

POLITICAL SUCCESSION IN THE MIDDLE EAST

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INTRODUCTION

Louis J. Cantori

The violence of international relations in the Middle East stands in striking contrast to the orderly political succession and relatively high degree of domestic political stability in the region, Algeria being the single extreme exception. In what follows, it will become evident that longevity of leadership, peaceful political succession and domestic political stability are the survival attributes of the security state in a region characterized by the constant threat of violence. This political “peace” and emphasis on survival is directly related to the fact that the Middle East has not developed. “Why not the Middle East?” asks the World Bank. The Middle Eastern security state is developmentally stagnant.

Political succession is not political transition. It is the replacement of one ruler by another who emerges precisely because he is a guarantor of the sovereignty of the state and the maintainer of the domestic distribution of power and resources (see Carapico and Robinson below). Political transition suggests movement from one status to another, e.g. from authoritarianism to democratization, from state capitalism to market economics or from underdevelopment to development. These transitions are not occurring in the Middle East.

The single most important explanation for the orderliness of Middle Eastern political succession is the intimacy of the relationship between the state and the ruling class. As Jacoby points out, this pattern has its origins in the centuries-long conditioning of the political formula of the Ottoman Empire, in which the ruling class was kept in a dependency relationship to the state. This class, unlike its counterpart in Europe, was never permitted to establish organic roots in society from which it might develop the capability to challenge central authority. In the early history of the modern republics, the ruling class operated as a kind of political coalition of diverse social and political factions, often grouped in a single political party. As time has passed, however, this group basis has been replaced by narrower economic and political power interests. It has transformed from a coalition of forces to a coalition of interests (see Lust-Okar and the case of Syria, but note Shehata’s conclusion regarding Egypt and the possible accession by Mubarak’s son). But, as Carapico points out, what is perhaps occurring, in effect, is the perpetuation of the legitimacy of the coup that founded the republic in the first place. The “revolution” of 1952 in Egypt was actually a military coup d’état. It can be called a revolution, in that the composition of the ruling class was fundamentally altered and Egypt was propelled in a radically different political direction. Again, on the Ottoman model, one ruling class was replaced by another. A revolution thus occurred, and political succession therefore represents the further institutionalization of the “revolution.”

This interest-based ruling class has its modern origins in the corporatist (*takafuliyya*) dynamic of the founding of the “socialist” republics of Egypt, Syria and Iraq. These origins formalized what

had always been the case historically, namely the licensing of groups by the state. This licensing is a formal process expressed in a law of organizations, as in Law 32 of Egypt. The state permits functional organizations (e.g. trade unions, a bar association, etc.) to operate semi-autonomously in exchange for political obedience (an informal social compact or *mithaq*). The leaderships of these groups are either part of the ruling class or exist at a lower level of the social hierarchy, again on the Ottoman model.

The Middle Eastern state is an organic whole that is internally interdependent, but it is also a dual system, a political state and a social state. The political state consists of a ruler, a ruling class, an army, an “official” ulama and a security apparatus (*mukhabarat*). It also possesses its own economic system where the wealth from the “rents” of oil revenue, foreign economic assistance and investment is concentrated (see Robinson on the Palestine national authority as “rent” collector). It is this economy that is praised by the U.S. government and the World Bank as having undergone structural reform, privatization and the appearance of market economics. As with all political systems, it also possesses a hegemonic principle of political legitimacy. In the republics of the Middle East (see Al-Kitbi) this principle tends to be the secular one of Arabism or, in the case of Turkey, Kemalism (see Bargu-Hasturk). The essential quality of this ideology is that it is “top down,” imposed by the ruler and his supporting ruling class. It is within this political state that the determination of a successor is made; then the social state is “consulted” by means of a referendum. In the case of the monarchies (Jordan, Morocco and the six Gulf Cooperation Council [GCC] states), their tribal base means that the political and social states are organically connected, and the “licensing” process that connects the two is established by lineage. As a result, the monarchies have more social capital than the republics to deal with reform and change.

The social state, on the other hand, is where the masses of the population are found. This concept originates with Alexis de Toqueville in *Democracy in America* and is itself an expression of informal social elements such as class structure as well as what is commonly called “civil society.” It is with this “state” that the political state enters into its “compact.” In the case of Palestine, its proto-state at best minimally expresses this compact, retarding the passage towards state creation. (Robinson notes the existence of two Palestinian elites, one in the political state – “the externals” – the other in the social state – “the internals”; hence the weakly integrated character of Palestine.) To a remarkable extent, the social state is nearly oblivious of the political state, as long it does not politically challenge it. When this happens, the modern equivalent of the Ottoman janissaries (the army) puts in its appearance and blood flows, as happened to Muslim groups in Hama, Syria, in 1982 and in Egypt in the 1990s. The ideological challenge to the state from the 1970s onwards has come from Islamism, a populist, “bottom up” phenomenon. In its non-political form, Islamism is intrinsic to the social state as a consequence of an ongoing religious revival. Devotional practice, education, and medical and social services are Islamic. From this incubator in the social state have issued forth Islamic challenges to secular rule among the Arab states and Turkey (see Bargu-Hastruk on Turkey and Robinson on the estrangement of the Islamic resistance groups in Palestine). The social state also possesses its own economy, commonly referred to as the “informal sector.” It is in the black market (*suq al aswad*) and barter exchange where the poor find their social safety net and try to make their lives bearable.

Much of what is sketched above conceptually is contained in Hegel’s political science (*The Philosophy of Right*). He is the originator of the concept of corporatism (*Korporatismus*). He deals with the problem of political succession only in passing in an otherwise politically comprehensive treatise, noting, for example, that a ruler need not have outstanding qualities of intelligence or judgment. For Hegel the ruler is far less important than the culture and structure of the state. This may be particularly apposite for the Middle Eastern state, with a ruler, a ruling class dependent upon the state, an effective security apparatus able to maintain social order, a supporting army, its

own self-contained economy and a hegemonic political culture. The structure of the state is also reinforced by the hazards of a threatening regional environment. It is a national-security state; hence, the pattern of leaders with military backgrounds and the need for large standing armies. It is a well-institutionalized state that needs neither a very capable leader nor one whose identity is known prior to the time of succession. A remark sometimes heard is that anyone can rule the Middle Eastern state! This observation is supported in Lust-Okar's analysis of the succession of Bashar al-Asad to power in Syria and in Shehata's account of the speculation regarding the possibility that Mubarak's son Gamal is being groomed for the presidency. It may also account for the fact that with republics such as Egypt or Iraq, as opposed to the monarchies (Al-Kitbi), it is difficult to predict the heir apparent. In the final analysis, the identity of a particular person or his possession of outstanding personal qualities is irrelevant. It is the state that matters.

THE OTTOMAN ROOTS OF THE SUPER-STRONG STATE

Tim Jacoby, York University

A considerable social distance between state and society defines much of the modern Middle East. An important reason for this is the region's imperial heritage. Many scholars have, however, failed to recognize and analyze the Ottoman influence in modern statecraft. Particularly under-theorized are the methods through which elite autonomy was institutionalized. Michael Mann, for instance, excluded the Ottoman Empire from his study of pre-modern imperial power entirely. Instead, he concluded that the western Roman Empire possessed "about as high a level of intensity of territorial control as could be attained within the logistical constraints imposed on all agrarian societies."¹ Here this claim is challenged by suggesting that, in contrast to previous imperial systems, the Ottoman state institutionalized previously unattained levels of infrastructural control by forestalling the emergence of potentially decentralizing intermediary groups. So, instead of the multiple and crosscutting social cleavages that developed within other imperial polities, the Ottoman Empire "continued to be defined by a primary axis dividing the state from all social strata."² As a result, civil societies in the Middle East, unlike more politically mobile senatorial and then feudal systems further west, were unable to impose comparable restraints upon their rulers.

Key to Ottoman state power was the amelioration of what Mann calls the "three-way power stand-off" between the state, an economically decentralized ruling class and the people endemic, in varying degrees, to all pre-modern imperial systems.³ Istanbul obstructed the emergence of this structure in a number of ways. Foremost, perhaps, was the strict enforcement of a meritocratic system of appointments and promotion within their structure of agents, the *askeri*, which, coupled with the use of summary dismissals/transfers, the seizure of private property and prohibitions on the inheritance of position or wealth, was largely successful in maintaining the state's centralized authority over its clerks, clerics and soldiers.⁴ Furthermore, within the non-clerical branches of the *askeri*, the widespread use of prisoners-of-war and indentured provincial recruits, many of whom were also prohibited from marrying until retirement, also helped to ensure that state agents were kept separate from their social networks in civil society and from the masses in general.

This rigid social divide was particularly apparent in the state's organization of its agricultural estates, the *timars*. Institutionalized as a means of redistributing newly conquered territory and confiscating the estates of the old Selçuk agricultural and military classes, these provided "the government with a crucial means of maintaining some control over the most important economic resource, namely the land, and also over the largest segment of the population, the peasantry."⁵ They were administered by cavalymen, *sipahi*, who collected taxes on the state's behalf, ensured that the land was continuously cultivated, and in time of war surrendered men and resources proportional to the farm's value and revenue.⁶ Subject to the status restrictions outlined above, the

sipahi represented the central authority of the state at a most diffuse village level. Together with the *ulema*, they formed an administrative layer “locally reproducing the political and ideological functions of the state.”⁷ This prevented the temporary *timariot* recruits from both merging with civil society and developing potentially decentralizing transcendental cults.

Indeed, the Ottoman state’s complex system of theocratic agents was a central feature of social organization from the early processes of imperial consolidation. Unlike more mercantile imperial processes of expansion, the partners of the Ottoman generals who administered the frontier on behalf of the core were dervishes and religious scholars. By predicating their positions on notions of *jihad* and the traditional status of the *mujahadeen*, this partnership was able to “imperialize” Islam. As the empire coalesced, the *ulema*’s control of the education system and the judiciary positioned the upper echelons of the clergy at the very center of the Ottoman state. Not subject to the same system of recruitment or status restrictions as other groups within the *askeri*, they represented a highly structured link between the state and the masses. Their network of judges and pedagogues reinforced Istanbul’s control of a huge and disparate populace by establishing the legality of private ownership, integrating non-Muslim citizens, arbitrating between disputants and promoting urbanization through their scholastic networks. In return the sultan respected the *ulema*, supported their judicial decisions and used their influence and edicts in virtually all matters of state.⁸ The position of the *ulema* leadership at the heart of the Ottoman administration thus ensured that the realms of political and ideological power remained very strongly linked.

Another facet of the *ulema*’s power was the caliph’s traditional obligation of *hisba* (the surveillance of public morals). This provided the Ottoman state with an institutionalized position within the economy quite different from that of other imperial systems where in order to maintain ruling-class support, the political center was commonly obliged to empower what Mann terms “a gigantic common market.”⁹ Rather than a decentralized economy organized by local notables, Ottoman production was defined by state intervention. As such, artisans and peasants, instead of merchants and landlords, were assisted through the dissolution of mercantile oligarchies and restrictions on what sipahis and other employers could extract from their labor. The movement and sale of produce was also closely controlled, usury was punished in the courts and any excessive wealth generated from trade investments could be seized. In this way, the state maintained an authoritative influence over its agents and minimized the possibility of an intermediary class developing between the *askeri* and the people. Further restraints on wealth generation were imposed by a prohibitively high exportation tariff of 12 percent, aimed at ensuring that Ottoman traders, already constrained by the limitations of pre-modern transportation, did not develop extensive networks of economic power.¹⁰ The Ottoman economy therefore largely consisted of self-sufficient production units trading predominantly with the state. This imposed lack of interdependence, coupled with the maintenance of a rarefied state vernacular largely unintelligible to the masses and the institutionalized localisms of *millet* organization, ensured that the citizenry remained segmentalized and unable to decentralize mercantile power or organize extensive networks of cultural unity.

In all, the Ottoman impact on the Middle East has been to reinforce the autonomy of the modern state elite. For over five centuries the imperial government presided over a system of administration primarily designed to regulate political access to the center. Unlike many other imperial methods of rule, the Ottoman state’s immanent use of theocracy prevented economic wealth from being converted into political influence and institutionalized high levels of territorial control. The result was that the civil elite was unable to organize sufficient levels of social power to bridge the gap between ruler and ruled.

SUCCESSIONS, TRANSITIONS, COUPS AND REVOLUTIONS

Sheila Carapico, University of Richmond

In the early nineties a popular joke in Egypt went something like this: Gamal Abdel Nasser had a political consultant who told him, “Mr. President, you should choose a vice-president. But take care to select someone less intelligent than yourself.” So Abdel Nasser appointed Anwar Sadat as his vice-president and ultimate successor. Acting on the same advice from the same advisor, after an extensive search Sadat appointed Husni Mubarak as his vice-president. When Mubarak became president, again the consultant urged him to seek a vice-president, but one of lesser intelligence. The punch line was that after many years in office Mubarak had found no one who qualified.

More recently, one explanation for the high-profile prosecution of Egyptian-American scholar Saad Eddine Ibrahim, offered by Mary Anne Weaver in *The New York Times*, was that Ibrahim offended Egypt’s “first family” when he speculated for a radio audience on whether Mubarak might be grooming his own son as his heir. Such speculations seem reasonable enough, in light of the recent or anticipated dynastic successions in both monarchies (Jordan, Morocco and the Arab Gulf states) and other Arab republics (Syria and maybe Yemen and Iraq).

“Succession” in the Arab world means a stable transfer of executive authority after the death of a king or military dictator. In a successful succession, so to speak, the larger ruling coalition around the absolute leader remains intact. The legacy of the last coup, some 20, 30 or more years ago, is institutionalized beyond the personal rule of its leader, though still in the form of personal rule. Policies might change, but political arrangements emerge unscathed, without struggle or upheaval. Both citizens and outside powers might prefer such a stable succession to the previous pattern of serial military coups d’état, each inaugurating a whole new regime. (In 1980, when Ronald Reagan was elected to replace Jimmy Carter, an illiterate but news-conscious Yemeni woman said to me, “You mean you change presidents without killing the first one? That’s a nice way to do it.”) The emphasis is on stability; it is the passing of the torch from one autocrat-for-life to the next in line. If the first one is still alive, it is not a succession but a transfer of power.

Successions should not be confused with political transitions. Transitions involve political rearrangements, perhaps even regime changes or de-concentration of executive power, or withdrawal of the armed forces from politics, or a changing of the guard at the end of a predictable term in office – something more fundamental than “the king is dead, long live the king.” Short of full-scale social revolutions that overturn the ruling class, certainly, political transitions nonetheless do entail significant transformation of the way power is distributed in society. The outcome of a transition is uncertain, whereas succession spells certainty. Successions follow from the fact that children become parents, grandparents and ultimately ancestors. When personal rule becomes family rule, power monopolies endure or even solidify across generations.

Prior to September 11, 2001, the shock of which raised prospects of removing “rogue” regimes by force, there were two lines of reasoning in Washington and other Western capitals about how to prepare for the future in the Arab world. Support for political transitions, especially smooth gradual transitions, translated into policies designed to cultivate liberal counter-elites in the Arab Mediterranean and Yemen. Under the rubric of democratization and civil-society assistance, Western governments made some funds available to institutions outside the executive branch of government – parliamentary and judicial institutions and especially non-governmental institutions. The idea was to fortify relatively democratic institutions vis-à-vis the executive and/or the military; to finance studies, conferences and publications articulating a liberal viewpoint; and ultimately to cultivate in the Arab world the sorts of leaders who have won competitive elections in Latin America on a pro-globalization platform. Minimally, backers of this strategy hoped to give a higher profile to Western-educated internationalists, as opposed to the array of socialists, Arab national-

ists and neo-Islamists who are currently the region's main opinion leaders. This approach was preferred by social democrats, Canadians, the European Union and inside Washington relatively by USAID, the Clinton administration, the National Endowment for Democracy and private groups like the Ford Foundation.

By contrast, a policy based on the premise of stable succession sought to cultivate insiders, including heirs to the throne and those whose loyalties would be needed to hold existing regimes intact. Here the assumption is that future leaders are those who already share executive power as members or sidekicks of the ruling family. So the effort is to curry favor with current, not alternative, elites. Rather than sponsoring conferences of academics and human-rights lawyers, Anglo-American military strategists and Republicans prefer to invite key military and security officers for training. Here it is a matter of betting on the favorite over putting money on the long shot, of realism over idealism (or constructivism), proponents might say. Besides, realists contend, a genuine transition in which executive power is contested and transferred – say through elections – risks empowering populists, Islamists, Baathists or leftists who might oppose Western interests and/or shake things up too much. (Even in Iraq, the first Bush administration declined to remove Saddam Hussein from power precisely because of the risk of setting in motion changes that could be neither anticipated nor controlled.)

As academics or as policy consultants, of course, we can play with words and concepts. We can imagine a dynastic succession yielding a liberalizing transition. Sons better educated or more widely traveled than their fathers might indulge contemporary interests in computer technology, sartorial cosmopolitanism, the performing arts or other matters. Seeing gerontocracies give way to more hip leadership, transitologists might conceptualize “succession” in the sense of a new generation coming of age. Groomed for power rather than storming the palace with guns ablaze, sons of despots could turn out to be democrats, or at least pragmatists willing to share responsibilities of governance with judicial, legislative and even civic institutions. As their fathers' inner circles die off, the heirs to power might appoint as ministers and consultants younger civilians from an ascendant counter-elite of entrepreneurs and liberal arts majors who in turn could reject xenophobia and protectionism in favor of globalism. Even in this rosy scenario, however, it seems doubtful that smart advisers will recommend to someone who inherited absolute power a vice-president elected by majority rule and replaced by constitutional mechanisms. Dynasties notoriously rely on the advice of sycophants.

In the past generation, Middle East scholars have moved from anticipating social revolutions to advocating liberal transitions to speculating about successions. Perhaps this trend in academic discourse accurately reflects the narrowing of political options in the region: from mass engagement, to counter-elite inclusion, to inter-generational but intra-regime succession – and soon perhaps to foreign instigation.

POLITICAL SUCCESSION IN EGYPT

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Who will become Egypt's next president, and how will this be determined? Will Hosni Mubarak's son follow his father as the country's next ruler in a manner similar to what transpired in Syria? And what, if anything, does hereditary political succession have to do with “Arab political culture”?

From the fateful day on which Anwar Sadat was assassinated in 1981 until today, Egypt has been without a vice-president. Mubarak is now 73 years old and serving his fourth six-year term, having survived at least one assassination attempt. Despite his good health, he is only mortal; the question remains, who will succeed him?

The Egyptian constitution is clear as to what *should* happen if a president dies or leaves office

without a vice-president. Article 84 states, “In case of the vacancy of the Presidential Office . . . the President of the People’s Assembly shall temporarily assume the Presidency; and if . . . the People’s Assembly is dissolved, the President of the Supreme Constitutional Court shall take over . . . on condition that neither one shall nominate himself for the Presidency.” One would be hard pressed, however, to find anyone in Egypt who believes that succession will be resolved constitutionally. This is worth mentioning because both the president and his son have invoked the constitution as an answer to the question of succession. Realistically, however, the constitution does not provide a definitive answer.

POTENTIAL RIVALS

Some have speculated that the reason Mubarak has been reluctant to appoint a vice-president is for fear of creating a potential rival. The only person who has ever come close to the position – Field Marshal Abd al-Hail Abu Ghazala, the charismatic defense minister for most of the 1980s – was unceremoniously removed after many believed that he had become powerful enough to remove Mubarak from office. Mubarak learned his lesson and has not allowed anyone to reach the level of popularity, visibility or power that Abu Ghazala achieved. More recently, when it was announced early in 2001 that Amr Moussa would leave the Foreign Ministry to become the head of the Arab League, many speculated that it was because he had become too popular and that the president did not like the attention showered on the well-spoken and dashing minister.

In light of the Abu-Ghazala incident, the prolonged absence of a vice-president, Amr Moussa’s removal from the cabinet, and the increasing political activity of Gamal Mubarak, one can understand why many Egyptians believe the president’s son is next in line. For a number of years now, Gamal Mubarak has increasingly been in the spotlight. And unlike the president’s eldest son Ala, Gamal has not been shy about his activities, emerging as an important figure on the political landscape.

Thirty-seven years old, Gamal spent over six years working in London before returning to Egypt to become a prominent businessman, now the executive director of MedInvest Associates, a financial advisory firm. It was at the MENA conference in Cairo in the mid-1990s that he was first featured prominently in the media spotlight. At the conference, he could frequently be seen on stage with cabinet ministers, delivering speeches on Egypt’s investment zones and the benefits of international trade.

Today Gamal Mubarak also serves on the prestigious U.S.-Egypt President’s Council, made up of only a handful of the nation’s top business leaders. He is also the chairman of both the Future Foundation, a non-profit concerned with low-income housing, and the Future Generation Foundation, an NGO committed to training and educating Egyptian youth in order to create “responsible citizens.”¹¹

In the summer of 1999, reports of a new political party further fed speculation about Gamal Mubarak’s political aspirations. In addition to the president’s son, it was rumored that the *Hizb al-Mustaqbal* (party of the future) would be established with the help of Osama al-Baz, the president’s longstanding political adviser, and a number of prominent Egyptian politico-businessmen. The party, it was thought, would have been a way for the younger Mubarak to officially break onto the political stage and differentiate himself from the characterless and ineffectual National Democratic party (NDP), establishing “a new channel of government patronage.”¹²

Both al-Baz and the president eventually denied that the party would be founded but implied that something of the sort had been considered.¹³ Afterwards, in February 2000, Gamal Mubarak was appointed to the General Secretariat of the ruling NDP and has been active in this role ever since, speaking to university students, youth and other groups and playing an increasingly prominent role in domestic politics.

Thus, from quite unmistakable official and institutional signals, such as inclusion in the ruling party and membership on the U.S.-Egypt President's Council, to smaller, seemingly trivial, signs such as his presence at official presidential ceremonial functions (national holidays and festivities such as the *Eid* prayers), today in Egypt one cannot help but get the impression that Gamal Mubarak is being groomed for the presidency.

“WE ARE NOT SYRIA.”

– President Mubarak, *The Washington Post* and *Al-Quds* newspaper, April 2001

Many, however, believe that Egypt will not go the way of Syria because of fundamental differences between the two nations. In Syria, “the ruling elite rallied around Bashar, as perhaps their best bet to maintain the regime itself.”¹⁴ By supporting a father-to-son succession, the beneficiaries of the Hafiz al-Asad regime were maintaining “Baathist and/or Alawi privileges and power.”¹⁵ Gamal Mubarak's succession, however, would not necessarily constitute regime stability. Rather, it would mark a departure from the existing model of succession in Egypt, which since the establishment of the republic in 1952 has always taken place through the military.¹⁶ And unless high-ranking security and military personnel were unified in their support for Gamal – something seemingly unlikely – his succession could potentially be more disruptive than that of a military man.

For, despite the demilitarization of Egyptian society over the last 30 years, the military is likely to play a key role in any succession process. In the current moribund state of Egyptian politics, with increasingly limited political freedoms and impotent opposition parties, the military remains the only institution with coherence, legitimacy and the economic and political power to influence the succession process. Thus, many believe that we are likely to see more of the same: another military man in civilian clothing with a similar group of civilian technocrats managing the economy.

CONCLUSION

With the succession of Bashar al-Asad in Syria and speculation that similar father-to-son transitions will take place in Iraq, Libya, Yemen and Egypt, some journalists have already implied that dynastic succession is a product of Arab political culture.¹⁷ The claim might soon be made explicit in academic guise and could easily be deployed as another variant of the “Middle East exceptionalism” thesis. The relationship between father-to-son succession and “Arab political culture,” however, is spurious for a number of reasons. First, it is simply empirically false. Father-to-son successions have more often occurred in non-Arab contexts: North Korea, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Nicaragua and Haiti. Rather than being the product of an essential Arab political culture, the phenomenon is more likely specific to a particular type of authoritarianism – centralization of power in the person of the leader, a small ruling elite, a lack of institutionalized power centers outside the leader, a cult of personality, and long-serving rulers who have been able to eliminate potential rivals.

For the United States, the subject of political succession raises a number of important foreign-policy questions. Does the United States, for example, have a policy regarding dynastic succession in what are ostensibly republics? How does political succession in the Middle East affect American interests, and how do U.S. policies and pronouncements impact processes of succession? Some have argued, for example, that early and wide international support for Bashar – including by the United States and the United Nations – “even before he was elected” – reflected the U.S. preference for stability over democratic procedure.¹⁸ The Egyptian case will be even more interesting, as Egypt is an important strategic ally and the second-largest recipient of U.S. economic assistance in the world. Would Washington's support for a father-to-son succession in Cairo contradict the ostensible U.S. policy of democracy promotion?

Finally, regardless of who becomes Egypt's next president, it is difficult to escape the discouraging conclusion that the overwhelming majority of Egyptians – ordinary citizens – are unlikely to have any say in the matter. In Egypt, this kind of politics sadly remains exclusively an elite game.

BASHARAL-ASAD'S RISE TO THE PRESIDENCY

Ellen Lust-Okar, Yale University

The transition of power from Hafiz al-Asad to his son Bashar in July 2000 is perhaps the most intriguing succession in the Middle East. Although reports, even in the Western press, made the transition look almost pro forma, there was nothing inherent in the Syrian regime that would have led to Bashar's succession. There were numerous potential contenders – both within the system (army generals and party leaders) and outside of it (the Muslim Brotherhood, leftists and Rifaat al-Asad) – who were not convinced that Bashar was the most qualified successor. More important, in stark contrast to the monarchies in the region, the legitimacy of the Syrian regime did not depend on the late president's son assuming power. Indeed, one could even argue the opposite – that hereditary succession could bring into question the republican underpinnings of the state. Thus, examining the factors that made possible the hereditary transition in Syria helps to clarify the nature of the Syrian regime at the time of Hafiz al-Asad's death. It also helps to consider whether this transition signals a fundamental change in the Syrian regime. Is Syria moving from a *Jumhurriya* to a *Mamluka*, or, as some have suggested, a *Jumluka*?

Although Syria is characterized as a regime based on military, Baathist and Alawite support, the transition demonstrates that by the mid-1990s, the personal power of President Hafiz al-Asad dominated these elements. Although the military remained a powerful player, even long-time military leaders could not force the president's hand. Many of the most powerful generals found themselves retired when they appeared as potential threats to Bashar's rise to power. In contrast to the military elite, the party elite posed a far less significant threat to the succession of Bashar; they lacked direct access to military power and had little popular support. Indeed, Volker Perthes noted the declining power of the party elites in 1990, when the larger representation of independents in parliamentary elections sent a "warning to some of those traditional components – the party, the unions and the bureaucracy – that the regime [was] ready to dispense with the critics in its own ranks."¹⁹ Consequently, top party leaders remained in power, but they could not thwart Bashar's presidency. Finally, although segments of the Alawite population disputed Bashar's leadership, Hafiz al-Asad directed the repression of the strongest opponents in Autumn 1999. In short, Hafiz al-Asad was in a position to remove potential threats to his son's succession. The Syrian regime was much more personalized than it had been nearly 30 years earlier; it truly had become "Syria al-Asad."

Comparing the justification for the presidency of Hafiz al-Asad in 1970 with that of his son in 2000 illustrates this point. In 1970, Hafiz's power, and the Baath party's dominance, was legitimized by its role in the 1963 Revolution. In 2000, Bashar's role was justified not by his revolutionary role in the Baath party, but by his relationship with his father. A speech nominating Bashar al-Asad to the presidency justified the Regional Command's decision:

Comrade Dr. Bashar Hafiz al-Asad has proved through his practices and behaviour a high level of commitment to the values and principles that reflect the interests of the homeland and people. He was born and brought up in the home of the late leader, was educated in his school and drank from his overflowing fountain of wisdom, knowledge, morals, faith in the issues of the homeland and people and commitment to the objectives of the nation.²⁰

Despite this hereditary transition, the nature of the regime has not changed. The legitimacy of Bashar al-Asad relied on his relationship with his father, not on a larger sense of family accomplishment; thus, the establishment of a dynasty seems unlikely. Democratization is also unlikely. There have been some striking events and announcements within the last year: civil society organizations re-emerged, independent newspapers were published, economic reforms were implemented. Yet there is not a significant change in the regime. Martial law remains in effect, legally prohibiting meetings of more than five persons, and civil-society members are also well aware that their new breathing space can easily be taken away. Indeed, the crackdown on civil society, resulting in the arrests of top leaders in August and September 2001, demonstrated the regime's resolve to limit democratic change.

More important, these changes are reminiscent of those that took place when Hafiz al-Asad came into power. In a striking move toward the business class, he reinvigorated private business with a series of economic reforms from 1970 to 1973. He gave greater political freedom, while simultaneously limiting it by fostering the formation of the National Progressive Front, the union of five (and later more) political parties under the leadership of the Baath. He had also called for the direct election of the Parliament.

Indeed, Bashar al-Asad appears to be following his father's style in consolidating political power. Although President Bashar has not yet assumed the power of his father, he is using mechanisms of personal power to ensure his stability. To a limited extent, the president and his supporters are attempting to re-invigorate the Baath party in an attempt to stave off greater change. Thus, for instance, there is talk of elections within the party and of grass-roots nominations for local candidates. This occurs, however, at a time when the president is forced to use replacements of top brass, as well as the expected changes in the cabinet, to ensure his position. Facing a system with a weak, Baathist party and the need to maintain power, Bashar is likely to cultivate the same political style his father had used. In the short-run at least, Syria is likely to remain "Syria al-Asad."

KEMALIST HEGEMONY AND THE SOCIALIST LEFT IN TURKEY

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Since the consolidation of the national liberation movement in Ankara, Kemalism – the official and founding ideology of the republic named after Mustafa Kemal Ataturk – has constituted the central framework for the self-definition of the new state. The regime's success in securing the conditions of its own reproduction has been achieved in the field of ideology through the establishment of the hegemonic position of Kemalism with respect to competing worldviews. Non-coercive coercion, or garnering the consensual support of subaltern groups for the dominant order, has been strategic in facilitating the political succession of the regime, as the invaluable and less visible counterpart to the coercive authority of the state. From this perspective, the socialist left of Turkey constitutes an example of how Kemalism has interpenetrated, shaped and constrained the potential of its rivals. Kemalist hegemony over the socialist left and the left's inability to disengage itself from this hegemony have substantially contributed to the failure of the opposition and the succession of the opposed.

As a positivist, modernizing worldview, Kemalism envisioned a new nation-state in which the National Assembly displaced the sultan, and national sovereignty was substituted for religion as the basis of legitimacy. Formulated around the six principles of republicanism, nationalism, populism, *étatisme*, secularism and revolutionism – referred to as the Six Arrows – Kemalism sought progress through a Jacobinist transformation program and a simultaneous construction of the nation. The prioritization of national independence, of which the state-led development of a

harmonious national capitalism was an inseparable component, over political liberties and democratic pluralism was seen as the imperative of the ultimate project of “reaching the level of contemporary civilizations” – always coded as the West. The state was the embodiment of this project, situated over and above society, with the claim of being the impartial representative of the indivisible nation whose otherwise diverse composition was increasingly invested with a mono-ethnic and mono-religious quality. The superimposition of a homogenous and unitary national construct upon the people, whose voice was indefinitely delayed, was complemented with the imagination of a cohesive and organic society, composed of occupational groups. The realization of this vision rested upon the inculcation of new generations with Kemalist values that would assure their allegiance to the state and social order, as the concrete forms of the nation’s general will.

The enforcement and dissemination of Kemalism through the channels of the state, single-party, military and educational apparatuses have enabled the maintenance of its hegemonic position over other ideological alternatives. Although the initial form of this hegemony as the total exclusion of alternative ideologies has been reconfigured by the transition to multi-party democracy, the boundaries of this relatively new political space have been frequently redrawn by military takeovers and national-security concerns. Therefore, the fluctuating presence of competing ideologies has depended upon the degree to which these alternatives were able to include, appropriate and internalize Kemalist elements. While Kemalism has become co-constitutive of alternative worldviews, it has not only been accepted but also further reproduced by its opponents.

A discursive analysis of the ideological-theoretical positions put forth by the main currents of the socialist tradition in Turkey portrays the assimilation of Kemalist principles as involving the incorporation of not only the Six Arrows but also their implications in terms of the designation of agency and strategy within the socialist construct. Among the Six Arrows, republicanism, nationalism, revolutionism, and secularism have generally been accepted without reservations; étatism and populism have been reinterpreted by the inclusion of a pro-labor perspective and the attribution of a proto-socialist essence to original Kemalist formulations – an essence that could be recovered by revolutionary efforts. Since complete national independence has been singled out as the driving concern of oppositional politics, the problem of economic progress was placed at the center of the agenda, leading to the advocacy of a state-led non-capitalist path of development. While strategies were formulated towards capturing state power and concluding the Kemalist revolution that was supposedly discontinued by the regime, the revolutionary agency was shifted away from subaltern classes towards the national front, encompassing as many segments of the population as possible with a prominent role ascribed to the civil-military bureaucratic intelligentsia. Hence, the left echoed the modernizing current in Kemalist ideology, locating the state as the sphere, the nation as the object, and the top-down structuring of society as the method of liberation from the ties of international dependency relations. Societal emancipation became a shared idiom that accentuated a “for the people, despite the people” elitism inherent in Kemalism.

Although the left has displayed a spectrum of positions that connect with Kemalist ideology, radical ruptures from Kemalism have always constituted exceptions to the general tendency of absorption, integration, synthesis and utilization. Thus, Kemalism has been largely successful in shaping the contours of socialist politics in Turkey. Envisaging socialist transformation with the help of Kemalist principles and its cadres, the left has given the anti-imperialist struggle precedence over that of anti-capitalism. The left has accepted the unitary construct of the nation as its conduit while endorsing the linear developmentalism, intolerance of pluralism, and authoritarian logic of the regime. The submission of socialist views to the main premises of Kemalism has backfired, undermining the left’s own grounds of opposition. Consequently, the reappraisal of Kemalist hegemony from the point of view of the left is crucial if the left’s marginal position is to be transformed into a real alternative to the core of the regime’s ideology. Though it need not result in an unqualified

rejection of the official ideology, this requires both the de-mystification and the unraveling of Kemalist parameters that continue to be deeply ingrained in the collective consciousness of the people of Turkey.

AFTER ARAFAT

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Israel's assault on West Bank Palestinian towns throughout April 2002 and its even longer siege and then occupation of Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat's presidential compound in Ramallah have raised legitimate questions about how long Arafat will remain in power in Palestine. After all, Arafat is already older than King Hussein of Jordan and Hafiz al-Asad of Syria were at the time of their deaths in recent years, and Arafat has suffered from a number of physical ailments, particularly since his near-fatal plane crash in Libya in 1992. In addition to the ravages of time, Arafat must also worry about assassination attempts, either from Palestinian dissidents or Israeli commandoes. Even as the siege of Arafat is coming to an end, the questions of his physical longevity and of political succession in Palestine only intensify. The intent of this essay is not to predict which personality will eventually succeed Arafat, but rather to outline some of the major issues that will define the succession process when it occurs.

SUCCESSION FOR WHAT EXACTLY?

Arafat currently wears four different political hats: he is the duly elected president (*al-ra'is*) of the Palestinian Authority, the interim government on the West Bank and Gaza Strip; he is the chairman of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO); he is the head of the major faction within the PLO, Fatah; and, usually forgotten, he is the president of the State of Palestine, which was officially declared by the PLO in 1988. The first point to be made about succession is that the era of one man's domination of all the major posts in the Palestinian national movement will come to an end upon Arafat's death. Different leaders will more than likely fill these posts; potentially, rival leaders may fill them. Whether this will represent democratization at the leadership level or fragmentation of the movement will depend on the context in which it happens. Even in the unlikely event that one man fills multiple leadership posts in the post-Arafat era, it is unconceivable that he will enjoy the same concentration of power that Arafat has garnered over the years.

CONTEXT IS EVERYTHING

Assuming that the real interest in succession concerns the position of political head of the Palestinian polity or state in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, the context in which succession occurs is utterly critical in determining its outcome. If Arafat dies peacefully in his sleep in five years' time, when he is the president of a Palestine that is at peace with its neighbors, then it is likely that succession will be peaceful and legally executed. If, on the other hand, Arafat is assassinated next week by Israeli sharpshooters or killed by internal dissidents in the midst of accusations of "selling out" to Israel, it is much more likely that succession will be violent and extra-legal. Thus, the context and timing of Arafat's death will be critical in determining whether men with guns come to power or a legal process brings a popular leader to power. This in turn will tell us much about the future of Palestinian politics.

On paper, the legal process for choosing a new PA president is straightforward: the speaker of the Palestinian Legislative Council, or parliament (currently Abu Ala), holds office for 60 days, during which time new popular elections are held. However, for this process to proceed, all parties must ignore legal realities – which they probably would. Legal reality number one is that all of the institutions created by the Oslo process (including the PLC, its speaker, and the Rais) officially

expired in May 1999. The Oslo accords were explicitly limited to a maximum of five years from the creation of the PA (which formally occurred in May 1994 in Cairo with the signing of the “Gaza-Jericho” agreement). Legal reality number two is that the basic law that governs succession in the Palestinian Authority has never been formally promulgated. Thus, in order for the legal succession to proceed, the speaker of a body that technically does not exist (the PLC) will apply a law that does not formally exist to hold elections for a position (president) whose legal standing is likewise in doubt. Of course, gentlemen’s agreements to keep these institutions in place have occurred, and politics will always trump legal niceties, but the dubious legal nature of the existing institutions of the PA should not be ignored in any succession discussion.

Two ELITES

While the context in which succession takes place will go a long way in determining which leader ultimately emerges, we can point to the major political cleavage which will be the dividing line of competition. That cleavage is not the secular-religious divide of the PLO and Hamas, although one cannot dismiss its importance. Rather, the dominant cleavage of succession will be between the “Oslo elite” and the “intifada elite,” or what others have called the “old guard” and “new” or “young guard.” The Oslo elite represents the old leaders of the PLO, beginning with Arafat himself but including many other top Palestinian officials such as Mahmud Abbas (Abu Mazen), Ahmad Qurei (Abu Ala), and Nabil Shaath. These men have lived most of their lives in exile, many since 1982 in Tunisia, where the PLO headquarters were located (which is why they are often referred to by fellow Palestinians as the “Tunisians”), and many are getting rather old. It was this old guard that made peace with Israel in 1993 – the Oslo accord – from their homes in exile.

Conversely, the “intifada elite” or new guard was born and raised in the West Bank and Gaza Strip and has had a very different life history than its Oslo elders. Members of this group tend to be economically poorer but better educated and know Israel much more intimately than do those old leaders coming back from exile. Some, like Marwan Barghouti, speak excellent Hebrew. These are people quite willing to make peace with Israel or to fight with Israel, but who hold no particular illusions about Israel’s occupation. They have also been the most outspoken critics of the authoritarianism and corruption practiced by the PA. It was the young guard who fought Israel in the first intifada in 1987-93 – a largely unarmed resistance – and it is this same young guard that led the current and much more violent al-Aqsa intifada. This group also built the pluralistic institutions of civil society in Palestine. In short, it is a much more modern elite than Arafat and his cohorts and better able to mobilize Palestinian society at the grass-roots level – because that is where they grew up. This elite will be much harder to cut a peace deal with but much more likely to make a good deal stick.

The competition between these two sets of political elites will largely determine succession and the future of Palestinian politics. It is in part a generational struggle but, more important, a sociological conflict between two very different types of elites with different visions and different rules of the political game. And given that the Oslo elite’s chief political project – the peace process of recent years – has been so utterly discredited in Palestinian eyes (having only led to more settlements and more land confiscations by Israel), it is a good bet that Arafat’s successor will come from the ranks of the home-grown intifada elite.

WILL SUCCESSION CHANGE ANYTHING?

The obvious answer to this question is yes; the passing of “Mr. Palestine,” the man who has so symbolized Palestinian politics for over three decades, cannot help but have an impact. On a deeper, more structural level, however, Arafat’s death may not significantly change the basics of Palestinian politics. The vast imbalance of power between Israel and Palestine will outlive Arafat,

so the basic hegemonic nature of any peace process will remain intact. Moreover, as I have argued at some length elsewhere, the basic political economy in Palestine will lend itself strongly to the kind of soft authoritarianism practiced by Arafat and the PA well into the future. Palestine, much like the oil states of the Gulf, is a “rentier state,” where money flows from the top down with very little extraction of taxes from society by the PA. This gives social forces very little leverage to push for democratic openings. Mr. Arafat’s death will not change this basic fact.

POLITICAL SUCCESSION IN THE GULF COOPERATION COUNCIL STATES

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The understanding of political succession in the states of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) begins with the legal/constitutional formulas for doing so. These prescriptions in law can then be assessed from the point of view of actual practice, and this in turn will permit overall observations and conclusions.

THE CONSTITUTIONAL AND LEGAL FRAMEWORK

Saudi Arabia

Article 5 of the basic law of Saudi Arabia (1992) includes the following points:

- (a) The system of government in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is that of a monarchy.
- (b) Rule passes to the sons of the founding king, Abd al-Aziz Bin Abd al-Rahman al-Faysal Al Saud, and to their children’s children. The most upright among them is to receive allegiance in accordance with the principles of the Holy Quran and the Tradition of the Venerable Prophet.
- (c) The king chooses the heir apparent and relieves him of his duties by royal order.
- (d) The heir apparent is to devote his time to his duties as an heir apparent and to whatever missions the King entrusts him with.
- (e) The heir apparent takes over the powers of the king on the latter’s death until the act of allegiance has been carried out.²¹

Kuwait

Article 4 of the Kuwaiti Constitution reads as follows:

- (a) Kuwait is a hereditary emirate, the succession to which shall be in the descendants of the late Mubarak al-Sabah.
- (b) The heir apparent shall be designated within one year, at the latest, from the date of accession of the emir.
- (c) His designation shall be effected by an emiri order upon the nomination of the emir and the approval of the National Assembly, which shall be signified by a majority vote of its members in a special sitting.
- (d) In case no designation is achieved in accordance with the foregoing procedure, the emir shall nominate at least three of the descendants of the late Mubarak al-Sabah of whom the National Assembly shall pledge allegiance to one as heir apparent.²²

To avoid any probable differences or disputes about the succession to the throne, Jaber and Salem, the Great Mubarak’s sons, made a historical agreement immediately after Mubarak’s death in 1915. Accordingly authority is alternated between the two branches, Al-Jaber and Al-Salem. This tradition has survived till now: the Prince of Kuwait Jaber Al-Ahmad belongs to Al-Jabers, whereas the Crown Prince Saad Al-Abdullah belongs to Al-Salems.²³

United Arab Emirates

The two crucial positions of the state president and vice-president, according to Article 4 of the UAE (a federal state) Constitution, are based on elections. Yet they are restricted to the High Council, which consists of the rulers of the seven emirates that make up the Union. Candidates should be members in the High Council. In other words, the qualifications of the president and the vice-president depend on their positions as rulers of emirates and their membership in the High Council of the Union.²⁴

Oman

In Oman, Article 5 of The Basic Law (1996) reads thus:

The system of government is a hereditary sultanate in which succession passes to a male descendant of Sayyid Turki bin Said bin Sultan. It is a condition that the male who is chosen to rule should be an adult Muslim of sound mind and a legitimate son of Omani Muslim parents.

In addition, Article 6 suggests that

- (1) Within three days of the position of sultan becoming vacant, the Ruling Family Council shall determine who will succeed to the throne.
- (2) If the Ruling Family Council does not agree upon a successor, the Defence Council shall confirm the appointment of the person designated by the sultan in his letter to the Family Council.²⁵

Bahrain

Paragraph 2 of Article 1 of the Bahraini Constitution (1973) states: The rule of Bahrain shall be hereditary, the succession to which shall be transmitted from His Highness Shaikh Isa bin Salman Al Khalifa to his eldest son and then to the eldest son of this eldest son and so forth, generation after generation, unless during his lifetime, the Amir appoints one of his sons other than the eldest as his successor, in accordance with the provisions of the Decree of Succession provided for in the next clause.²⁶

Qatar

In Qatar, Article 4 of the temporary Constitution restricts the right of selecting the crown prince to the prince himself provided that the former is a descendant of the ruling dynasty.²⁷

Conclusion

The principle of hereditary succession is common to all six GCC countries with the exception of the federally structured United Arab Emirates. There the governing High Council, to which all the leaders of the separate states belong, elects a successor. It is also the case that while the principle of hereditary succession exists, there is also the legal provision for the incumbent to select from the closest members of those next in succession the person thought to be the best qualified. In this fashion, the progeny of multiple mothers provides flexibility for getting around the potential unsuitability of the successor next in line.

PROBLEMS OF POLITICAL SUCCESSION IN THE GCC COUNTRIES

The legal and constitutional framework of political succession in the GCC countries can result in a peaceful transition of authority. However, the investigation of domestic affairs in each ruling regime reveals that in fact the issue of authority transition is sometimes pervaded by difficulties. In spite of the apparent specificity of the legal provisions for hereditary political succession, in practice the criteria of succession can be vague.

Saudi Arabia

This vagueness is dramatically illustrated in the case of Saudi Arabia. The authority transition since the death of the founder of the modern state, Abdel-Aziz Bin Saud, in 1953, has been based on age and seniority. The four kings (Saud, Faysal, Khalid and now Fahd) who have reigned to date have been Abdel-Aziz's eldest sons. But there has already been an exception in the case of the older Prince Mohammed Bin Abdel-Aziz, who willingly conceded the throne to his brother Khalid in 1975.²⁸ The Dynasty Council later skipped over princes Naser and Saad, Abdel-Aziz Bin Saud's sons, for the sake of King Fahd in 1982. Yet paragraph 2 of Article 5, as indicated above, fails to provide for this. It says the king is chosen from the most upright sons of King Abdel-Aziz Bin Saud and the sons of sons. The Article does not set criteria to identify what is meant by "upright," or explain who is entitled to define these criteria – the king, the council of the ruling dynasty or the people? Hence the vague expression "the most efficient" paves the way for competition among the descendants of Abdel-Aziz. The expression also intensifies polarization between the conflicting wings inside the ruling dynasty.

The problem becomes even worse owing to the fact that King Abdel-Aziz had about 36 sons from various marriages, and over 200 grandsons.²⁹ The sons are also very close in age. Prince Ahmed Bin Abdel-Aziz, the youngest son, deputy minister of interior, and Prince Saud Al-Faysal, a son of late King Faysal, are both 60 years old. Crown Prince Abdullah Bin Abdel-Aziz is 76. Abdullah's brother Sultan, second deputy premier, minister of defense and the first elected king after Abdullah Lasdah's reign, is 74 years. Prince Nayef Bin Abdel-Aziz, minister of interior and the most probable crown prince after Prince Sultan, is 72. In other words, problems would remain if age seniority continued to be the criterion of political succession.

Paragraph 3 of Article 5 itself constitutes a major problem. It indicates that the king has the right to select the crown prince and to deprive him of office upon a monarchial decree. This paragraph allows the present king to keep control of the position of his successor. Therefore, being crown prince does not necessarily mean becoming the next king. Moreover, we should bear in mind the conflict of attitudes and policies between Crown Prince Abdullah and his likely crown prince, Sultan. The escalation of conflicts and competitions between the two parties may lead Abdullah, if he assumes office, to rely upon the above-mentioned article in order to depose Sultan from the position of crown prince. Conflicts, divisions and polarities would inflict the Ruling Dynasty and other bodies, especially the army, because the latter is loyal to Sultan, minister of defense. Serious repercussions may arise and threaten the stability of the state in general.

United Arab Emirates

In spite of the constitutional mechanism of assuming authority in the United Arab Emirates, which is apparent in the presidential elections carried out by the High Council of the Union, the problem of political succession is more complicated. Sheikh Zayed is the elected president of the federal state, but he is also the autocratic ruler of the state of Abu Dhabi, whose regime is described as hereditary. Succession for the UAE, then, becomes possibly more complex: the expected ruler of Abu Dhabi may become president of the UAE. The matter thus seems simple and straightforward, but the reality is potentially more complicated.

The reason is in the details. The title of the ruler appears absolute and determined in Abu Dhabi due to the fact that Khalifa Bin Zayed has been named crown prince. But the problem persists in the naming of a crown prince after Khalifa. Some names have been suggested: Sultan Bin Zayed, deputy premier of the prime minister; Mohammed Bin Zayed, chief commander of the armed forces; and Sultan Bin Khalifa, Sheikh Khalifa's son, the head of the crown prince's office. Competition is sharpened due to the absence of any legal mechanism in the Emirates to identify the criteria for selecting a crown prince, such as age, a matter which opens the door for conflicts and

polarities between Zayed's sons (about 20) and the ruling dynasty.

The preceding uncertainty is also the problem in the other component states of the UAE. Each unit has its own problem concerning political succession amidst the significant absence of more precise mechanisms to codify this process.

Kuwait

The dilemma of succession in Kuwait is embodied in the advanced age of both the ruler and the crown prince; they are over 70. The crown prince suffers from serious health problems that could lead to his death before the ruler, and consequently to possible disputes. In fact, disputes have already started between Al-Jabers (Sabah Al-Ahmad, minister of foreign affairs and the present ruler's brother) and Al-Salems (Salem Al-Abdullah, former minister of defense and the crown prince's brother) about who most deserves the crown prince position. Sabah Al-Ahmed believes he deserves the post due to his age and long experience in politics. Salem Al-Abdullah, supported by his brother the crown prince, deems that his merit originates in the historical agreement made by the Al-Jaber and Al-Salem branches on the principle of the alternative authority of the two branches.³⁰

Oman

Although there exists the constitutional mechanism for determining Omani authority, it has not yet been put to the test. The article fails to indicate the criteria required to identify the next sultan; rather it leaves the issue to the ruling dynasty to decide. Simply stated, the vagueness of the Omani constitution makes the process of political succession potentially conflicted and unclear.

Qatar and Bahrain

The Qatari and Bahraini rulers are relatively young and assumed power only a few years ago. But it is still uncertain whether their nomination of a crown prince would settle the conflicts and competitions inside the ruling dynasties. Furthermore, the designated crown princes are in their early twenties. Meanwhile, there are more mature and experienced candidates: Khalifa Bin Salman (the ruler's uncle and minister of interior) in Bahrain; the ambitious and politically influential Hamad Bin Jasem, the ruler's cousin and minister of defense, and other elder sons of the ruler in Qatar. However, problems of political succession are less likely to occur in Qatar and Bahrain in the short and medium terms.

In the cases of Qatar and Bahrain where youthful leaders and successors are present or potential, striking political reform has occurred. In Qatar, for example, elections were adopted, women were allowed to take part (e.g. municipal elections of 1999), restrictions on political expression were lifted, and media censorship on publication and mass media cancelled. The famous and outspoken Al-Jazeera TV Channel is even supported financially as a free platform by the ruler of Qatar and is neither censored nor questioned by the government. Apart from these changes, a permanent constitution is promised, a parliament is to be formed, and parliamentary elections are to take place.

In Bahrain, recent government actions have been much more progressive than those of the previous ruler. These include a public opinion poll on the draft of the "National Charter," the proposed new constitution, which contains essential changes. Many freedoms and rights were given to the people, and an amnesty for political prisoners was declared. Bahraini members of the political opposition abroad were permitted to return to Bahrain. The relationship between the ruler and the people was codified in a constitutional monarchy based on a parliament consisting of two councils, one elected and the other appointed by the prince. The authorities of the ruler and the two representative bodies were divided and separated.

The above-mentioned changes and reforms in Qatar and Bahrain appear to have strengthened the principles of the hereditary monarchy and increased the popular legitimacy of the regimes. Remarkably, they also far exceed what is taking place in the republican regimes of various Arab states.

CONCLUSION

The issue of political succession in the GCC countries also raises the question of the nature of the “state.” Without going into detail on the nature of the state in this region or surveying the literature that discusses the concepts of the authoritarian state, the rentier state, etc., the state in the Gulf region certainly faces numerous problems. Among these are the fragility of representative bodies and institutions, the state’s dependence on ruler’s personality (the state is the king’s, the prince’s or the sultan’s), the structure of economic loyalty to external parties, and even the domination of foreign Asian experts and employees over these structures – a domination sometimes described as peaceful Asian colonialism!

Thus, reform is a decisive factor in the future of political development in the GCC countries. The process of succession is by no means associated with the development or adoption of policies and mechanisms that are required to reform and transfer the state into a constitutional monarchy in the true sense of the word – a monarchy that endorses citizenship clearly, assures the sovereignty of law, respects rights and freedoms, approves political participation through legitimate and effective channels, etc. Political succession is not necessarily political reform. As a result, some GCC countries remain politically vulnerable. Small and unable to protect their huge wealth, let alone the unsettled regional environment, the maintenance of such political entities and is fraught with danger.

“Political succession” does not involve a change in the ruling dynasty or the hereditary ruling pattern. Instead, it implies a change within the same pattern. The ruling elites are under pressure to initiate change, however, since domestic developments in some GCC countries, together with globalization, make change a necessity. When the political regime fails to lead change from above and ignores it as a fundamental basis for enhanced legitimacy, instability results. Indicators point to the likelihood that the GCC states will not be able to continue their welfare and subsidization policies due to declining wealth. This will increase the political pressure on these governments to reform.

¹ Michael Mann, *The Sources of Social Power* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), Vol. I, p. 250.

² Robert Bianchi, *Interest Groups and Political Development in Turkey* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), pp. 87-88.

³ Mann, p. 295.

⁴ As Arnold Toynbee points out, the allocation of initial position within all elements of the askeri classes, from laborer to judge, was subject to aptitude, and progress remained based on “ability and alacrity; the social status of the conscripts’ families counted for nothing.” “The Ottoman Empire’s Place in World History,” *The Ottoman State and Its Place in World History*, K.H. Karpat, ed. (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1974), pp. 15-33.

⁵ Karpat, “The Stages of Ottoman History: A Structural Comparative Approach,” *The Ottoman State and Its Place in World History*, p. 89.

⁶ It has been estimated that by 1475 there were 22,000 *sipahis* in Anatolia and 17,000 in Rumelia. Each time a sultan was enthroned, these were reshuffled to prevent them merging with civil society and constituting a decentralized intermediary class. Perry Anderson, *Lineages of the Absolutist State* (London: Verso, 1993), Sixth Edition, pp. 368-369.

⁷ Huri Islamoglu-Inan and C. Keyder, “Agenda for Ottoman History,” *The Ottoman Empire and the World Economy*, Islamoglu-Inan, ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), p. 48.

⁸ A. Hourani, “The Ottoman Background to the Modern Middle East,” *The Ottoman State and Its Place in*

World History, pp. 61-78.

⁹ Mann, p. 278.

¹⁰ Owen Lattimore estimates that animals used to transport food would have to eat the contents of their loads every 100 miles. *Studies in Frontier History* (London: Oxford University Press, 1962), pp. 476-485.

¹¹ See Gamal Mubarak, "What the Future Holds for the Country's Youth – and for Himself," www.amcham.org/HTML/Activities/Events/GMubarak.htm. When asked about presidential succession, Gamal Mubarak responded, "The constitution is clear. There is no ambiguity or doubt in the case of an unforeseen eventuality."

¹² Robert Springborg and John Sfakianakis, "The Military's Role in Presidential Succession," *Armée et nation en Egypte: pouvoir politique, pouvoir militaire*, May Chartouni-Dubarry, ed. (Institut Français des Relations Internationales, February 2001), p. 57. See also footnote 2 in their article.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 58.

¹⁴ Curtis R. Ryan, "Dynastic Monarchy, Dynastic Republic? Political Systems and Succession in Jordan and Syria," paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Middle East Studies Association, Orlando, Florida, Nov. 16-19, 2000, p. 15.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 16.

¹⁶ See Ahmed Abdalla, "Military-Political Interactions in Egypt: an Historical Perspective," *Armée et nation en Egypte: pouvoir politique, pouvoir militaire*, p. 49-50.

¹⁷ See Brian Whitaker, "Hereditary Republics in Arab States," *The Guardian*, August 28, 2001.

¹⁸ See Yotam Feldner, "Egypt's Succession Part II," Middle East Media & Research Institute, July 25, 2000, www.memri.org/ia?IA3200.html.

¹⁹ Volker Perthes, "Syria's Parliamentary Elections: Remodeling Asad's Political Base," *Middle East Report*, January-February 1992, p. 18.

²⁰ "Syria: Baath Party Deputy Pledges Continuation of Al-Asad's Policies, Ideals," Syrian Arab TV, Damascus, BBC Monitoring International Reports, June 17, 2000. See also "Syria: Baath Party Congress Appoints Bashar al-Asad Party Leader," Syrian Arab TV, Damascus, BBC Monitoring International Reports, June 18, 2000.

²¹ The Basic Law of Government (1993).

²² The Constitution of Kuwait.

²³ *Kuwait: Infighting in the Royal Family*, January 30 2001, www.Stratfor.com.

²⁴ The Constitution of the UAE.

²⁵ The Basic Law of the Sultanate of Oman.

²⁶ The Constitution of Bahrain.

²⁷ The Constitution of Qatar.

²⁸ Joseph Kechichian, *Succession in Saudi Arabia* (New York: Palgrave, 2001), p. 25.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 26.

³⁰ *Kuwait: Infighting in the Royal Family*, op. cit.