorism

As mentioned in Chapter One, scholars and policymakers often adopt the conventional wisdom that increased liberalization and democratization discourage rather than encourage terrorist activity. Quantitative evaluations of both the liberalization efforts in Algeria offered by FH scores and of the terrorist incidents as recorded by MIPT offer an opportunity to evaluate the quantitative relationship between the two trends. As the trends in Figure 6.1 indicate, there is a clear relationship between reversal or absence of liberalization and democracy and the prevalence of terrorist violence in Algeria.

Figure 6.1
Algeria: Freedom House Score and Number of Terrorism Incidents, by Year



NOTE: A score of 1 indicates the highest degree of freedom, and 7 the least.
RAND *MG772-6.1*

Appropriately, FH identifies 1990, 1991, and 1992—following the 1989 reforms—as the "freer" periods in Algerian politics, with the country earning its highest rating of a 5, 4, and 4 for those respective years. The nadir begins after 1992, following the preemption of the country's first multiparty elections, as FH assigns dismal scores of 6.5 from 1993 and 1994. Terrorist violence rose concomitantly, as political measures ran afoul of reform initiatives instituted during 1989.

As the civil war in Algeria escalated, the country earned the lowest FH rating possible (7) in 1995 following the reassertion of the military in Algerian politics. That same year saw the failure of the Rome Sant'Edigio Conference, in which the Algerian government refused to accept an accord with Islamists that would include legal recognition of the FIS. Scores improved in 1996 after the adoption of a new constitution that mandated the creation of a second parliamentary chamber. The goal of the amendment was to enhance popular representation by allowing two-thirds of chamber members to be elected by the public.

The implementation of President Abdelaziz Bouteflika's 1999 Civil Accord likewise saw a boost in FH scoring (from 6 to 5.5). Since then, however, ratings are little changed, and violence has remained persistent but at low-grade levels.

The quantitative analysis discussed above has helped shed some light on the general direction and intensity of phenomena in Algeria. Yet important nuances that do not readily reveal themselves are masked in ways that underscore the limitations of relying on numeric summaries. For example, missing from MIPT evaluations are other forms of violence, such as that emanating from Algeria's Berber or Amazigh minority. While Algeria's Berber population is not responsible for *Islamist* violence, their occasional violent opposition to the authoritarianism of the state is nevertheless a challenge to stability. Rejecting "Arabization" of the state and Algerian society, Berber social and political actors have engaged in direct confrontation with the state in pursuit of goals of greater democratization, pluralism, and civil liberties for all Algerians, partly as a result of their own marginalized role within the regime. Berber-Arab confrontations had been ongoing well before 1989, but tensions appear to have become exacerbated as the civil war with Islamists waned. Berbers sparked riots with security forces in 1998,

following the death of famed singer and nationalist Matoub Lounes, and nearly 100,000 took to the streets in 2001, following the death of a Berber youth who died in custody. Protests lasted for three months and claimed 50 lives.

Nor does quantitative analysis allow for examination of changes in group behavior or the sources of those changes. As mentioned previously, state restrictions on Islamist groups in Algeria may have forced them aground—but they have strategically adjusted, establishing ties with groups and individuals in other countries. The regime, then, has become an unwitting accomplice in the exportation of destabilization and terrorist violence, a dynamic that cannot be captured by quantitative analyses alone.

Qualitative examination, by contrast, contributes to a fuller understanding of the how state actions, institutions, and political arrangements bear on the calculations of political and societal actors. In the section that follows, we use interviews, opinion surveys, and archival material to assess the extent to which institutions have contributed to freedom of expression, contributed to norms of tolerance and pluralism, and, finally, how existing liberalization efforts influence the legitimacy of the state.

Assessing Effects

Institutional Effects

In Algeria, promoting national integration in the aftermath of the civil war and suppressing Islamist violence entailed a resumption of the liberalization process that would include revising the institutional mechanisms in a way that restructured political relationships and the rules of the game for societal actors. However, the extent to which Algeria's new institutional framework meaningfully addresses the domestic balance of power between oppositionist forces and the state is highly questionable.

Algeria's more contemporary liberalization process, in stark contrast to the experiment in 1989, has been substantially more contained and directed. A new constitution adopted in 1996 declares Islam as the

official religion, but officially bans the creation of parties based along religious, linguistic, ethnic, gender, corporatist, or regional lines. The 1996 revisions also include the creation of a popularly elected parliamentary chamber, but the parallel creation of a second house blunts the chamber's potential to enhance popular representation. As fully a third of the second chamber's members are appointed by the state, the regime has a "built-in" security net for its authority, since legislation needs to be approved by three-fourths of that chamber's members. The net effect is a dilution of these bodies' ability to emerge as an institution that can effectively aggregate public preferences.

Following the passage of the new constitution, legislative elections of 1997 and subsequent contests have seen a reinstatement of parliamentary life in Algeria, allowing the participation of select Berberist parties, such as the Socialist Forces Front (FFS) and Rally for Culture and Democracy (RCD), and significantly, two moderate Islamist parties, the Movement for Society and Peace and al-Nahda.[10] However, the current multiparty framework excludes other Islamist factions from being a part of the political milieu and has forced the Islamic movement to the sidelines of Algerian politics. The Algerian regime, then, remains little affected, and the power configuration among elites is essentially unaltered. The state continues to marginalize Islamists who seek change, and it excludes those who ask for a reinstatement of the 1992 elections or who seek to engage the government in direct negotiations.[11] Islamists of a hard-line orientation are persecuted by security forces, resulting in the incarceration and killing of hundreds. In this, however, the government has supporters found among several political organizations, including Berber parties and secularists.[12] One Algerian analyst stated frankly that multiparty elections give only the

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[10] Al-Nahda was even part of the former government coalition, along with the government-engineered National Democratic Rally (RND).

[11] Layachi (2004, p. 53).

[12] In fact, during the confrontational period with the Islamists, RCD leader Saad Saadi's anti-Islamic message made the party attractive to the state and earned the faction two ministerial positions. However, the RCD, faced with the Berber uprising in 2001, withdrew from the government lest they would lose their traditional stronghold through too close an association with the state.

veneer of a democracy. "We have a constitution. We have around 60 parties. In reality, though, this is an empty shell. The constitution we have has potential, but its attempt to use religious populism is in the end, anti-political."[13]

In fact, the rather unusual coterie of parties that have coalesced in opposition to Islamists points to what seems to be more accentuated fault lines between cleavages in Algerian society. The inclusion of the Islamist moderates in politics is widely opposed by both secular Algerians and conservative Islamists, who see the moderate Islamist vision as a deviation from their respective agendas. The move, though, is also rejected by Berberists, who consider Islamist goals a threat to their own efforts at cultural recognition. The state's tendency to play the nationalist card, therefore, may have the opposite effect on integration. In other words, instead of promoting harmony, the state is creating fragmentation. Another observer argued that Islamist goals are in many respects different from those of any others, rendering interests virtually irreconcilable.[14]

In addition to elections, the Civil Harmony Law is another measure adopted by the state to unite fractured forces. Launched in 1999 by the newly elected President Abdelaziz Bouteflika, the law culminated in the 2004 Charter for Peace and National Reconciliation, an amnesty that was a cornerstone of Bouteflika's agenda to foster peace and national integration. The charter offers reparations for families of the disappeared and compensation for those who suffered during the civil war. Excluded from the amnesty are individuals involved in massacres, rapes, or bombings. As with elections, the accord contributes little to open expression of popular grievances or regime accountability. The plan, for example, ends judicial proceedings for Islamist militants who disarm, for those living abroad who were involved in violence in Algeria, and for those who were convicted of crimes in absentia. Equally controversial, Algerians are forbidden to make accusations against state

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[13] Author interview with Algerian analyst, Algiers, Algeria, August 27, 2006.

[14] The journalist ventured that "human rights do not exist for the Islamists. God's governance comes before the governance of human beings. Their vision of the world follows Dar al-Harb and Dar al-Islam" (author interview, Algiers, Algeria, August 25, 2006).

agents or security forces that were complicit in violence and are prohibited from disparaging Algerian institutions. Restrictions on political activity by groups involved in violence and financial assistance to insurgent families are also bellwethers for widespread complaint. Although the accord passed easily in public referendum in 2005, with 98 percent voting in favor of the amnesty, many complain about the failure of the state to generate consensus over its content. This disillusionment with the amnesty is underscored by the comments of Algerian critics across the spectrum, who question whether the charter compensations will lead to broad peace, asserting that the amnesty lacks adequate mechanisms for debate, punishment, and justice. One female activist, for example, said that women, among the most frequent victims of Islamist violence, were cheated.[15] Another activist similarly rebuked the state for placing the charter at the center of political debate without discussion and warns that the regime's impunity will not lead to a positive outcome, arguing, "the democratic potential inherent in the peace and reconciliation plan became a victim of an alliance between jihadists and corrupt military generals."[16]

Berber oppositionists similarly argue that the amnesty fails to adequately implement justice. Members of the FFS and RCD, in particular, also vocally oppose the absence of debate about the charter and object to concessions made to Islamists. The FFS, while supportive of the rehabilitation of Islamists, maintains that reconciliation can only come about if all involved in the violence accept their responsibility and if there is the existence of a legitimate adjudication process to determine guilt or innocence of suspects. Other motives also shape FFS and RCD opposition to Islamists. They seek to minimize Islamists' influence in the Algerian polity mainly because the latter's staunch promotion of the Islamic religious identity obviates the Berber expression of their cultural identity, a long-held aspiration of Algeria's Berber movement. Such concerns are echoed in the words of one Berber activist who asserted that the FIS would have won in the democratic election,

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15 She emphasized that many women were ignored in the process (author interview, Algiers, Algeria, August 26, 2006).

16 Author interview with Algerian analyst, Algiers, Algeria, August 27, 2006.

but in the end abandoned democracy.[17] The FFS and particularly the RCD, therefore, are wary of compromise with Islamists and embrace a platform that espouses commitment to the promotion of democracy, liberty, and human rights.[18]

Importantly, the state, in excluding parties and civil society groups from decisions about the Charter, has essentially assumed the role of an authoritarian chief arbiter. The clearly constitutional character of the critique is echoed in the words of one RCD member, who asserts that "it is not the state's place to make such determinations."[19] An observer of Algerian politics attributed part of the problem to Algeria's political culture, of which public debate is not a part, and to the persistence of "the single-party mentality" where "the people decide," not the masses. The period of "political liberalization" post-1989 only had the effect of stabilizing authoritarian rule and bolstering the durability of the authoritarian state rather than challenging its roots.[20]

Thus, the regime sits uneasily in tension with society and Islamists, having struck a bargain of sorts with militants but having engendered little endorsement from frustrated elements of the Algerian public who looked to the state as a guarantor of justice. The weaknesses of the amnesty continue to diminish the credibility of the state, but, with the strength of the insurgency also diminished, the government and its supporters maintain their hold on power. According to a number of members from Algeria's NGO sector, the lack of adjudication procedures and implementation of justice only undermines state legitimacy. In the words of one prominent journalist, the democratic potential inherent in peace and reconciliation became a casualty of an alliance between jihadis and corrupted military generals. The political system in Algeria, he summarized,

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17 Author interview with FFS party member, Algiers, Algeria, September 3, 2006.

18 Such views also relate to their respective role in the civil war. The RCD supported the military coup and continued to lend support to the éradicateurs of the military establishment, thereby condemning the FFS and other political parties' rapprochement with the FIS during the 1995 Sant'Edigio talks.

19 Author interview with RCD member, Algiers, Algeria, September 2, 2006.

20 Hashemaoui (2004, p. 9).

> has merely reproduced itself, and the state appears to express little interest in change. The state may be strong in terms of rent and budget, but not in its presence and efforts to liberalize society.[21]

Normative Effects

Algeria's institutional framework has forced most Islamist groups to the margins of Algerian politics, leaving only those supportive of the state among the "legal opposition."[22] But have the regime's arguably tepid attempts at liberalization in any way facilitated moderation among Islamist parties, or fostered norms of tolerance and pluralism among Algerians and also among Islamist groups? Evidence suggests that Islamist investment in elections and domestic political institutions has not encouraged a moderation of group norms. The still-radical GSPC/AQIM refuses to cooperate with the government. As far as the current Islamist groups participating in the coalition are concerned, these did not have a history of radical behavior to begin with, so one cannot definitively argue that they have shifted toward a more moderate posture. Indeed, they have had to maintain a pragmatic stance in exchange for the state-granted privilege of being allowed to participate in political life.

Toleration among the broader public also deserves consideration in this context as well. Although an appreciation for democracy and pluralism exists among Algerians, it does not appear to translate into wholesale tolerance for Islamists, a sentiment that understandably reflects the lingering effects of the civil war. The public, in fact, believes that the amnesty is, overall, accommodating to Islamists. The 2002 parliamentary elections are illustrative here. In 2002, results showed a decline in support for Islamist parties, even those that had been involved in the 1991–1992 process. The MSP lost half its seats (69 down to 38), and al-Nahda's seat allocations plunged from 34 to 1. The new Islamist

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[21] Author interview Algiers, Algeria, August 27, 2006.

[22] One analyst sarcastically states, "only the FLN, MSP, and RND alliance has the right to debate anything. And that is essentially because they back the government" (author interview, Algiers, Algeria, September 8, 2006).

party, al-Islah, earned 43 seats. The real victor was the government's FLN, which won 199 seats in 2002, up from 69 five years before.[23]

Electoral outcomes demonstrate disillusionment among the Algerian public with the electoral process, parties, the government, and the current constellation on Islamist forces. The still-discredited Algerian government, for its part, has yet to recover from its handling of the civil war and accusations of political engineering, elitism, and corruption.

Elite interviews reveal an Algerian public supportive of government efforts to exclude Islamists to the greatest extent possible. One former FLN representative lauded the military for its handling of the Islamists and argued that, during the heightened state of insecurity, they were considered allies.[24] Public opinion results, however, indicate more-complex viewpoints that are receptive to alternate forms of governance. For example, a 2004 World Values Survey of urban Algerians shows that nearly half (47 percent) believe that democracy is at least "fairly good" for their country and a majority (56 percent) say that "despite its problems, democracy is still the best political system for their country." This, however, does not translate into preferences for a political system devoid of religious actors. This is reflective of the broader trend of Islamic activism and politics that has shaped political discourse in the country for decades and the centricity of Islam in Algerian political culture. Asked about the role of religious actors in the political life of their country, roughly 46 percent of urban Algerians agree "it would be better for Algeria if more people with strong religious beliefs held office in their country."[25]

Separate, but no less important, is the state's continuing struggle with its Berber population.[26] Significantly, the political inclusion of Berbers appears to have contributed to lower levels of violence and to the spread of pluralistic and democratic values. The need of Berber groups to capture a mass base of support has contributed to an

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[23] Layachi (2004, p. 61).

[24] Author interview, Algiers, Algeria, July 23, 2006.

[25] World Values Survey of Arab Citizens, conducted under the auspices of the University of Michigan–Ann Arbor, covering West Bank/Gaza, Algeria, Jordan, 2003–2004.

[26] The Berbers represent about 30 percent of Algeria's population.

expanded agenda of organizations and parties. The Berber minority has long opposed the Algerian regime and the existing order. The most well-known demonstration of such resistance is known as the Berber Spring of 1980, when Berber groups in the Kabylia region openly protested against regime oppression. Opposition continued from 2001 to 2002 in protests that targeted not only declining economic conditions but also the association of the Algerian state with its national constants, "Islam," "Arabism," and "Nationalism." As mentioned previously, Bouteflika made concessions by naming Amazigh a national language that should be taught in schools, but warned that secessionist anti-Algerian rhetoric would put them out of the Algerian consensus and risk alienating ordinary Algerians.[27]

As Michael Willis explains, from Berber protests grew a myriad of other organizations adding diversity to the political representation of Berbers.[28] By questioning the very basis of state identity, Berbers demand a redefinition of the state based on rule of law, pluralism, democratization, and constitutionalism. It is telling that many Berber groups are not associated with political parties and even doubt their effectiveness, due to the view that parties were captured by state power.

Importantly, Algeria's Berber parties themselves claim to be at the forefront of calls for greater openness.[29] The rise of Berber parties as a major democratic force in Algeria appears a logical development. Berber organizations attempt to appeal to all Algerians, a dynamic attributed as much to an earnest appreciation for cultural pluralism, which requires democratization, as to the need for a solid support base to achieve such goals.

The Effects of State Actions on Perceptions of Regime Legitimacy

Although the Algerian regime is relatively stable, it rests on only a fragile legitimacy. The varied debates about the definitions of legitimacy set aside, legitimacy essentially refers to the capacity of a political system to engender and maintain the belief that the existing institutions are

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27 "Le Président Abdelaziz Bouteflika Officialise La Langue Berbère," (2002).

28 Willis (2002, pp. 13–14).

29 Author interview with RCD member, Algiers, Algeria, February 21, 2007.

the most appropriate ones for a society. It also entails being responsive to public aspirations and values and behaving in a way that is consistent with these. A regime, in sum, must have an acknowledged right to exert authority. This analysis reveals that there is little agreement among societal groups regarding the legitimacy of the Algerian state and its institutions. The failure of the state to reconcile competing interests, then, is likely to contribute to ongoing contestation and violence.

Coercion and co-option have allowed the government to suppress Islamist militants or at least contain the violent movement at manageable levels, keeping complete government collapse at bay. Despite the passage of some reforms, corruption and oppression obviate such progress. Political competition, participation, and representation remain limited, and the government has adopted an eradicationist approach to Islamist groups, refusing to allow the emergence of any independent Islamist movement outside of the purview of state control. This has only engendered resentment from Islamist groups, which remain dedicated to the overthrow of a regime they deem "un-Islamic."

The polity that has emerged in Algeria reflects the rationality of the state instead of the will of the citizens. The implications are that the stakes for contesting the state are relatively high for opposition parties that do not accept the status quo.[30] Consequently, the oppositionist actors face even greater constraints to fostering their agenda.

One journalist also points out that the government is able to maintain limits on civil society because Algeria's oil wealth allows the state to cultivate favorable relationships with the United States and other major powers that tacitly allow Algeria to forestall meaningful democratization.[31] Oil revenues also provide Algeria with the resources to limit civil society and maintain the networks of clientelism that have so defined the country's politics. Further, Algeria has the elements of a pluralist society, but pluralism does not exist. Another Algerian expert notes that the government is slowly reversing whatever progress was made during the past. Pointing to continued state control over the media and strict regulations governing nongovernmental associations,

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30 Addi (2006, pp. 158–159).

31 Author interview, Algiers, Algeria, July 23, 2006.

she concludes that violence would continue in an environment characterized by paralysis.

Summary and Implications

To conclude, the retreat or absence of substantive democratic processes contributes to sustained violence in the Algerian case. While liberal initiatives are welcomed by society, changes clearly do not address the balance of power that continues to tip in favor of the regime, replicating past political arrangements in Algeria. With Islamists forced aground, a by-product of this dynamic has been an expansion of clandestine transnational networks in the Maghreb region. Importantly, however, the impact of the violence has produced a radicalized segment of the population on the *domestic* front—and one that is desensitized to violence. The state has, in effect, lost its "sacred position." Prisons and the police no longer evoke feelings of fear: "People see that there is impunity everywhere. Too much terror and autocracy makes the instruments of state power less effective."[32]

Therefore, inclusive strategies, such as they are, have not truly altered the positions of radical Islamists—they, and moderate and radical elements of the FIS, were merely sidelined from politics. Inclusive strategies do appear, however, to have encouraged sustained moderation among groups that were already pragmatic in their doctrine, which is a positive development.

But the co-option of Islamists through institutional mechanisms may have done more to create fissures and deepen divisions among societal groups, for none seem completely content with limited political representation and participation. Though Algeria may not lapse again into civil war, its leadership may have to deal with levels of low-grade violence over the longer term, as violent extremists continue their battle with the regime. Yet there is a wider implication for domestic violence on regional stability. Violent Islamist groups, faced with the inability to fully reconstitute themselves domestically, will likely maintain their

[32] Author interview, Algiers, Algeria, February 21, 2007.

efforts to expand their transnational networks in North Africa and the African Sahel. Therefore, they will continue to pose a challenge to both domestic and regional security.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Morocco

Introduction

Situated in close proximity to Algeria and Tunisia, where liberalization is either limited or in retreat, Morocco's political opening places the country among the better examples of political reform in the region. Initiatives adopted over the last decade saw an expanded role for political parties and other civil society actors, improvements in the status of women, and, significantly, greater inclusion of Islamists. However, an overview of Morocco's experience shows that the government's inclination to manage democratic transition by imposing limitations on the liberalization process mutes the substance and consistent implementation of reforms, with potentially dangerous consequences for future violence in the country.

Trends in Liberalization

While recent changes in Morocco are often attributed to the country's new reform-minded monarch, King Mohammed VI,[1] liberalization measures actually began under his predecessor and father, King Hassan II. As in many Middle Eastern countries, economic crises and political paralysis during the 1980s were catalysts for change. The Moroccan political system, characterized by patron-client networks, ineffective

[1] Mohammed VI ascended to the throne in July 1999, after the death of his father, King Hassan II.

political parties, widespread human rights abuses, and massive poverty, severely discredited the regime, which was associated with corruption and repression.

The 1990s saw somewhat of a turning point for liberalization in Morocco. Deteriorating economic conditions during the 1980s and early 1990s sparked food riots and protests that were as much as about material survival as they were a critique of regime governance. The demonstrations were a "warning shot across the bow" for King Hassan II, who adopted a series of reforms to address widespread discontent and bolster the legitimacy of his unpopular regime. Liberalizing reforms were instituted that gave some protections in the area of human rights and allowed representation of the Islamists in parliament and government. Changes extended to the constitution as well. Amendments in 1992 and 1996 were introduced, for example, to encourage greater party participation and broader political space for civil society, including religious organizations.[2] Hassan II also introduced *alternance* after the 1997 elections, which was an invitation to oppositionists to form a coalition government. Despite this effort to take Morocco in a democratic direction, the monarchy nevertheless maintained a monopoly of Morocco's political institutions.

It was not until after 1999, however, that the liberalization process in Morocco acquired energy. The death of Hassan II brought the young new monarch, Mohammed VI, to the throne, and he accelerated liberalization throughout the 2000s, with the promise of bringing a final end to Morocco's "38 years of lead."[3]

One of the first major initiatives during the early 2000s was the creation of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (IER), a human rights organization intended to address the most sensitive violations—specifically, instances of disappearances, torture, and murder that the Moroccan state was accused of under Hassan II. In 2005, the commis-

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[2] This boded well for both moderate and militant Islamists, who took advantage of the reinvigoration of public life to criticize the failure of the "tolerated opposition to deal with the concerns and demands of average Moroccans" (author interview with Justice and Development Party (PJD) member, Ifrane, Morocco, January 18, 2007).

[3] This label was used by Moroccans to describe the oppressiveness of Hassan's rule. Even Hassan himself used the phrase.

sion successfully organized public hearings in which victims of state oppression could openly share their experience, a move that was considered a step forward in the country's liberalization effort.

Despite progress during this period, terrorist attacks on May 16, 2003, loudly signaled dissatisfaction with such efforts. Importantly, the bombings, which killed 43 persons, called attention to the potential for violent dissent among the portion of the economically excluded population that co-exists alongside the wealthy, modern segments of the economy. To counter claims of neglect, the monarchy and elites adopted fighting the causes of poverty and associated frustration as a major national priority. Two years after the attacks, these concerns found their expression in the launching of a national initiative for human development, officially called the Human Development Initiative (INDH), and what Mohammed VI calls his *projet de règne*. Under the INDH, accountable government and increasing powers to the parliament are seen as effective ways of dealing with underdevelopment, and they are also openly echoed in the liberal press.

Another noteworthy development is the revision of the *mudawanna*, or personal status code governing familial relations in 2004. Improving on only minor changes adopted in 1993, the reformed law outlaws polygamy, gives women a greater share of inheritance, and imposes stricter conditions for seeking divorce. The reform of the code came on the heels of a 2002 electoral initiative that encouraged greater political representation and participation for women. The government instituted a 10 percent quota for women representatives in parliament. As a consequence, the 2002 national elections welcomed an unprecedented 33 female parliamentarians. The electoral initiative of 2002 also included a reform law that introduced a system of proportional representation. Under the 2002 formula, larger parties have an opportunity to win at least a seat each in each district, while smaller parties have an opportunity to win more. The goal of the plan was to increase the role of smaller parties.

Arguably, Morocco's reforms have created a climate of openness that has permitted greater participation, activism, and the airing of grievances in comparison to the past. However, liberal initiatives have not transformed Morocco into a democracy. Reforms have not

translated into substantially greater autonomy for political parties and other civil society actors, and they have left the traditional balance of power between the government and societal forces essentially unaltered. Morocco's liberalization process has been carefully managed by the state, with the aim of maintaining executive control and traditional power structures. Resting on historical foundations as *Amir al-Mu'minin*, or Commander of the Faithful, the king is the country's supreme religious and political authority, sitting atop an extensive system of patronage that operates as the king's informal bureaucracy.[4] Despite legislation enhancing the role of parties, they have little autonomy, while elections guarantee government party control of parliament. The 2002 electoral law, though it encouraged multipartyism, has had fractionalizing effects that tend to produce parliaments with no clear majority, thereby enhancing the power of the king. In addition, the monarch ultimately has the power to approve all legislation, make all political appointments, dissolve parliament, and declare states of emergency. The king also has unlimited authority to regulate civil society actors. For Islamists, this means that the king has the power to deem them illegal, relegating them to the political margins if they are perceived as a threat.

Such is the fate of the conservative Islamist party al-'Adl wa-l-Ihsan (also known as the Justice and Charity party), led by Shaykh Abdelsalam Yassine. As Morocco's largest hard-line Islamist party, the organization is a vocal critic of the government.[5] Having earned a following among the young, urban poor during the late 1990s, al-'Adl wa-l-Ihsan's condemnation and rejection of the current political system prompted a legal ban on the organization. The moderate Justice and Development Party (PJD) has fared much better by comparison. Currently the country's most significant tolerated opposition force, the PJD accepts the monarchy's religious and legal status as well as the existing political order. While divergent currents within the PJD system are

4 Yacoubian (2007).

5 The party speaks against corruption, political oppression, and social inequality. Staunchly conservative in ideology, Yassine asserts that the solution to Morocco's problems is to "Islamicize" society and oppose the monarchy as an institution.

more critical, the more moderate tendency currently prevails. This has likely aided the party in its electoral successes. In 2002, the party was the third-largest bloc in parliament, holding 42 of 325 seats. Though expectations were high that the PJD would sweep the 2007 contest, it performed only marginally better amid record low turnout (37 percent voted; the party earned just 47 seats).

Even in the area of human rights, where the king is credited with fostering the most progress, the opportunity for change is hindered by poorly empowered institutions. The IER is not mandated to pursue suspected perpetrators on behalf of the victims, the logic being that these are legal powers of the courts that the commission should not assume.[6] The IER has been criticized for lack of transparency, a lack of constitutional recommendations, and for being biased toward the individualization of human rights abuses. In reality, they were related to a period of political confrontation between the monarchy and its opponents.[7] Moroccan human rights organizations have published regular criticism of the commission's concepts and practices.[8] As an article in the *New York Times* reviewed in Morocco's independent press reveals, the IER could not reveal that the monarchy is responsible for past abuses. With torture still in practice, trials for security forces were not recommended, nor has the king expressed formal excuses.[9]

Morocco's occupation of the Western Sahara is also relevant in this regard. Morocco has been accused of stalling on holding referenda in the occupied territory that would allow the Saharawi population to vote on their status: to be a part of Morocco or to be an independent

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6 Author interview with Moroccan professor and analyst, Ifrane, Morocco, January 19, 2007.

7 In a report submitted to the king in December 2005, recommendations for how best to avoid future violation of human rights also did not mention constitutional changes, but stressed instead issues of education of security officials. This information was confirmed in a personal interview with Moroccan professor and analyst, Ifrane, Morocco, January 19, 2007.

8 These include the Association Marocaine des Droits Humains and more elitist Organisation Marocaine des Droits de l'Homme. See Organisation Marrocaine des Droits Humains (2008).

9 *Le Journal Hebdomadaire ,* commentary, March 25–April 3, 2006, p. 3.

entity. The government has avoided a political solution to the problem, arguing that it has a legal right to the territory, in rejection of the right to determination, a principal upheld by the United Nations. In the meantime, human rights observers accuse Morocco of abuses against Saharawi advocates. Supporters have been unlawfully detained, tortured, and frequently denied access to legal processes. The occupation has long engendered resentment in the Western Sahara as activists protest occupation. This is usually met with harsh military responses.[10]

The liberalization project in Morocco has been further undermined by antiterrorism legislation passed in the wake of the May 16, 2003, attacks. The new laws, approved by parliament just a few days after the bombings, gave the government expansive powers to stem "threats to national security." Individuals, particularly Islamists, suspected of participating in violent activity were subject to arrests, indefinite detainment, and harassment. Security forces arrested 2,100 Islamists on charges of terrorism, with most being subjected to trials described as unfair and unconstitutional.[11] The trials culminated in 93 convictions.[12] The legislation also gave the government the authority to tighten restrictions on civil society activity if it were deemed necessary. Consequently, the lack of individual rights and the lack of effective constitutional constraints have frequently evoked criticism against the government.[13]

Trends in Violent Activity

Although liberalization has contributed to keeping violence at low levels in Morocco, its inconsistent application has made the country vulnerable to attacks, albeit episodically. Part of the reason lies in how the Islamist movement evolved. The first well-organized Islamist movement in Morocco emerged during the 1970s and focused primarily on

[10] Informal interview with Polisario member, Rabat, Morocco, December 17, 2006.

[11] Amnesty International (2004).

[12] Author interview, Rabat, Morocco, February 28, 2007.

[13] Author interview, Rabat, Morocco, February 28, 2007.

religious education and the promotion of culture. Although Islamist groups also vocally opposed secular leftist and nationalist ideology, they were essentially nonviolent.

As in Algeria and the other countries, Islamic militancy in Morocco gained momentum during the 1980s in the wake of the Iranian Revolution and the Afghan war against the Soviets. Galvanized by these events, a number of Moroccan Islamists left the country to fight alongside the mujahideen in Afghanistan and in Iran. Dire domestic conditions, meanwhile, fueled grassroots support for radical Islamist groups such as al-'Adl wa-l-Ihsan, which openly questioned the religious legitimacy of the monarchy.

Concerned about the growing Islamist current, Hassan II invited Saudi Arabia to promote Wahabbism as an alternative religious ideology. It was a strategy that worked ultimately to the detriment of the government's intentions, for Moroccans who traveled to Saudi Arabia and participated in Saudi-funded organizations within Morocco became radicalized. Many who embraced the Salafi tradition began to become outspoken critics of the regime. A number also traveled to Afghanistan during the 1990s and joined those foreign Muslims who would become known as "Afghan Arabs."

It is in this context that the jihadi Moroccan Islamic Combat Group (MIGC) was established and we see terrorism emerging in Morocco, though at very low and episodic levels. Radicalization fueled by Iran, Afghanistan, and, by this time, the 1990 Gulf War, were catalysts for terrorism and other types of protest. In 1990, for example, an Iraqi diplomat was assassinated in protest of the Gulf War, and thousands of Moroccans also took the streets in rejection of Morocco's support of the United States in the conflict. An incident launched in 1994 by "des Fes" sought to destabilize the Moroccan economy, a reflection of dissatisfaction with domestic circumstances. The May 16, 2003, attacks, however, marked a turning point for violence in Morocco. The incident was the most deadly on record, killing 43 persons and prompting a decisive crackdown on Islamists.

A strong monarchy and effective security measures have contributed to limited terrorist violence in Morocco. Moreover, Islamist groups themselves have been traditionally weak and fragmented. The move-

ment has a leader that lays claim to being Amir al-Mu'minin, or Commander of the Faithful, a preeminent status that provides the monarchy with an historic, traditional, and religious prestige unmatched by Islamists. Legal measures have also suppressed Islamist groups, however, constraining their ability to mobilize.

More recent activity clearly shows that, despite attempts to keep violence at bay, Morocco has not been able to stop terrorist violence. Four attacks occurred in Casablanca in the spring and summer of 2007, including two thwarted incidents.[14] Around the same time, several terrorist cells were discovered in Fez and Meknes.

As with the other countries included in this study, radicalization of Moroccans who traveled to Afghanistan has undoubtedly contributed to greater militancy. The Casablanca and Madrid attacks are believed to have been implemented by the MIGC, whose core was formed from among the Afghan-Arabs. In another noteworthy trend, Islamists from Morocco have been implicated in the activities of terrorist cells and networks in other countries, such as France, Spain, and the United States. Some Moroccans experts are concerned that a retreat or stalling of democratization could lead to spawning of smaller cells or continued activity by existing groups.[15] None, however, are expected to mount an effective challenge to the state as in Algeria.

The following Islamists groups have been active in Morocco:

- *Moroccan Islamic Combatant Group:* This group was formed from mujahideen who fought in Afghanistan. A number of the group's members were trained in that country. The MIGC is dedicated to the creation of an Islamist state in Morocco and supports al-Qa'ida's objectives toward the United States and Western countries. The group shares members with al-Qa'ida and is an ally.

[14] Attacks since 2003 are telling in this regard. For example on March 11, 2007, there was a suicide bombing marking the three-year anniversary of the Madrid explosions. On April 10, three suicide bombers attempted an explosion inside an Internet café, and, on April 11, two suicide bombers detonated their devices near the U.S. Consulate.

[15] Author interview with Moroccan analyst, Rabat, Morocco, January 15, 2007.

- *Salafiyya Jihadiyya:* A terrorist group supposedly created in the mid-1990s committed to ousting corrupt Arab regimes through the use of violence. Some believe that the group is one of the largest in Morocco; the organization consists of an assortment of several groups (Takfir wa Hijra, al-Takfir Bidun Hijra, Ansar Islam, Moroccan Afghans, Assirat Mustaqim). Yet, there are doubts as to whether Salafiyya Jihadiyya is an actual group and may instead be an arbitrary label used by Moroccan authorities to pursue all Islamists. The government believes that it is based in Morocco, allied with MIGC, and may receive guidance from Algeria's GSPC/AQIM.
- *Takfir wa Hijra:* This is considered more a pan-religious group or cult than a formal organization. Takfir wa Hijra has members in a number of countries, including Morocco; Ayman Al-Zawahiri and the late-Abu Musab al-Zarqawi are believed to be members.
- *des Fes:* A violent Islamist cell in Morocco that is based in France.

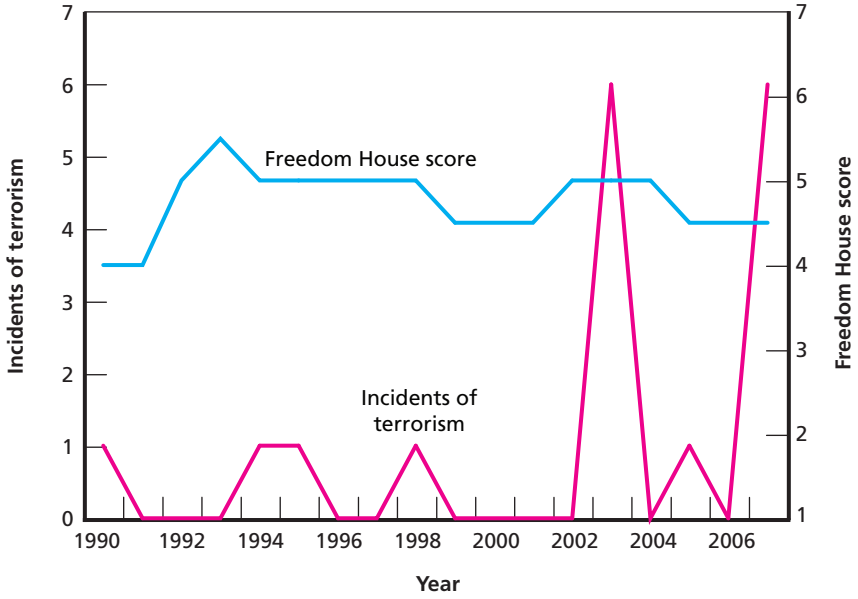
Comparing Levels of Freedom and Terrorism

Given the low levels of violence in Morocco, can we conclude that the near absence of violence is associated with political change? A quantitative assessment (shown in Figure 7.1) suggests that, while there does seem to be a trend substantiating this claim, liberalizing initiatives have not been a completely effective buffer against violence. Morocco earned a generally favorable FH rating of 4.5 in 1990, the period when the monarchy, as previously mentioned, instituted a number of reforms. Morocco saw one incident of terrorism, in which an Iraqi diplomat was stabbed to death outside of his home, possibly in protest to the 1990 Gulf War.[16]

However, further observation of the time line shows that all violent activity is not associated with advancement of the liberalization.

[16] The incident may have also been in protest to Morocco's support of the United States in the war.

Figure 7.1
Morocco: Freedom House Score and Number of Terrorism Incidents, by Year



NOTE: A score of 1 indicates the highest degree of freedom, and 7 the least.
RAND *MG772-7.1*

In fact, incidents occurring during a slight backsliding in liberalization or at least during a stalling of the process (with FH scores ranging from 5.5 to 5.0) speak to a variety of motives, not all of which are in rejection of domestic conditions. A 1995 assassination of a Russian diplomat was in reaction to the Chechen struggle. Moreover, terrorist actions have not always emanated from domestic sources, and not all protests against the state have been violent. For example, vandalism of a Moroccan resort town in 1998 was believed to have been instigated by an *Algerian* group. As for attacks that were more clearly in response to political and economic circumstances in this time period, a diplomat was assassinated in 1990 in protest of Morocco's occupation of the Western Sahara, and an attack in 1994 sought to destabilize the economy.

The death of Hassan II in 1999 and the ascension of his son, Mohammed VI, ushered in a series of new initiatives from 1999 to

2004 that included greater freedoms for the press, civil society measures, and a number of reforms intended to enhance the role of political parties, as well as the status of women in society. According to MIPT figures, terrorist activity during this period of opening was absent until the 2003 bombing in Casablanca.

Ironically, the most serious attack in Morocco's history occurred during a period of significant political opening. At first glance, the Casablanca attacks—analogous in Morocco to 9/11 in the United States—might be relegated to the category of those that are in response to a lack of democratization. However, a closer look at the targeting might also lead to the conclusion that the bombings were as much a protest against Morocco's relationship with the United States and the West as they were a commentary on domestic conditions. The attacks targeted Jewish landmarks and sites frequented by Western tourists. Thus, the 2003 bombings had an anti-Western and anti-Israel message as well, which suggests that domestic political and economic opportunity as a cause of terrorism provides only a partial explanation. Still, as Moroccan observers point out, domestic conditions are clearly important for understanding the demographic characteristics of who participates in terrorist activities and are a dynamic that should not be underestimated.[17] Frustration with corruption and personal economic circumstances contributes to alienation and disaffection with the regime such that violence becomes the only viable means of expression.[18] Another Moroccan observer notes that it is not coincidental that most attacks in Morocco occur in Casablanca. It is in the country's commercial capital, where the gap between the rich and poor is most pronounced.[19]

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[17] Several of the bombers implicated in the 2007 attacks are from Sidi Moumen, a severely impoverished neighborhood of Casablanca.

[18] Author interview with Moroccan professor and analyst, Ifrane, Morocco, January 19, 2007.

[19] Author interview with Moroccan professor and analyst, Casablanca, Morocco, March 17, 2007.

Assessing Effects

Institutional Effects

Has Morocco fared better than Algeria in creating institutions that mitigate tensions and correct uneven balances of power? Electoral processes in Morocco appear to have addressed complaints of political exclusion of at least moderate Islamist groups, thereby mitigating destabilizing militancy.[20] Part of the success is attributed to the historic weaknesses of the Islamist movement in Morocco. The monarchy has never been seriously challenged by Islamists. The weakness of the Islamist movement in Morocco is partly attributed to strategies adopted by the state. The monarchy has shrewdly used a combination of cooption and what could be called "flexible authoritarianism" to maintain a monopoly over the political and religious space in Morocco. The king's religious and political status helps him remain in step with Islamists. For example, during the 1980s, Hassan II controlled religious discourse and symbols and promoted religious councils, including the council of the *'ulama'*. Hassan II also created religious institutions and implemented various religious practices, such as prayer in schools, and advocated a conservative personal status code that kept in step with Islamist preferences.

King Mohammed has also demonstrated the capacity and willingness to use the same types of controls as his father. In response to the Casablanca bombings, for example, the monarch brought all mosques under the wing of authorities in an effort to monitor what it perceives to be the central cause of violent extremism in the country. A religious body was also established to monitor textbooks, and guides have also been provided to the military.[21]

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[20] Al-Adl wa Al-Ihsan, a militant Islamist group in Morocco, is banned from participation in politics. This organization has increased its influence over the years. It calls for the return through legal means of the rule of God. Headed by Abdelram Yassine, Al-Adl wa Al-Ihsan identifies more with its Algerian counterpart, Hamas, than with the Salafi-jihadi GIA or GSPC.

[21] Previously, about 37 of mosques operated independent of authorities ("Morocco's Tentative Tap-Dance with Terrorism" (2004).

The king has also used a strategy of co-option, permitting the political participation of moderate Islamist parties, namely the PJD. This appears to have influenced a more moderate posture among PJD members. In exchange for legalization and inclusion in political life, the PJD has opted to engage in *rapprochement* with the government instead of confrontation. The PJD has agreed to accept the Moroccan constitution, pluralism, and the role of the king as Amir al-Mu'minin. The monarchy, for its part, benefits from this arrangement as well. By co-opting the Islamist opposition, he avoids running afoul of public preferences—approximately 47 percent of Moroccans said they would support the PJD in the 2007 elections[22]—and at the same time, enters into partnership that allows careful management of moderate Islamists.

Though the PJD's performance in the September 2007 elections was lower than projected,[23] the party nonetheless received the second-highest percentage of votes, an unprecedented moment in Moroccan politics. The overall turnout for the election was alarmingly low, however (37 percent, down from a similarly disappointing 52 percent in 2002). The outcome suggests that not only does the PJD appear to lack a resounding mandate, but the public is still clearly disenchanted with the political system, despite recent significant reforms. Although political engineering is clearly a source of the PJD's weak showing,[24] the public also appears to have grown sour on political parties as an institution, no matter their orientation. According to public opinion surveys conducted just before the 2007 elections, only half (52 percent) had confidence in the government as an institution to deal with the country's problems effectively, and even smaller percentages felt the

[22] Unpublished 2006 nationwide survey of Moroccans, carried out under the auspices of International Republican Institute and cited in *Le Journal*, May 2007.

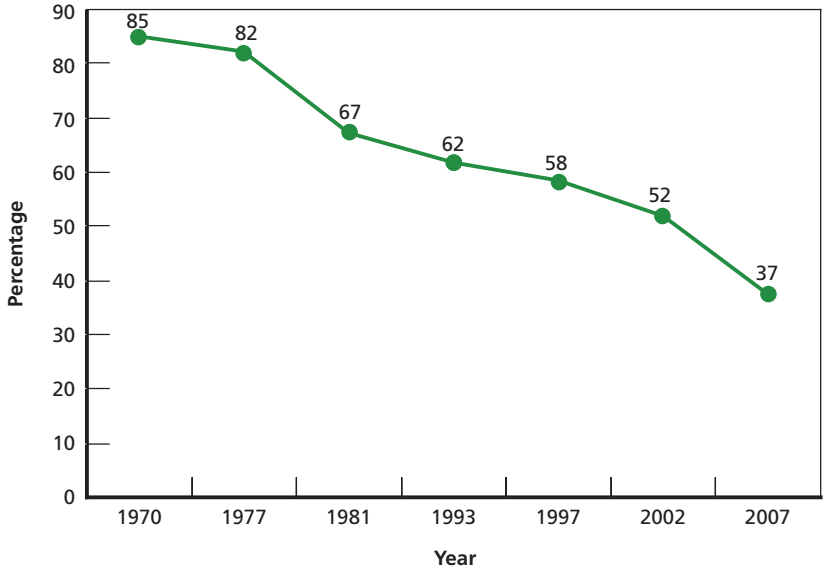
[23] Observers estimated that the PJD would take 80 of 325 seats, rather than just 47.

[24] The PJD won the highest percentage of votes on regional and national lists, but it failed to achieve a majority over Istaqlal (the Independence Party). Under the new laws, it is extremely difficult for any party to acquire a strong majority (McFaul and Wittes, 2008, p. 24).

same about courts (33 percent) and political parties (24 percent). Two-thirds, by contrast, voiced confidence in the religious establishment.[25]

Pessimism is also fairly widespread regarding the influence of ordinary Moroccans and political actors on the political process. Most (60 percent) believe that ordinary citizens have no effect on political decisionmaking and that no matter what party wins elections, it will never make a significant difference in political outcomes (55 percent). Such views are echoed by most Moroccan elites, who doubt that key institutions such as the media, the judiciary, and parliament function with independence. Many are also concerned that corruption laws are only weakly enforced and that reform of all institutions is ultimately necessary.[26] The overall effect is increasing political apathy over the decades, as illustrated in Figure 8.1.

Figure 8.1
Voter Turnout Rates, 1970–2007



RAND *MG772-8.1*

[25] Unpublished 2006 nationwide survey of Moroccans, carried out under the auspices of International Republican Institute and cited in *Le Journal*, May 2007.

[26] International Foundation for Elections Systems (IFES) survey conducted among 150 political, media, and judiciary elites in Rabat, Casablanca, and Marrakech during 2005–2006.

Thus, while institutions in Morocco have certainly become more open, generally contributing to the mitigation of violent trends, the consensus favors an expansion and deepening of institutional reform in ways that enhance representation, expression, and participation. Interestingly, one expert argued that although the low turnout in the recent elections might be interpreted as a lack of confidence in institutions and critique of the state, it could also be interpreted as citizens perceiving greater freedom in exercising their choice to vote or *not* to vote.

> Under the old regime, people were afraid not to vote. It could be that now that this new monarch has consolidated his power, that people feel more comfortable than under the previous king choosing to stay home on election day.[27]

Whether the electoral turnout is interpreted as a form of protest and civic activism or not, it is dramatically indicative of the depth of alienation.[28]

Domestic concerns also extend to the status of human rights in Morocco. Groups that cannot be controlled are subject to repression. State actions in the aftermath of the 2003 Casablanca bombings are illustrative. The government, following the lead of other countries, passed antiterrorism legislation only days after May 16. The new laws gave the government expansive powers and, in the view of one expert, turned counterterrorism operations into a political purge.[29] Also of concern was the suspiciously sudden discovery of numerous cells "conveniently" called Salafiyya Jihadiyya.[30] Consequently, the lack of individual rights and the lack of effective constitutional constraints have been other frequently evoked criticisms against the government.[31]

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[27] Author interview with a Moroccan professor of anthropology, Ifrane, Morocco, February 27, 2007.

[28] McFaul and Wittes (2008, p. 29).

[29] Author interview, Rabat, Morocco, February 28, 2007.

[30] Author interview with PJD member, Ifrane, Morocco, January 19, 2007.

[31] Author interview, Rabat, Morocco, February 28, 2007.

The legislation also resulted in increased censoring of the Moroccan press. Since 2003, a number of journalists have been fired, fined, or officially charged with various offenses, despite stated commitments by the government to promote a liberal press. Many complain of growing "inconsistency between the palace line which boasts democracy" and the attacks endured by journalists."[32] Tellingly, an editor interviewed by this author was later charged with publishing phrases that were moral, indecent, and disrespectful toward to king.[33]

Normative Effects

The willingness of the PJD to cooperate with the state suggests a move toward greater moderation for this Islamist party. The party has softened its once provocative, sometimes violent rhetoric and has adopted a strategy of pragmatism. The change in posture is especially notable since the Casablanca attacks of 2003, likely due in part to fear of government reprisal and perhaps to ambitions to be involved in the political process. Yet it is important to point out that the PJD was not really a radical party to begin with. Thus, the assumption that the source of PJD moderation is institutional inclusion and strengthening democratic norms must not be overstated. The PJD has often compared itself with Turkey's Justice and Development Party (AKP) and Europe's Christian Democrats. According to some observers, the party also objects to being called an Islamist party, instead opting to describe itself as an organization with an "Islamic reference."[34] The party, like many organizations in the country, is also influenced by the Sufi rather than Salafist orientation (as is the AKP), and this has also contributed to its more moderate stance. In addition, party members are still very much aware of the detrimental effects of extremist parties, recalling neighboring Algeria's bloody civil war.[35] The PJD, moreover, has no contacts with Hamas or the Egyptian MB. The party has managed to

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[32] *Reporters Sans Frontiers* editor-in-chief Hajar Smouni, quoted in *Liberation*, August 8, 2007.

[33] Author interview with editor, March 17, 2007.

[34] McFaul and Wittes (2008, p. 25).

[35] McFaul and Wittes (2008).

carve alliances with the National Labor Union of Morocco (UNTM) and Movement of Unity of Reform (MUR). Each of these enhances the credibility of the PJD's economic and religious messages, respectively, while also augmenting the pragmatic and modernist character of the organization.[36]

Although the PJD is committed to nonviolence, whether the party will remain moderate if it achieves power remains to be seen. PJD Secretary General Saad Eddine al-Othmani, several years ago, made comments advocating the creation of an Islamic state in Morocco. This rhetoric was quickly softened after the 2003 attacks, in an apparent attempt by the party to censure itself. The PJD's views on various social issues, such as women's and minority rights, individual freedoms, and power sharing, are less clear, though the party seems to be more tolerant on these concerns.[37]

If the PJD's attitudes toward pluralist policies are less clear, the party does appear to demonstrate an inclination to apply democratic principles to its *internal* processes—perhaps more so than other parties in Morocco. The PJD's debates are transparent, and when decisions are undertaken, they are usually resolved. Positions of leadership change hands, and, in the event of intra-party disputes, democratic methods are used to address such problems.[38] Essentially, liberalization has increased the regime's tolerance for opposition forces, and has led to moderate parties' willingness to work within the mainstream institutional frameworks rather than pursue a more confrontational path.

Recent evidence likewise points to changes in behavior among the staunchest of oppositionists, the radical al-'Adl wa-l-Ihsan. Despite al-'Adl wa-l-Ihsan's refusal to participate in elections, the group is considering becoming a political party to reap the benefits of participating in politics and end its standoff with the regime.[39] The organization's younger, more middle-class professionals, representing the "participa-

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[36] "Morocco's Fundamentalist Muslim Leaders Exploit Resentment of the Poor," 2007.

[37] McFaul and Wittes (2008, p. 26).

[38] McFaul and Wittes (2008).

[39] During 2007, leader Shaykh Abdelsalam Yassine supposedly sent a letter of fraternity inviting all political forces to work to end to "the reigning of decadence" and join together

tionist" or inclusionist component, seek to have a say in politics and are likely to become more vocal in their demands after Yassine cedes power. Yet, this move to accept the system may splinter the already radical group into more extremist factions, as those who oppose the gesture may break off. Importantly, in the case of Al-Adl wa Al-Ihsan, inclusion may have more destabilizing effects than not.

Legitimacy

Has Morocco's style of "managed liberalization" strengthened state legitimacy? The historic prestige of the monarchy is, indeed, a strong foundation for ruler legitimacy in Morocco. The recent reforms instituted in Morocco thus far are seen as a positive development. The potential danger, however, seems to lie in the substance and content of current efforts. Specifically, the lack of meaningful reforms appears to be associated with ongoing episodic terrorist attacks. The monarchy's legitimacy remains, for the most, part intact, but continued corruption and lack of rule of law, in addition to massive economic disparities exacerbating the gap between rich and poor, will be major irritants for Islamists and will push a segment toward extremism. Domestic ills will remain a lightning rod for complaints among the more marginalized portions of the population. Indeed, it is no coincidence that the 2003 terrorist attacks in Morocco occurred in Casablanca, as have subsequent bombings. As the country's commercial center, Casablanca is also the area where poverty and economic exclusion are most pronounced.

One of the largest problems, however, still rests with application of rule of law. Though newer elections laws have enhanced party competition, an editor of a prominent magazine maintains that political and economic corruption are significant hurdles to democratization.[40] The level of corruption, he and other academics explain, is so widespread that it has created a cynicism and distrust among Moroccans.[41] He also points out that widespread poverty and unemployment are

in a national pact ("Morocco's Fundamentalist Muslim Leaders Exploit Resentment of the Poor," 2007).

[40] Author interview, Rabat, Morocco, February 21, 2007.

[41] Author interview, Rabat, Morocco, February 21, 2007, and March 19, 2007.

increasing rather than shrinking.[42] As a consequence, the legitimacy of the country's institutions is undermined. Nowhere is this more notable than in attitudes toward political parties. In a 2007 preelection survey carried out in Casablanca, Fez, Meknes, and Rabat, the vast majority of Moroccans lacked confidence in political parties to meaningfully address a number of issues important to them. Importantly, a sizable portion cited corruption as the single most important problem facing Moroccans today.[43]

Conclusion

Liberalization and political inclusion in Morocco, backed by state controls, have contributed to moderation of radical groups and minimal levels of violence, at least in the short term. This, however, may not be enough to prevent future violence and terrorism. Controlled liberalization may cause democratic reforms to lose their legitimacy, which does little to ensure a stable environment.[44] More recent incidents of terrorism in Morocco suggest that over the long term, inconsistent reform processes are likely to foment continued violence and terrorism. While this may not occur in ways that destabilize the regime, it will almost certainly challenge regime credibility and give voice to Islamist critics of the regime. It remains to be seen whether liberalization will split those Islamist groups recently elected into the government. Hard-lined factions within the PJD oppose cooperating with the government. So long as the moderate wing prevails, internal fissures can be held in check.

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[42] Morocco's unemployment rate is between 20 and 30 percent. In 2003, the country earned what officials considered a discouraging Human Development Index score of 126, well below Algeria, which was rated 107. There was only marginal improvement in 2004, according to the 2006 report: Morocco earned a 123, while Algeria earned a 102 for that year (United Nations Human Development Programme, 2004b, 2006).

[43] Survey of Moroccan Citizens (2007).

[44] McFaul and Wittes (2008, p. 30).

CHAPTER EIGHT

Conclusion

This study has sought to move beyond the polarized debate about whether democracy stops terrorism, has nothing to do with terrorism, or even exacerbates terrorism. Instead, we have examined the effects of reform processes in the Middle East over 15 years, asking whether such processes influenced the choices of domestic actors to engage in or support acts of terrorism or other political violence. We did so by delineating the causal logics usually assumed, but often not articulated, that in theory are expected to link democratic practices to more pacific behavior. This analysis led us to identify three central areas where democracy is expected to undercut terrorism, according to democracy proponents: by espousing norms of tolerance, by creating functioning and inclusive institutional structures, and by increasing the legitimacy of the political system. We also considered arguments suggesting that the destabilizing nature of transitional states may make them more inclined toward war (and applied such logic to the terrorism arena).

Because democracy is not established in any of our six empirical cases, the effects of liberalization are mixed and may not appear immediately. The legitimacy brought about through liberalization measures (particularly if reforms are viewed as substantive and genuine) can have a positive effect on reducing support for political violence, even if it cannot completely eliminate radical extremists already fully committed to a violent path. Yet limited and controlled reforms in the Arab world often bring about intolerance and exclusionary political systems, contributing to, rather than undermining, support for political violence. Controlled state processes and effective security institutions

and repression have managed to contain levels of political violence in many instances, challenging the notion that transitional systems are, by nature, destabilizing. That said, the destabilizing effects of transitional systems might be more apparent over the long run—in essence, a "delayed effect"[1]—when state policies of control and repression run their course. If reforms are not viewed as genuine or have been reversed, long-term stability may be at risk, no matter how effective short-term co-option strategies may be.

In short, the empirical cases illustrate the varied effects of reform processes over time and in different contexts. Yet despite significant differences across cases given the diversity of geographic location, nature of regimes, ethnic and tribal identifications, and socioeconomic conditions, our study illustrates some important common trends. One of the most critical commonalities among cases is the finding that, even if limited reform measures can have some moderating effects on key domestic actors, backtracking on reform and a widespread perception that the political process lacks legitimacy can prove destabilizing. The most negative aspects of political reform processes in the Arab world (e.g., exclusionary political systems, intolerance, and sectarian, tribal, and ethnic divisions) are the result of their limited and incomplete nature, not their mere existence.

Liberalization in the Arab World Can Both Contain and Exacerbate Political Violence

Political reform can co-opt and moderate opposition forces and marginalize hard-liners, but not indefinitely if reforms fail to produce tangible results. Allowing mass-appeal opposition movements, including Islamists, to participate legally in the political process has, in some cases, fostered moderation and prevented more violent tactics of confrontation against the state. In the case of Morocco, for instance,

[1] The authors thank Marina Ottaway for raising the delayed-effects dilemma, whereby the consequences of either repressive policies or political openings may not be apparent for some years.

the government has permitted the political participation of moderate Islamist parties, leading them toward accommodation with the government instead of confrontation. The historic prestige and legitimacy of the Moroccan king has made accommodation and co-option of Islamists easier and allows the monarchy to maintain a monopoly over the political and religious space.

Similarly, Jordan's inclusion of the Islamist opposition in the political process has had a moderating effect, undercutting support for more radical elements within and outside the party. However, growing confrontation between the government and the Islamist opposition in Jordan is providing ammunition for more hard-line elements, who question the benefits of participating in a political process that is viewed as corrupt and illegitimate. An unstable regional environment also creates a ripe breeding ground for recruitment to extremist groups. The potential for hard-liners within the MB to radicalize and move toward violent tactics is a serious concern among analysts and government officials in Jordan. Jordanians do not want to follow the Egyptian example, where extremist splinter groups emerged from imprisoned MB members, so, despite growing tension, many in government still recognize the need to accommodate the opposition in order to stave off more radical alternatives.

In Bahrain, the November 2006 parliamentary election bolstered the ranks of the pro-participation party, al-Wifaq, while siphoning support from the militant al-Haq movement. But al-Wifaq's inability to produce tangible results from its parliamentary tenure and the resulting rise in frustration are pushing more Shi'a back to al-Haq. Moreover, splitting the opposition can be destabilizing, as the more radical wing may be tempted to use violence to play a spoiler role and demonstrate its continued viability on the streets.

Political reforms have had little effect in promoting norms of tolerance; if anything, they often exacerbate existing societal cleavages. Although reform processes have, in some cases, had a moderating effect on the opposition, their limited and controlled nature—and the fractured context in which they are operating in the Arab world—have resulted in a distinct absence of norms of tolerance and pluralism across all cases. To be sure, some limited success is appar-

ent. Opening up the political process in Jordan, for example, forced the major opposition group (the Islamic Action Front) into positions that required tolerance for opposing groups as they began creating new political coalitions with factions holding vastly different worldviews (e.g., liberals and communists). But fears of growing Islamic power among the government and secular opposition movements are also increasing intolerance of opposing groups and leading to crackdowns on freedom of expression. Similar effects are apparent in Egypt, which suffers from significant tension and violence between its Muslim and Coptic communities. Copts are generally opposed to any changes that would give Islamist groups further power (as are secularist groups), as they are unsure about whether political liberalization would actually lead to further protection of minority rights. In Bahrain, the holding of elections in 2006—particularly in the context of sectarian strife in Iraq, Hizballah's war with Israel, and the disclosure of the Bandar Report (an alleged government plan to co-opt Sunnis in order to marginalize the Shi'a in Bahrain)—exacerbated sectarian tensions and intolerance of other groups. In Algeria, although there is an appreciation for democracy, it does not appear to translate into wholesale tolerance for Islamists, in large part because of the lingering effects of the civil war.

Political institutions in the Arab world are controlled and exclusionary. To be sure, opening up the process to allow for new institutional mechanisms, such as political parties and elected parliaments, has had some moderating effects on opposition forces in several cases and, most critically, has prevented the formation and support of more radical groups. For instance, although continually viewed with suspicion by Bahraini Sunnis, one Shi'a opposition party largely abandoned its radical agenda in the 1990s and has participated in elections and has pushed for political reform via peaceful channels. But institutional openings are often tightly controlled and limited. In the Jordanian case, election laws are structured to systematically exclude and marginalize the Islamist opposition, breeding resentment and frustration. In Algeria, institutional mechanisms, such as the official ban on Islamist parties from elections and political life, have forced the Islamic movement to the sidelines. Similarly, Islamic opposition groups have been consistently excluded from political participation in Egypt.

In the Gulf cases, democratic structures are often viewed as "institutionalized sectarianism." Nowhere is this more apparent than in Bahrain, where the king unilaterally revised the 1973 constitution, subordinating the elected parliament to an appointed upper house and depriving it of any ability to formally introduce new legislation or exert financial oversight over government ministries. The effective neutering of this body, along with electoral gerrymandering designed to ensure Sunni dominance, spurred a widespread Shi'a and leftist boycott of the 2002 parliamentary and municipal elections. The result was a National Assembly that was disproportionately dominated by Sunni Muslim groups. The November 2006 parliamentary elections were also seriously marred by the disclosure of a semi-official government study that outlined an elaborate plan to rig the elections and ensure continued Sunni dominance through the co-option of Salafi and MB candidates and, more egregiously from the Shi'a point of view, the rapid naturalization of foreign Sunnis of Syrian, Saudi, Jordanian, Yemeni, and Pakistani origin.

Cosmetic reforms and backtracking can erode regime legitimacy and contribute to political violence. Of all the causal logics linking democracy to terrorism, the legitimacy argument appears to be the most critical factor even in these cases of limited reforms. In Jordan, many analysts argue that a belief in the system, even if imperfect, has at least indirectly reduced radicalization and a resort to violence. While political reform may not have a direct effect on existing radical terrorist groups, even limited reforms can help "pull the rug out" from under the extremists if opposition groups and the broader public believe that the system is legitimately addressing their concerns and interests. In Saudi Arabia, the National Dialogues initially provided some legitimizing effect by enabling powerful Sahwa clerics to be co-opted into proto-democratic institutions and air their grievances via petitions. This was critical in setting the stage for their cooperation in the regime's counterterror efforts and their endorsement of the 2005 municipal council elections. In other cases, political reform has also helped generate societal support for government counterterrorism measures against extremist groups.

But the lack of legitimacy stemming from undeveloped reform measures and associated rights or, just as often, the reversal of even limited gains, increases the appeal of extremist groups. Because controlled political reforms often foster exclusionary norms and institutions (as discussed above), the legitimacy of the process is under strain across the region. Polling in the broader region suggests that publics desire democratic governance but are consistently disappointed with their leaderships' failure to deliver. The growing public sphere and new sources for information may only be exacerbating the gap between rising expectations for democracy and the disappointing reality of its absence.

A good indicator of eroding legitimacy of regimes' reform efforts is the growing political apathy among Arab publics: Several recent elections, from Morroco to Jordan, have had low voter turnouts. In Morocco, even though the monarchy's legitimacy remains largely intact, the continued corruption and lack of rule of law (in addition to massive economic disparities) are major irritants for Islamists. Security crackdowns in Jordan following terrorist attacks and concerns about instability spilling over from Iraq have led to a growing confrontation between the government and the Islamist opposition and reversals on key areas of reform. The potential for increased political violence is a serious possibility in the coming years, in part because of the eroding legitimacy of the system. The most dramatic example of democratic reversal leading to violence is, of course, the Algerian case, where the nullification of democratic elections in 1992 (where the Islamic Salvation Front was poised to win) led to the explosion of a civil war that engulfed the country in violence for nearly a decade.

In the Gulf, the anemic power of elected bodies also damages regime legitimacy and contributes to violence. Bahrain's main agent of political violence and street protests, the al-Haq movement, depends largely on its ability to mobilize grassroots support among disaffected Shi'a by portraying government institutions as illegitimate. In leaflets distributed in mosques during a wave of bombings in mid-April 2006, for instance, it stated that violence would continue until Shi'a were better represented in a parliament that was fully endowed with legislative power. In both the Bahrain and Saudi cases, the push for full participatory politics has stalled because of arguments against rapid

democratization due to an "immature," fractious, and illiberal body politic. Parliaments are viewed as surreptitious channels for Islamist domination, resulting in a web of bylaws and rules that prevent them from exercising any real power. This invariably has led to cynicism and charges of hypocrisy, damaging whatever legitimacy the initial holding of elections might have conferred on the regime.

In short, political inclusion may not convert radicals into moderates, but it may help *prevent* moderates from turning radical, while diminishing broader support for groups advocating violent extremism. But the lack of meaningful reforms or deliberalization can alienate mainstream domestic groups and bolster hard-line factions within opposition parties, who may no longer see any value in working within the system. Likewise, backtracking may facilitate support for even more radical groups.

Limited reforms are not always destabilizing, at least in the short term. If political reforms have, in practice, had a poor record in terms of producing real political inclusion, tolerance, and legitimacy, in many instances they have still not proved as destabilizing as we might expect. This is particularly the case given that such processes are often pursued as part of a larger regime survival strategy of accommodation and repression. In Bahrain, Jordan, and Saudi Arabia, for example, the competency of the regimes' security services played a major role in either curtailing or preventing terrorism and violence. In Bahrain, this was helped by the island's small size and population and the lack of an indigenous Afghan Arab cadre or a strong takfiri-jihadi ideological current, as well as Iran's decreasing interest in using political violence as a policy tool. In Saudi Arabia, a sudden cash windfall from oil profits aided counterterrorism in 2004. Moreover, the Saudi regime has proven more successful in bolstering its legitimacy through tribal patronage, intermarriage, and an artful mix of historical revisionism and pageantry, reflected in school textbooks and yearly nationalist celebrations.

While co-option and other government techniques of accommodation and repression can provide quick fixes to mitigate the destabilizing effects of reform processes, such tactics do not address long-term, underlying challenges and may just be pushing back the problem. For

example, the success of the Egyptian government in using repression to quell terrorism within its borders by the end of the 1990s may have inadvertently sent the extremists elsewhere. The perception that parliamentary structures and other "democratic" institutions are actually government-engineered mechanisms to benefit ruling regimes has resulted in a decline in perceptions of regime legitimacy, which may produce more extremism and violence in the future. Again and again, we see that the lack of substantive reforms provide justification for violent attacks against the state.

Rule of law and human rights are particularly critical factors in influencing calculations regarding political violence. Although all aspects of reform in the region have been limited, some elements provoke more concern and resentment than others, particularly challenges to the rule of law and human rights. For example, close observers of Egyptian politics and the state's struggle with violent groups view the protection of human rights and the rule of law as key elements of genuine democratization and as particularly important in boosting the legitimacy of the regime. In Bahrain, one of the most important, tangible initiatives that bolstered the credibility of the new emir when he came to power in 1999 appears to have been reforms in the judiciary, particularly the removal of the despised British chief of Bahraini security and increased freedom of the press. Author interviews revealed that prison reform, rule of law, human rights, freedom of expression, and a general improvement in the judiciary system are perceived as critical early steps to legitimizing the reform process. The nexus between legitimacy and judiciary reform appears to be borne out even in Saudi Arabia (the most authoritarian case examined in this study), where writings of Saudi jihadis themselves routinely attack the harshness and human rights abuses of the penitentiary system. Indeed, much of the kingdom's takfiri ideological current appears to have coalesced in prison. In the case of Algeria, the lack of adjudication procedures and implementation of justice with respect to the amnesty following the civil war undermines state legitimacy according to a number of NGO representatives. In survey research in Morocco, a sizable portion of respondents cites corruption as the single most important problem facing the country today. Public opinion polling in the broader region

also suggests that people associate democracy with greater freedoms, human rights, and rule of law.

There are many reasons for a rise or decline in radicalism and terrorism that are unrelated to reform processes. This study recognizes that a rise or decline in terrorism and other forms of political violence is not only related to reform processes. Correlations between levels of political and civil liberties and levels of terrorist violence are often indeterminate and miss other forms of political violence (such as riots and political protests among the Shi'a in Bahrain or in southern cities in Jordan). Aggregate data at the national level (such as that employed by Freedom House and the MIPT database) also do not show regional variations that may account for political violence and that are largely unrelated to political processes occurring at the national level.

The cases also demonstrate a number of other factors affecting levels of violence that are unrelated to internal reform processes. For example, the decline of Iranian-backed terrorism in Bahrain in the late 1990s was probably more rooted in Bahrain's external rapprochement with Iran and policy shifts inside Iran than internal measures. Similarly, the spike in violence that arose in mid-2003 inside Saudi Arabia likely resulted from regional developments, such as the return of Saudi veterans from the Afghan front and the Iraq war, rather than from the nominal internal reform process. In Morocco, the 2003 bombings in Casablanca are believed to be a response to Morocco's relationship with the United States and the West in the aftermath of the Iraq war as much as they are a protest against domestic conditions. Other factors that affected levels of terrorism in various cases (positively and negatively) include the effectiveness of state security services, the nature of jihadi cells within the country and their prior experience, the cohesiveness of opposition forces, other regional developments (e.g., the Iraq war, violence in the West Bank and Gaza, and the Lebanon conflict), negative public reactions to terrorist tactics, and broader socioeconomic conditions within the country.

Policy Implications: A Return to Realism or Realistic Democracy Promotion?

Because Iraq is associated, rightly or wrongly, with the Bush administration's newfound strategy after 9/11 of promoting democracy to stem terrorism, all subsequent democracy promotion efforts in the region are now suspect. Instability in Iraq has given regimes an excuse to halt liberalization efforts. Instead of the specter of Algeria (where democratic elections in the early 1990s led to years of bloody civil war), authoritarian regimes now have the specter of Iraq as cover to avoid pursuing genuine reforms. Islamist electoral gains in Egyptian and Palestinian elections (particularly the victory of HAMAS, which the United States and Europe consider a terrorist organization) provide further ammunition to those arguing against pressing democracy in this region.

And it is not just Arab governments who are pulling the reins on reform—many liberal and minority groups want the United States to stop emphasizing this issue. Some believe it will be easier to pursue this agenda without overt U.S. support, which often undermines their legitimacy. Secular liberals also worry about the destabilization and rising Islamist strength that can result from political reforms, and thus are not raising their voices as one would expect given the current backtracking in even more open Arab countries, such as Jordan and Morocco. It is no secret that the controlled nature of political participation in the Arab world has "tilted" the political playing field in the Islamists favor, further marginalizing all non-Islamist political opposition.[2] Until this playing field is more balanced, many secular and liberal reformers prefer to go slow with political reforms, particularly those related to elections.

So it is not surprising that U.S. policy is itself backtracking on this issue. The growing consensus in Washington is that democracy is dangerous in this part of the world and that democracy's ability to effectively address key challenges, such as terrorism, is questionable.[3]

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[2] On this dilemma, see Brumberg (2005–2006).

[3] Gregory Gause started this debate with his *Foreign Affairs* piece (2005), but such sentiment is widespread in policy circles. For a more recent critique of democracy's limited value

The demotion of democracy efforts is particularly glaring in the case of U.S.-Egyptian relations, where arms sales, not reforms, now dominate the agenda. As one study observes, "After pushing fairly assertively (and with some success) for reform in Egypt in 2003–2005, the United States dropped the issue just as suddenly in 2006 because its priorities shifted from transformational back to traditional diplomacy to contain regional crises."[4]

In short, U.S. policy appears to be returning to "realism."[5] But our study suggests that a return to realism would be shortsighted.[6] Yes, there are dangers and risks inherent in reform processes in the Middle East, and our cases provide ample evidence to this effect. But there are also dangers in trying to stymie such processes. Indeed, one of the most dangerous triggers for radicalization and a resort to political violence is the backtracking apparent across the region. This suggests that pressing ahead with genuine democratization, not just limited reforms, may stem extremism over time by bolstering the legitimacy of weak and vulnerable regimes.

That said, suggesting that the United States maintain democracy promotion as a key foreign policy priority does not mean that we recommend a transformational policy of regime change or the imposition of democracy by force. Political reform in the Arab world, and indeed across the broader region, is a varied and internal process that requires sensitivity and recognition of the limits of what external actors can

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in addressing terrorism that reflects this emerging consensus, see Byman (2007).

4 Dunne, Hamzawy, and Brown (2007).

5 That said, some analysts question how genuine the democracy agenda was even at the height of neoconservative influence. For example, Thomas Carothers argues that the Bush administration's democracy agenda was never that serious. In his view, while key elements were introduced (such as the Middle East Partnership Initiative [MEPI] and the Millennium Challenge Corporation [MCC]), these initiatives were limited at the outset and subordinated to other security interests. See Carothers (2007b, pp. 8–12) and Carothers (2007c).

6 For an argument supportive of continuing the democracy agenda, albeit in a more nuanced fashion focusing on basic political rights (such as freedom of speech, assembly, and association) as well as on strong states who are U.S. allies (e.g., Egypt, Jordan, Morocco, and Saudi Arabia), see Wittes (2008a). For more similar arguments and a more detailed overview of U.S. democracy promotion efforts in the Middle East, see Wittes (2008b).

affect. But serious attention to liberalization measures in this region, particularly in the areas of human rights and rule of law, can serve U.S. interests over the long term. Rather than a return to realism, U.S. policy should pursue realistic democracy promotion. This means focusing on the key areas that matter consistently and forcefully while recognizing that democracy is no panacea for countering terrorism. Democracy promotion is one critical way to diminish motives and support for violent acts, but counterterrorism policy must rely on multiple tools to effectively address this complex and multifaceted challenge. Our study suggests that democracy promotion, if carried out carefully, should remain in the toolbox.

Policy Recommendations

Based on the study's findings, we suggest the following courses for policy action.

Apply sustained pressure, scrutinize, and limit applause. U.S. attention to reform measures and sustained pressure can serve as a critical impetus for continued efforts among key allies. This does not mean pressuring important allies such as Egypt, Jordan, and Bahrain to pursue policies that would threaten their survival. The focus should be on strengthening democratic institutions and practices, including election laws, so that reforms that have been initiated are followed through and substantiated. The problem for many regional democracy activists is the perceived absence of sustained U.S. commitment and the belief that the United States is often deceived by the façade of democratization that in practice is not genuinely allowing alternative voices to be heard or adhering to basic civil liberties. What is needed is a more disciplined U.S. policy metric for measuring reform and more-careful attention to the manner in which approval, endorsement, or criticism is publicly conveyed.

Emphasize judicial reform and rule of law, human rights, and transparency. In many cases, the legitimizing effects of political reforms are hindered by a lack of progress on rule of law and judicial reform. Torture, political imprisonment, anti-assembly laws, arbitrary

arrests, censorship, and abusive security services continue to erode regime legitimacy across the region, and by extension, U.S. legitimacy, given American support for these regimes. Indeed, American post-9/11 actions (Abu Ghraib, Guantanamo, rendition policies) have themselves eroded the U.S image as supportive of human rights and the rule of law. In addition, many interviews for this study suggested that another critical area of reform was financial oversight of government affairs, the lack of which continues to hamper the building of popular trust with the regime. U.S. policymakers should be more attuned to measuring progress in these areas before lauding reform solely on the basis of elections.

Avoid taking sides. Across the region, accusations of U.S. meddling in electoral processes are widespread, particularly in the aftermath of the U.S. rejection of the HAMAS victory in the Palestinian elections. In the Gulf, the United States is viewed as fueling sectarian strife; in Bahrain, MB candidates routinely point to Shi'a meetings with U.S. embassy personnel as proof of a larger electoral conspiracy. While a degree of paranoia will always exist, overt signals of U.S. partisanship, particularly for liberals, should be avoided—they damage the legitimizing effects of reform by injecting a foreign-patronage dimension into indigenous institutions. Moreover, they antagonize potential and future partners. For example, in the 2006 parliamentary elections in Bahrain, liberal candidates supported by the United States faired poorly in the election; post-election commentary blamed their defeat on America's vocal and overt patronage.

Safeguard security while respecting the rule of law. Arab publics do not want the Iraq experience replicated throughout region, and their concerns for security and stability lead to considerable tolerance for government crackdowns on extremist groups. But such efforts must be balanced with the need to maintain legitimacy by respecting the rule of law and avoiding excesses. U.S. policymakers must convey these priorities to regional partners and adhere to such principles in America's own actions in the region, particularly in Iraq and Afghanistan, where U.S. forces are concentrated.

Engage Islamist parties while leveling the playing field for other types of political opposition. Accepting and engaging Islamist

parties (at least those that adhere to nonviolent practices) may not be ideal, given that many hold positions contrary to U.S. interests. But the dominance of Islamist movements in the region, if only because authoritarian governments have not allowed any other alternatives to develop, is a reality in the region that U.S. policy cannot wish away. Over time, Islamist popularity may erode if they also fail to deliver and respond to basic needs in society, but, at the moment, such movements fill a gap not provided by existing leaderships. To enhance the legitimacy of reform processes in the region, the United States must recognize the role Islamists play and engage such actors. U.S. embassy officials should continue to reach out to representatives of Islamist groups, even if, at times, they will refuse to meet. U.S policymakers should also encourage allies to continue or adopt co-option and accommodation strategies that are more likely to encourage moderation and marginalize radicals. At the same time, the United States can try to foster (but not overtly support) more secular or even Islamist alternatives that are less socially conservative, while recognizing such alternatives will take time to develop because they currently do not have broad appeal.

Recognize political motivations behind pro- and antidemocratization stances. Stances on the democracy-terrorism question often mask ulterior political motivations and positions. For example, the Egyptian government often argues against reforms by evoking fears about Islamist takeovers that will lead to massive violence and unrest, but it uses such fears as a cover to crack down on *all* political opposition, including secular parties. The MB, on the other hand, argues in favor of democratization ostensibly because it favors pluralism and free and fair elections, but in reality it too seeks to maneuver the political system to its liking, which in practice may not tolerate minority views. The Saudis sometimes express opposition to Bahraini political reform (because of concerns regarding Iranian influence), opposition that has been exaggerated by the ruling al-Khalifa in Bahrain as a useful pretext for avoiding real reforms. Western policymakers need to understand such motivations in order to pursue appropriate democracy promotion and counterterrorism strategies.

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