Destined to Authoritarian Rule?: A Comparative Analysis of the Processes of State Creation and Regime Formation of Jordan, Saudi Arabia, and Iran

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DESTINED TO AUTHORITARIAN RULE?

A Comparative Analysis of the Processes of State Creation and Regime Formation

of Jordan, Saudi Arabia, and Iran

An Honors Thesis

Presented By

Caroline Glass

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ABSTRACT

Democracy is complex regime type, one that has been analyzed extensively. Yet the intricate nature of a democratic regime, and the challenges associated with keeping it running effectively, make it a continued object of scholarly research. Some countries with regimes that can be considered democratic maintain their democracies more effectively than others. This study attempts to analyze factors that have obstructed democratization in three non-Western countries: Jordan, Saudi Arabia, and Iran.

My first goal is to outline processes of state creation and regime building in Jordan, Saudi Arabia, and Iran. A democratic regime cannot evolve without a state structure in place, nor can it develop immediately when leaders of a state begin a process of regime building. Democracy takes time, and in fact, it is rarely the ultimate goal of the leaders of a state. After exploring the processes of state creation and regime building in the three countries, I explore reasons as to why none of these states has democratized.

My second goal is to conduct a comparative analysis of the three countries, and to create a tentative theory of state creation, regime building, and lack of democratization across the cases. The case of Jordan forms the basis of the theoretical framework, and the other two cases, Saudi Arabia and Iran, build upon it. My goal in creating a theory is twofold: I first intend to evaluate how applicable existing theories are to these three cases. I then intend to create a theory that takes into account the processes of state creation and regime building present in the cases. I also intend to design a theory that could be extrapolated to other cases in the Middle East, and beyond, to help explain their respective processes of state creation, regime building, and democratization.
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I would also like to thank David Grace, my Junior year high school history teacher of the course “World Crises.” He introduced me to international relations and foreign policy and opened my eyes to the complexities of the world; the Middle East in particular. He also made me use my analytical powers for the first time in my life. I have truly never encountered someone more cut out to be a teacher. It is the rare person who is knowledgeable and can effectively communicate information in a way that instills in others the same passion for the subject that he or she feels. David Grace is one of those rare people. Thank you for helping me to discover a passion that now leads me to, shamelessly, get excited over theories of democracy,
and leads me to feel aghast when someone does not know which languages are spoken in Afghanistan.

Special thanks to the Connecticut College community, including other faculty, CELS advisors, and, of course, friends, who have been with me every step of the way and provided endless encouragement and support. I would also like to thank my family who has done the same for me for my whole life.

Learning never takes place in isolation, and this has never been more apparent to me than over the past four years, so thank you all.
TRANSLITERATION DISCLAIMER

The transliteration between the native languages of the countries outlined in the following cases and English is not standardized. There is no single way to translate Persian or Arabic character sounds into the English alphabet. For example, the name ‘Mohammad’ can also be spelled ‘Muhammed’, ‘Muhammad’, or ‘Mohammed’. The transliteration in this study strives for consistency and reflects the spelling in English that most closely resembles the sounds of the original Persian or Arabic characters, in the opinion of the author.
USEFUL TERMS

All Cases

- **Caliphate**—the Islamic empire. Eventually, the original caliphate broke into multiple ones as the empire expanded.
  - **Caliph**—the leader of the Islamic empire.
- **The Hajj**—the holy pilgrimage to Mecca that is required of every adult Muslim at least once in his or her lifetime.
- **Imam**—a senior religious figure in Islam, usually the leader of a mosque who leads prayers.
- **Mecca**—the birthplace of Islam, and the holiest city in Islam. It is the location to which hundreds of thousands of Muslims travel each year during the Hajj. Located in present-day Saudi Arabia.
- **Medina**—the city established by the Prophet Mohammad and his followers when those in Mecca initially rejected his religion of Islam. Another holy city in Islam. Located in present-day Saudi Arabia.
- **The Prophet Mohammad**—the founder of Islam in the early 7th century AD.
- **Qur’an**—the holy text in Islam.
- **Rentier System**—reliance on outside subsidies for economic support, usually based on outside purchases of a lucrative natural resource, such as oil. This process results in a distributive rather than productive economy. The government distributes oil profits to the population rather than developing a reciprocal relationship with society through the means of production. Therefore, the regime in this type of economic system is not held accountable to the population since the population does not contribute to the state’s economy through the usual process of taxation.
- **Shari ‘a**—the rules and laws outlined in the Qur’an. More generally, it is guidelines by which to live life. The strictest interpretation is favored by the Hanbali school of law.
- **Shia Islam**—literally meaning “followers of Ali”. Ali was the cousin and son-in-law of the Prophet Mohammad, and he eventually split with the original caliphs. Those who rallied around him believed that, as a descendent of the Prophet, he was the rightful leader of the Islamic empire, as were his descendants.
Twelver Shiism—The largest branch of Shia Islam. The predominant branch of Shiism practiced in Iran. Those who practice it believe in a Hidden 12th Imam who will eventually return from occultation to lead his followers.

- Sunni Islam—the predominant form of Islam practiced worldwide. Those who practice it do not believe in hereditary rule, as Shia Muslims do.

- Ulema—a group of religious figures and leaders in Islam. A religious council.

Jordan

- Emir—the name for the ruler of Transjordan.

- Feyadeen—members of the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) who launched attacks out of Jordan against Israel, as well as caused violence within Jordan.

- Intifada—an uprising, literally meaning a “shaking off” in Arabic. The PLO launched several of these uprisings to challenge Israeli power and control in Palestine.

- Tanzimat Reforms—reforms initiated by the Ottomans during the 19th century that attempted to increase the consolidation of Ottoman power in areas of its empire far from the central leadership. These reforms were the precursor to state-building. Arab leaders were introduced to the idea of constructing a government structure and its various organs, such as a parliament. The reforms also stressed the rule of law, the importance of elections, and the notion of citizenship to political identity.

- Vilayet—a governorship under the Ottomans designed to be an outpost of their power in a specific, often far-off, location.

Saudi Arabia

- Fatwah—a religious decree in Islam.

- Ikhwan—the Bedouin-comprised military force established in 1912 by Ibn Saud.

- Wahhabi Islam—Eighteenth century puritanical revivalist movement in Islam. Sometimes used interchangeably with Salafism, Wahhabism calls for a literal interpretation of Islam. It falls outside of the four main law schools of Sunni Islam and is the state religion of Saudi Arabia and Qatar.
Iran

- **Ayatollah**—literally, “sign of God,” the highest-ranking figure in Shia Islam below an Imam. In Twelver Shiism, he is responsible for taking the place of the Hidden 12th Imam until the return of the Hidden Imam.

- **Fatwah**—a religious decree in Islam.

- **Majles**—a council of political figures that forms a legislative political body.

- **Shah**—King of Iran, the title used during the monarchy.
INTRODUCTION

Democracy is often unintentional, is rarely perfect, is challenging to create, and requires constant upkeep. If this is so, then why and how do democratic regimes form? And, in the case of the countries discussed in this study, what factors have prevented democracy from taking hold?

Before such questions can be answered, I ask the following questions: What factors lead to state creation and consolidation, which are themselves prerequisites for democratization? Once a state is in place, what factors lead to the creation and building of certain types of regimes, and why do democracies form in some cases and not in others?

Most of the literature on these subjects revolves around Western processes of state creation, regime building, and democratization. The factors that have been designated as necessary for these processes to ensue have been derived from Western models. Other regions have been analyzed in the context of Western factors, but specific countries’ processes within those regions are rarely differentiated. For example, the region that this study deals with, the Middle East, is usually studied and analyzed as an aggregate, i.e., state creation, regime building, and democratization, or lack thereof, are analyzed in terms of the region rather than in terms of individual countries. There are no countries in the region, save for Israel, which can be considered democracies; therefore the Middle East presents scholars of state creation and regime building with a multitude of case studies to analyze.

This study is guided by several objectives. My first objective is to delineate the processes of state creation and regime building of three countries in the Middle East: Jordan,
Saudi Arabia, and Iran.\(^1\) It is not possible to understand how the political regime of a state came into being without understanding its evolution. No other author on this subject has outlined the processes of state creation and regime building in specific Middle Eastern countries. Therefore, I attempt to determine what social, economic, demographic, geographic, and international factors have led to the state creation and regime building processes experienced by each of these countries.

My next objective is to determine what factors have obstructed democratization in each country. Again, no other author on this subject has linked an analysis of Middle Eastern states’ processes of state creation and regime building to an analysis of why none of the states’ regimes has democratized.

My final objective is to posit a tentative overarching theory of state creation, regime building, and obstacles to democratization across the three countries in this study. My intent is to determine whether there were common factors that obstructed the development of democracy across the three countries and if so, what conditions in each country resulted in these common factors?

I have selected Jordan as my baseline case for it is the least nuanced. The cases of Saudi Arabia and Iran then build upon the case of Jordan. My goal in this study is not to make generalizations about the Middle East as a whole, rather it is to identify similarities and differences between, and draw conclusions about, factors that are common across the three cases presented. I hope that these conclusions could then be extrapolated and applied to other cases in the region.

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\(^1\) I selected these countries because of the relationship and similarities among them. For example, Saudi Arabia and Iran are regional rivals and Jordan and Saudi Arabia have some shared history. Furthermore, none has experienced an “Arab Spring” even in recent years, and all have had extensive economic ties to foreign powers.
METHODOLOGY

The first section consists of a review of existing literature on the processes of state creation, regime building, and democratization. In this section, I define the state, the nation, and democracy. I also present various theories of state creation, nation building, regime building, and democratization. As I point out, most of the literature on these topics is Eurocentric, and therefore only marginally applicable to the Middle East. The various theories that exist, and which I present, that are specifically related to the Middle East are flawed in two major ways: they present theories for the region of the Middle East as a whole, and they barely describe the processes of state creation and regime building in the region. They also fail to derive theoretical constructs that help to understand variances in such processes.

After I review the existing literature, I outline each country’s history. I divide each history section into important events prior to the 20th century, but I focus principally on the 20th century since this century was a turning point for all three countries. I begin with Jordan, followed by Saudi Arabia, and finally Iran. After outlining the respective histories of the countries, I conduct an analysis of their processes of state creation and regime building, as well as examine why none has democratized. In the analysis of each case, I attempt to answer the following questions:

- What factors throughout history have shaped the country’s process of state creation?
- What factors throughout history have shaped the country’s process of regime building?
- Why has the country not democratized?
• What is the role/impact of foreign intervention in the processes of state creation and regime building in the country?
  
  ○ How has having a rentier economic system impacted the social and political systems in the country?

• Are there any indicators at present that the country in question could potentially democratize?

•

In the final section, I develop a tentative overarching theory for the processes of state creation, regime building, and democratization, or lack thereof across the three cases. As I already noted, I use Jordan to build the base of my theoretical framework because it is the least nuanced of the three cases. I then move onto Saudi Arabia and Iran to refine and restructure, if necessary, my original theoretical construct. I end with some thoughts about areas for potential future research.
LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

The existing literature on state creation, regime building, and democratization tends to focus on European actors. The literature on these subjects concerning the Middle East is limited and what exists often examines the region as a whole, with little differentiation between various countries. Additionally, the literature places the Middle Eastern experience in the context of European theories of state creation, regime building, and democratization. Furthermore, the literature tends to explain state creation and regime building in the Middle East in more of a historical, rather than theoretical, context. Despite the Eurocentric nature of the seminal theories of state creation, regime building, and democratization, they are necessary and important to examine, as they provide general outlines of the aforementioned processes. After I outline the seminal works on each of these processes, I outline the literature that exists on these processes in the Middle East specifically.

Definitions of the State

The classic definition of the state is Max Weber’s. Weber defines the state as a “community that successfully claims the monopoly of the legitimate use of physical force within a given territory”.1 While Weber’s definition is clear-cut, and presents the state as a legitimate, functioning entity, Karl Marx takes a different view. Weber has confidence in the state; Marx does not. Marx views the state as an illusion or confidence trick by those in power to maintain their power. He believes that states are less cohesive and more chaotic entities than those in
Another seminal definition of the state is Charles Tilly’s. Like Weber, he claims that a state exists if there is a defined territory, yet he also stipulates that the entity must be differentiated from other organizations that exist within the same territory. The entity must also be autonomous, and divisions of power within the entity must be formally coordinated with one another. Like Weber, Tilly has more confidence in the state as a cohesive, functioning entity than does Marx.

These three authors all focus their studies on the nature of European states. A less Eurocentric definition of the state is Joel Migdal’s. He defines the state as “an organization composed of numerous agencies led and coordinated by the state’s leadership, its executive authority, and that has the ability to make and implement binding rules for all people as well as implement parameters of rule-making for other social organizations in a given territory, using force if necessary to have its ways.” Migdal does not define the state based on the experience of European state-making, and therefore, his broader definition is more applicable to other state-making experiences outside of Europe. However, like Weber’s classic definition, he does acknowledge that there must be a defined territory and that force can be used to achieve state goals.

Similar to Weber’s definition, Jorge Dominguez defines a state as “a set of institutions with claim to a legitimate monopoly of force over a certain territory and an ability to exercise it…” Dominguez argues, as others do, that a state has a monopoly of force over a certain territory, yet he takes his definition one step further: he assumes that the state actually has the power to assert its force over the territory. Dominguez’s view of the state is inherently more militant than other authors’ views.
Joseph Strayer takes one of the strictest views of the state. Strayer defines the state as having special fixity, durability, permanent and impersonal institutions, final authority and loyalty. This is similar to Weber’s definition in that a state needs to be territorially defined; yet Strayer stipulates very specific guidelines for the nature of institutions within the state. Like Tilly, he argues that the state must be the entity that has ultimate authority within a territory.

Taking a drastically different view than Strayer, Jay Nordlinger defines the state as “all those individuals who occupy offices that authorize them, and them alone, to make and apply decisions that are binding upon any and all parts of a territorially circumscribed population. The state is made up of, and limited to, those individuals who are endowed with society-wide decision-making powers.” He assumes, as others do, that a state is defined in a specific territorial area. However, his definition does not focus on the “exercising force” aspect of a state, and he also defines the state as being comprised of those who are responsible for its decision-making. In other words, Nordlinger views a state’s power as stemming from individuals who are responsible for decision-making, as opposed to its power stemming from the use of force.

Stephen Krasner is one of the few authors who includes sovereignty in his definition of the contemporary state. Krasner outlines four definitions of sovereignty: 1) international sovereignty, 2) Westphalian sovereignty, 3) domestic sovereignty, and 4) interdependence sovereignty. The first definition defines a political entity in the international system and asks “is the entity recognized by other states?” Recognition is extended to states with territorial and formal juridical autonomy. The second definition addresses political life, which is organized on two principles: territoriality and the exclusion of external actors from domestic authority. The third definition addresses the following questions: “How is public authority organized within
the state?” and “How effectively is it exercised?” The fourth definition addresses the issue of state sovereignty being eroded by the process of globalization.

Unlike the other authors discussed thus far, Gabriel Ardant views the state through an economic lens. Ardent describes the state as a set of expansive goals pursued by rulers of the state, a bundle of financial policies, economic infrastructure and resources, financial consequences of state policies, and the social political consequences of these variables. The state, in his view, operates as a purely economic entity and focuses its activity almost solely on the expansion of its economic goals.

I favor Joel Migdal’s definition of the state since it takes into account what comprises a state, as opposed to simply defining the physicality of a state. Furthermore, in terms of state functions, Migdal’s definition highlights the role that other institutions besides the military play in the functioning of the state. Overall, I find Migdal’s definition to be the most comprehensive.

**General Theories of State Creation**

Because successful democratic regime building cannot take place outside the entity of an established and legitimate state, I now turn to an examination of theories of state creation.

In his work on state formation in Europe, Stein Rokkan writes that there were four dimensions of the generation of systems of territorial control in Europe as state formation took place: 1) a territory’s distance North from Rome, 2) a territory’s geopolitical distance West or East from the center belt of trade route cities, 3) the concentration of landholdings in a territory, and 4) the ethnic basis of the early efforts of center building and linguistic conditions for early versus late consolidation of the state. Rokkan puts emphasis on the legacy left by the Roman
empire in terms of law.\textsuperscript{18} He argues that the empire left a precedent of literate bureaucracy and legal institutions, trade and the emergence of new identities, the emergence of a national script, and the ability to unify peripheries culturally and linguistically.\textsuperscript{19}

However, prior to the processes of state formation in Europe, there was a key process that took place in its territories: consolidation of power initiated by a small group of elites and accompanied by the eventual incorporation of peripheral populations into the core of their power. The periphery became tied to the center through four organizing agencies: legal, military, cultural, and economic.\textsuperscript{20} The nature of center-periphery integration can be classified by primary indicators—estimates of comparative strength of the four organizing agencies setting conditions for center-periphery integration—secondary indicators—two way linkages among the four organizing agencies, i.e., the how the center was connected to the periphery through each individual factor—and tertiary indicators—assessment of the overall strength of two poles of the model; the two poles being economic strength and cultural distinctiveness.\textsuperscript{21}

To differentiate the political systems that emerged out of the center-periphery links, Rokkan identifies three factors: 1) characterization of peripheries based on their dependence on the center; tied via military, culture, language and religion, 2) internal and external resources of the central establishment and differences among elites in their abilities to marshal resources, and 3) similarities and differences in the process of change, i.e., which center-periphery links were established first.\textsuperscript{22} The economic interaction between the center and periphery—urban and rural populations—were important because the strongest European nation-states were built on territories with a history of ownership and control of land.\textsuperscript{23} Essentially, the balance of integration between the center and periphery in terms of economics is an important factor in the center-periphery links and success of integration in Europe.\textsuperscript{24}
Rokkan goes on to identify four stages of state creation in Europe. First, as previously discussed, elites had to unify politically, economically, and culturally. This process allowed for the establishment of the requisite infrastructure for state creation. Second, elites at the center had to expand their networks to the peripheries to draw them into the new political system. Third, increased channels of communication had to be established to enable mass participation in political parties and opposition groups. Finally, agencies of redistribution had to emerge to meet the demands of the larger population. Evolution through the four phases that Rokkan posits becomes important in the context of the cases examined in this study since all of them have achieved up to a certain phase, yet none has successfully completed phases three and four.

In the cases of European state formation, Rokkan identifies six givens: 1) the heritage of the Roman legal system and concept of citizenship, 2) the organization of the Catholic Church and its central role in channeling elite communication, 3) the role of the Germanic kingdoms, 4) the revival of trade between the Orient, the Mediterranean and the North Sea after the defeat of the Muslims in those regions, and the increase in the network of independent cities, 5) development and consolidation of feudal and manorial agriculture systems and landholding, and 6) the emergence of literatures in vernacular languages and the decline of Latin as a universal language.

Overall, Rokkan identifies four master variables that were integral to state formation in Europe: 1) secular religious differentiation, 2) linguistic unification/distinctiveness, 3) differentiation between independence of city networks, and 4) concentration versus dispersal of land holdings. Rokkan also discusses the role of the military as a tool for religious expansion. Furthermore, he contends that the hierarchical structure of Catholicism was detrimental to later development and democracy in Catholic countries, whereas Protestant countries did not
experience these same challenges, and mass mobilization was easier. The roles of the military and of religion have implications for the cases in this study.

Charles Tilly posits a theory of state formation compatible to that presented by Rokkan. Tilly outlines the common conditions that were present in Europe at the beginning of the 16th century that aided with state-making. First, there was cultural homogeneity present in much of the region arising from a single-family system, i.e., not a tribal system. Second, there was a prevalent peasantry which was settled, i.e., not nomadic, and which became increasingly tied to the core of power in the territory through a process of power centralization. Third, the decentralized political structure was uniform throughout the region, incorporated deliberative assemblies, and came about through resistance to expansion of state power. Tilly observes that state makers in Europe imposed their will over centuries of ruthless effort, meaning that there was time for these systems to develop. Tilly adds that there were three important features of state-making in Europe: 1) the population and collective political life, 2) the government organization and its exercise of control over the means of coercion within a population, and 3) routinized relations between the government organization and the population. Tilly takes directly from Rokkan the three diverse forms of mass mobilization that occurred in Europe. One was the state-church relationship and the Reformation leading to mass participation in national politics. Another was the relative timing of participation and industrialization. The final form was cultural and religious diversity of the population under the state.

Generally, Tilly strives to answer three questions when considering state-making: 1) under what conditions do nation-states become the dominant organization in the area? 2) What are the chief forms taken by nation-states and what causes them to appear? and 3) What determines if a nation-state is strong, durable, effective, and responsive to its own population?
He argues that an entity can only be considered a state if: 1) it is clearly distinguished from other institutions in the same region, 2) it is autonomous, 3) it is centralized, 4) its divisions are in formal coordination with each other.\textsuperscript{34} Furthermore, the ability of territories in Europe to evolve into states was determined primarily by whether they: 1) possessed extractible resources, 2) were vulnerable to military conquest for an extended period of time, 3) had capable political leaders, 4) boasted a powerful and successful army, 5) ruled over a homogenous population, 6) enjoyed unification and centralization at the elite level, and 7) were positioned advantageously in the international arena.\textsuperscript{35}

Tilly also discusses how the structure of the nation-state differs from the alternative systems. First, it is a controlled, well-defined territory, second, it is relatively centralized, third, it is differentiated from other organizations, and fourth, it reinforced its claims through the tendency to acquire a monopoly over the concentrated means of physical coercion.\textsuperscript{36} In terms of the conditions that helped European states with their processes of state creation, Tilly argues that homogeneity helped divide up the European continent into mutually exclusive territories with decentralized power. Additionally, the weakness of corporate structures and kinship supported a process of growth through the manipulation of shifting coalitions.\textsuperscript{37} According to Tilly, the most successful cases of state building took place when the managers of political structures could cope successfully with social change and when they could direct social change toward a set of outcomes.\textsuperscript{38} Tilly observes that state makers encouraged homogeneity of the culture, language, religion and education, and it was the homogeneous populations that were able to survive and prosper.\textsuperscript{39} The consolidation of the state system constricted opposition for the building of new states through war, and territorial expansion. The armies that were built up as part of state building process were unlikely to ever actually fight in an international war, but resources were
still devoted to them as a show of the state’s power. Tilly makes a final important point when he observes that the process of European state building will never again be repeated, and therefore, new states will need to find alternative models of state building.\textsuperscript{40} Many of the factors that Tilly outlines as being useful for state creation are applicable to the cases in this study either in that they were present or were noticeably lacking. A few important ones to note are the presence of natural resources, homogeneity of religion, the presence of strong kinship structures, and the history of colonialism and imperialism.\textsuperscript{41}

Samuel Huntington addresses the role of force in state creation. He outlines the dynamic between militias and state militaries, though his study is limited to the United States. He states that in the US Constitution, there are two clauses that make full civilian control of the military impossible. First, sanction is given to semi-military forces that can never be completely subordinated to military discipline nor completely removed from political entanglement. Second, sanction is given to a division of control over the militia between state and national governments, which leads to conflicting interests in the federal system.\textsuperscript{42} Huntington argues that the creators of the US Constitution preferred militia forces to a regular army and throughout the 19\textsuperscript{th} century, militias remained outside the control of the federal government.\textsuperscript{43} What is important about Huntington’s analysis is that it makes clear that in the US, dual control of the military became unfeasible; state militia forces had been subordinated by national forces by the 20\textsuperscript{th} century.\textsuperscript{44} Huntington’s analysis has implications for the cases in this study because of the role that militaries played in the initial process of state creation and consolidation of power.

Literature pertaining to processes of state building in Latin America has implications for the region of the Middle East as well. Frank Safford outlines seven factors that were important
to state building Latin American during the 19th century: 1) economic geography, topography, resources, and level of economic integration, 2) political geography, including geographic and transportation conditions affecting political integration, 3) relative economic and fiscal strength, 4) relative public acceptance of the political systems whether or not a constitution exists, 5) the extent to which civilian authorities control the military, 6) the role of the Catholic Church, and 7) the relative vulnerability of the evolving state to external pressure or attack. Each of these factors has an implication in the context of the cases in this study, particularly the role of religion (but not of the Catholic Church), geography, the level of economic integration, and the extent to which the military is civilian controlled.

Fernando López-Alves presents another argument regarding Latin America that is pertinent to the Middle East. He argues that feudal characteristics and mode-of-production arguments regarding state creation are not relevant in Latin America. He then presents several hypotheses on what has been relevant to state building processes in Latin America. One was the failure on the part of a rebellious upper class to coalesce against the central power, which accelerated power centralization, another was when the landed gentry were defeated in their own domains, the process of centralizing power took place faster, and a final one was the location in which wars took place. These factors have fewer implications in the context of the cases in this study than do the ones identified by Safford. State formation did not stem from a rebellious upper class in the countries in this study, nor was there a landed gentry present in any of the countries.
State Creation in the Middle East

According to Roger Owen, the Middle East has faced some of the most challenging state formation conditions. The fact that concepts of legitimacy, hegemony, and authority were unique to the European experience meant that they did not often take hold elsewhere the way they did in Europe. From the European perspective, Middle Eastern states were supposed to possess the same structure and follow the same trajectory as Western ones. Furthermore, they were supposed to have the same systems of taxation and war-making skills as Europe. Yet, as Owen observes, the failure of the Middle East to achieve these norms of statehood and state building has led some to believe that the Middle East is incapable of achieving statehood in the European sense. Furthermore, Owen observes that within the region of the Middle East, there are conceptual differences between the state, regime, and government. For example, all three are so closely linked in Gulf States that if one were to collapse, the rest would follow. This reality makes analysis of the legitimacy of the state challenging. It is important to note that there exist conceptual differences between the state, regime, and government in all regions, not just the Middle East. However, Owen’s point is that in the Middle East there is less of a distinction between the state, regime, and government. For example, in the US when there is an election of a new president, the government changes, but the regime type, a democracy, remains the same, and the state as a defined entity remains intact. However, in Saudi Arabia, for example, the regime is the government and the state, and therefore none of them can remain if the other collapses.
Owen argues that state formation in much of the Middle East can be categorized into three phases: the colonial state, the immediate post-independence state,\(^2\) and the authoritarian state.\(^52\) The defeat of the Ottoman Empire during World War I signaled the beginning of French and British occupation in the region and the division of the region into new territories with the aim of creating modern states.\(^53\) Even in places where the French and British allowed more autonomy, both powers were responsible for determining new state borders, implementing rulers, determining the new form of government, and exploiting natural resources.\(^54\) Even in instances in which the physical state was created without foreign intervention, as was the case in Saudi Arabia and Iran, the leaders of the new state could not engage in a process of state creation and power consolidation without the economic assistance of the French and British. Furthermore, even entities that came into being organically were forced to recognize other boundaries that had been established by the French and British.\(^55\) Besides establishing the physical outlines of states, the French and British were also responsible for establishing government structures.\(^56\) The French and British tended to favor a monarchical or an authoritarian regime type as they were easier to maintain control over.\(^57\) Owen discusses two more important aspects of state building in the Middle East: family rule and the importance of natural resources, namely oil, in creating a rentier economic system. He argues that places where family rule has endured are places in which the tribal nomadic element has a strong history.\(^58\) I will discuss these two factors further in the context of the cases themselves.

Finally, Owen highlights the importance of the role of the military in the Middle East. He outlines three important relationships: 1) the army as a special type of organization, with its

\(^2\) These first two factors also apply to Latin America. All Latin American states have faced internal struggles as to whether to create a state in which power was heavily centralized and Catholicism played a central role, or to create a secular state with power distributed between various regions. This is a challenge that the United States never faced in its process of state creation (Hybel, *The Making of Flawed Democracies*, chapter 1).
own particular form of hierarchy, well defined boundaries, and professionalism, 2) the relation to the international arena and the fact that most militaries were modeled on European ones, after which time the relationship continued through the sale of military equipment to Middle Eastern countries by Western countries, and finally 3) the relationship of the army to the state. The relationship depends on the structure of society and economic conditions. Leaders in Jordan, for example, built up the military with heavy reliance on tribal elements. This action, in turn, helped ensure the loyalty of the tribes to the monarchy.

Delving deeper into the role of natural resources in shaping state formation, Terry Karl writes about how Venezuela’s reliance on oil shaped its process of state building. In Venezuela, resource-based industrialization deepened oil-led development in the country and defined its economic policy. Additionally, Venezuela’s external borrowing became the main strategy by which its leaders coped with an internal fiscal crisis. An important concept Karl brings up is ‘Dutch Disease’. “Dutch Disease” refers to when a country that bases its whole economy on one lucrative resource, it often lets all other industries fall by the wayside. Iran, notes Karl, is another example of “Dutch Disease.” In Iran, “Dutch Disease” led to an economy characterized by inflation and balance-of-payments deficits. Economic growth and institutional development occurred simultaneously and were initiated by the arrival of multinational oil companies. The fate of the Pahlavi regime, state building, and the oil industry were inextricably linked. Karl’s analysis of the role of natural resources in state formation, and their role in creating links with foreign powers, have implications in the cases of Saudi Arabia and Iran.

Beverly Milton-Edwards argues that in the Middle East, state creation was an artificial process initiated by foreign powers, namely the French and British. As a result, citizens felt little loyalty towards the state entity. Milton-Edwards asks: “To what extent did colonization
promote state formation in the region?" and "To what extent was the Western or European inspired model rooted in the region?" Milton-Edwards posits three ways in which foreign powers were involved in the Middle East, ranging from the least foreign involvement to the most: mandates, protectorates, and colonies. Institutions of the state and government that evolved under Islamic rule were replaced with European forms of government based on principles of freedom and democracy, but also on a practice of colonial rule. Milton-Edwards emphasizes that no single phenomenon can describe the experience of the region as a whole, but that the economic role of oil rents must be factored into the region. She outlines Hazem Beblawi and Giacomo Luciani’s theory of rentierism. Like Owen, Beblawi and Luciani state that rentier states do not derive income from taxation or internal sources, but instead rely on revenue derived from external rents from possessing lucrative national resources. The state has a monopoly on rents and distributes benefits to citizens while receiving nothing in return. This type of economic system is important for Jordan, Saudi Arabia, and Iran. Furthermore, Milton-Edwards states that the predominant political regime found in the Middle East are monarchies, one-party systems, imam-chief systems, or post-colonial systems.

Simon Bromley views the beginning of modern state formation in the Middle East in much the same way as other authors do: it originated during the decline of the Ottoman Empire and subsequent European intervention. He argues that there were indicators of state formation present in the Ottoman Empire, such as the tanzimat system, which originated in the mid 19th century. The creation of modern nation states in the Western sense, however, actually started with European domination of the economies in the region, the imposition of foreign currencies, the imposition of administrative systems based on European legal codes, foreign control of public revenue and expenditure, and direct foreign occupation and control of commerce and

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3 See the “useful terms” section or the Jordan case study chapter for a definition.
finance. Bromley concludes that there are three important factors to consider when examining state creation in the Middle East: 1) the account of state formation must relate the development of the state apparatus to the change in the nature of social relations which govern material reproduction, 2) the pattern of state formation is shaped by the position of the state in the world market/state system and the indigenous response, and 3) if state formation is to be viewed through a historical lens, then it is important to pay attention to the social forces which struggled to reproduce and transcend relations of appropriation and command.

**General Theories of Nation Building**

Juan Linz and Alfred Stepan make an important distinction, one that I also want to make, between ‘the nation’ and ‘the state’. Linz and Stepan argue that the nation is more conceptual than the state; it is a “sphere of values.” The nation has no organizational characteristics comparable to those of the state, i.e., no autonomy, agents, or rule, and the only resources of a nation are derived from the psychological identity of people. In the following, I outline what various authors have written about ‘the nation’ as defined separately from ‘the state’.

Rokkan argues that nation building followed, or occurred along with, state building. He outlines a number of factors necessary for nation building. He makes an important distinction between the nation building that took place in the early European states, such as France, and nation building that took place in later states, such as Germany. He identifies a few important factors for nation building: coping with administration unification, addressing issues of national identity building, and roping in territories that were accustomed to high levels of autonomy and thus resisted state centralization of power. Rokkan also identifies the Protestant Reformation
as a key factor in the transition from state building (phase one) to nation building (phase two) and the development of unified cultures before the era of mass politics (phases three and four). He states that nation building in Europe also depended on the initial conditions of linguistic and ethnic unification. Different European states had different linguistic developments, and therefore different processes of power consolidation, unification, and center-periphery linkage.

Linz and Stepan contend that state building generated nation building, and eventually a process of democratization, in Europe. State building in Europe was accelerated by the crisis of feudalism and the Renaissance and Reformation. The authors aim to determine under what conditions state policies aimed at nation building and state policies aimed at democratization were congruent. They claim that it is only when there is an awakened or existing nation, no irredenta outside state borders, and low cultural diversity that the aforementioned is the case.

**Nation Building in the Middle East**

Owen argues that the Middle East has had a challenging time with the concept of the nation. He argues that the nation, which in his view is a constructed entity, often came into being in Middle Eastern states at the same time that state formation was taking place. A new regime’s attempts to control this process and establish a national identity through the use of passports, taxation, etc. often faced obstacles in the form of existing identities, such as tribal ones.

Milton-Edwards also discusses the concept of the nation in the context of the Middle East, and considers the views of a few other scholars. She points out that Elie Kedourie believes that the nation in Middle Eastern states is often linked to political Islam, and that John Hutchinson and Anthony Smith disagree with Kedourie’s view of nationalism, claiming that he
makes out nationalism to be too much of a destructive force. She then adds that Ernest Gellner believes that nationalism is a modern concept that arose after the Western Industrial Revolution, and that culture and language are important signifiers of national identity in the 20th century. She also points out that according to Smith, the preexisting ethnic bonds are an explanatory phenomenon in nationalism. She concludes by contending that Benedict Anderson explores the psychological appeal of nationalism, stating that the nation is an imagined product due to the decline of other bonding elements, such as religion.

Though the aforementioned concepts of the nation and nationalism vary to a certain degree, Milton-Edwards observes that they all take a Eurocentric view of ‘the nation’. Milton-Edwards attempts to ameliorate this shortcoming by discussing two ways the nation in the Middle East could be conceptualized: one is to view it from a Western model standpoint, the other is to view it as more indigenous -- as something that draws upon the concept of the umma—the community of Muslims—the tribe, or ethnic affiliation. She argues that in the historical context of the Middle East, the nation has been associated with: 1) the state, anti-colonial sentiment, yet dependent on Western notions of state, class and ideology, and is often imposed top-down, 2) post-colonial, anti-Zionist, and social liberation oriented movements of state elites, and 3) theocracy-based and pan-Islamic notions of the state, which is the product of an uneasy marriage between Islam and the West at the beginning of the 20th century. She adds that two unifying forces that transcend the state, which have been present in the Middle East since the turn of the 20th century, are Arab nationalism and pan-Islamism.
General Theories of Regime Building and Democratization

Turning to an examination of theory on regime building and the process of democratization, I first examine Robert Dahl’s seminal work on this topic. Dahl writes that there are two key factors for determining regime type: political participation—how inclusive the political system is—and political contestation—the level of political liberalization within the political system. A strong presence of both these factors is integral to democratization and are the two most important determinants of whether or not a regime is democratic. Dahl states that there are four extreme regime types: a closed hegemony in which neither participation nor contestation exists, a competitive oligarchy in which there is full contestation but no participation, an inclusive hegemony in which there is full participation but no contestation, and a polyarchy in which there is full participation and contestation (see Figure 1). In reality, most regimes fall somewhere in between these extremes, with varying levels of participation and contestation.

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4 When I refer to ‘political liberalization’ in subsequent sections of this study, I am not using it synonymously with ‘contestation’. Rather, I am referring to a process of moving closer to the polyarchy quadrant of Dahl’s chart; a process of the opening of the political system. In other words, I am referring to a process of democratization that includes increases in both political participation and contestation, not just changes in contestation.
Dahl discusses three paths for moving from a closed hegemony to the three other regime types: from a closed hegemony to a competitive oligarchy, the level of contestation allowed—political parties, organizations, etc.—increases, but participation remains nil; from a closed hegemony to an inclusive one, the amount of participation allowed increases—a greater number of people are allowed to have a role in political processes—but contestation remains nil; from a closed hegemony to a polyarchy, both contestation and participation need to increase significantly. The conditions presented by Dahl as being important for polyarchy have important implications in the context of the cases in this study.

Linz and Stepan also discuss regime type and democratization, specifically focusing on what it means for a regime to be a consolidated democracy. They argue that a democracy can be consolidated in three ways: 1) behaviorally, i.e., when a regime is territorially consolidated, when no significant national, social, political, or institutional actors spend resources to create a non-democratic regime or turn to violence or foreign intervention to secede from the state, 2)
attitudinally, i.e., when a strong majority of the public believes that democratic procedures and institutions are the best way to govern collective life as a society, and 3) constitutionally, i.e., when governmental and non-governmental forces in a territory of the state become subjected to, or used to, the resolution of conflict within specific laws, procedures, and institutions sanctioned by the democratic process. The authors also observe that a defined state must be present before the process of creating a democratic regime can occur. If a state exists, then five other conditions must also exist for the process of democratic consolidation to be successful: 1) a civil society must exist, 2) there must be an autonomous, valued political society, 3) the rule of law to ensure citizens’ freedoms and independent associational life must be present, 4) the state bureaucracy is useable by the new government, and finally, 5) there exists and institutionalized economic society. Linz and Stepan pose the questions “Under what conditions do nation-states and democracy form complementary logics? Conflicting logics?” and “What makes democracy consolidation more or less likely?” The response the authors provide to these questions is that nationalizing state policies can occur without democratic policy logic, or the desire for it. A key variable in democratic theory is the degree to which people in a territory accept the scope and domain of the state as the entity responsible for legitimate decision-making. Furthermore, Linz and Stepan include three key observations about democracy: 1) democracy is harder when there exists a heterogeneous population, 2) to make democracy work in multicultural places, the norms, practices and institutions of democracy must be carefully crafted, and 3) the fact simply exists that some ways of dealing with stateness are inherently non-democratic. In the context of the Middle East, Linz and Stepan ask an important question: “How can democracy be achieved in multinational states?” If people feel foreign to the territory in which they exist, and are denied citizenship, then democratic consolidation is unlikely, and
can only be remedied if all citizens are given a common “roof” of individual rights. They argue that in the context of the Middle East, the concept of the ‘state-nation’ as opposed to the ‘nation-state’ is a better way to define the experience of the region. The state-nation is a multicultural and national, but still engenders strong identity and loyalty from citizens; an example of this would be the United States.

Linz and Stepan also outline three regime types that are applicable to the Middle East. The first regime type is a totalitarian regime in which social, political, and economic pluralism do not exist, there is a unified, articulated ideology, intensive and extensive mobilization of the population, and leadership that rules charismatically with undefined limits. Another regime type is a post-totalitarian regime, which encompasses a range of regime types, but is different from authoritarian regimes in that there is less economic and social pluralism than in authoritarian regimes. In both aforementioned regime types, there is limited political pluralism. The final regime type is a democracy, of which there are two subtypes: consociational—ones in which coalition building occurs amongst non-majority segments, and majoritarian—ones in which those who hold a majority of the vote gain power. Within the post-totalitarian (non-democratic) context, there are many types of regimes, including hierarchical military regime, non-hierarchical military regimes, sultanistic regimes based on personalized rule, and civilian led regimes.

Linz and Stepan identify two paths of democratic transition: 1) through the rising up of civil society and a collapse of a non-democratic regime, through revolution, or through a non-hierarchical military led coup, and 2) a transition initiated by a hierarchical state or regime, after which there is no guarantee of an interim government. Like Dahl, Linz and Stepan view free and fair elections as being crucial to democracy. Elections also allow new political actors to
emerge and are necessary for building up the proper institutions for democracy such as legislatures, constitutional assemblies, competitive political parties. Finally, Linz and Stepan argue that the constitution-making environment is a too-often neglected aspect of democratic transition and consolidation. They outline six contexts for constitution-making: 1) the retention of the constitution created by a non-democratic regime, 2) the retention of a paper constitution that becomes destabilized when used under more electorally competitive conditions, 3) the creation by a provisional government of a constitution with some de jure non-democratic powers, 4) the use of a constitution created under highly constraining circumstances reflecting de facto power of non-democratic institutions and forces, 5) the restoration of a previous democratic constitution, and 6) the process of free and consensual constitution-making among democratically elected representatives. The authors’ analysis about forms of democratic transition has more implications for the cases in this study than does their analysis on constitution-making.

Rokkan briefly comments on the transition to democracy that can occur after state formation and power consolidation have occurred. He argues that once borders have been consolidated, successful power consolidation often leads to less a desire on the part of the newly incorporated population to leave, but at the same time, leads to an increased demand for a voice in the new state entity. He argues that in Europe, if there were close economic ties between urban elites and the rural populations, then there was a greater chance for a successful transition to a full-suffrage competitive democracy. Rokkan also argues that the geographical size and location of the state have implications for democracy, as do class structure, tax burdens, ease of resource extraction, and geopolitical issues. Rokkan notes that in Europe, smooth transitions to mass politics in phases three and four occurred when either the territory was remote from the
trade belt so that a unique cultural and identity could develop, or the territory was within the central belt and could establish consociational ties toward a central state apparatus. Obstacles to the transition to mass politics occurred when there was a strong central build-up at the edge of the trade belt, or when power consolidation and nation building were followed too closely by a transition to mass politics. Rokkan notes that low levels of political mobilization of the population at the time of state building is key for the successful development of mass politics later on. In other words, it is necessary to consolidate state power and work out issues in the state building process before the general population gains greater participation and contestation. Rokkan’s phases have important implications for the cases in this study since none has transitioned to phases three or four.

Charles Tilly raises three important issues vis-à-vis the study of regime type and democratization. He first argues that in terms of political standing, the population needs to know what regime type it is dealing with. The population must realize that democracies behave differently from other political regimes in how they respond to external interventions [on sovereignty], deal with international relations, and fight wars. Second, Tilly states that democracy is good because it gives a regime’s population collective power and rescues people from the tyranny and mayhem that prevails in most political regimes. Democracy delivers better living conditions in terms of education, medical care, and legal protection. Finally, Tilly argues that democratization only occurs under rare social conditions, but when it does, it greatly affects the citizens of a regime.

Tilly outlines three conditions necessary for democratization. First, there must be a unitary state. Second, everyone within the territory must be allowed citizenship. Third, there must be state activities such as elections and tax collection. Tilly then identifies four partly
independent dimensions of variation among regimes, so as to be able to distinguish regime type and to test for democracy: 1) breadth—has suffrage been extended to a whole state’s adult voting age population, 2) equality—do all citizens, regardless of distinguishing characteristics, have equal rights, 3) protection—are a state’s citizens protected from arbitrary action by the state, and 4) mutually binding consultation—do states have the clear and enforceable obligation to deliver certain things to its citizens. Together, these four variables qualify as a single variable: the degree of democracy present in a state. If a regime is moving toward the higher end of each of these categories, this signals democratization.\textsuperscript{128}

Tilly brings up another important aspect of democracy: a state’s capacity to enforce its political decisions. It is possible to have a high capacity for enforcement and to be undemocratic, or to have a low capacity for enforcement and be democratic. The extremes are low capacity and undemocratic, and high capacity and democratic.\textsuperscript{129} A high-capacity undemocratic regime is characterized by little public voice permitted by the state, high involvement by the security forces, and regime change that occurs either through top-down methods or mass rebellion. A low-capacity undemocratic regime is characterized by warlords, ethnic blocks, religions mobilization, and frequent civil wars. A high-capacity democratic regime is characterized by frequent social movements, political party mobilization, and high political activity. A low-capacity democratic regime is characterized by frequent social movements, interest group activity, and political party mobilization, but less effective state monitoring.\textsuperscript{130}

Juan Linz offers important insight into two regime types relevant to the Middle East: totalitarian and authoritarian regimes. Linz argues that a totalitarian regime includes three characteristics: 1) there is a monistic, but not monolithic center of power, and any pluralism that
exists derives its legitimacy from that center, is controlled by the center, and is a political
creation rather than a movement from a preexisting society, 2) there is an exclusive, autonomous,
and intellectually elaborate ideology used by ruling groups as a basis for policies or to
manipulate and legitimize their power, and 3) citizen participation in mobilization for political
and collective social action is encouraged and channeled through a single party and many
monopolistic secondary groups.\textsuperscript{131} Linz stresses the importance of ideology in legitimizing
totalitarian systems and rule.\textsuperscript{132} Linz also outlines types of personal rule, such as traditional and
semi-traditional authority. An example would be tribal rule, which is especially relevant in the
cases of Jordan and Saudi Arabia.\textsuperscript{133} Another form of personal rule that Linz discusses is
sultanistic rule, which is based on personal leadership. Unlike traditional or semi-traditional
rule, it is not based on tradition or ideology, but on fear, rewards, and payouts to those who are
loyal.\textsuperscript{134} Another form of personal, which is often relevant in Latin American cases, is chieftain
politics. This regime type includes: 1) the repeated emergence of armed patron-client seats,
cemented on personal ties, 2) the lack of institutionalized means for succession to offices, 3) the
use of violence in political competition, and 4) the repeated failures of incumbent leaders to
guarantee their tenures.\textsuperscript{135} Finally, Linz outlines authoritarian regimes. He states that an
authoritarian regime is one with limited political pluralism, without an elaborate guiding
ideology, but with distinctive mentalities, a lack of extensive or intensive political mobilization
except at certain developmental points, and a regime in which a leader exercises power within
ill-defined limits but some predictable ones.\textsuperscript{136} Linz’s analysis of authoritarian regimes has
implications for the cases in this study.

Larry Diamond et al. discuss the impact of authoritarian regime structures on democracy
in Latin America. The authors believe that democracy is threatened both by the absence of an
authoritative state and by an overly dominant one. Though they were writing about Latin America, their argument has implications for cases in the Middle East. States in the Middle East often possess authoritarian regime types or have possessed them at some point in their respective histories. Therefore, Diamond et al.’s analysis has important implications for the cases presented in this study.

Having outlined existing literature on state creation, regime building, and democratization, I now turn to an examination of the history of each respective country presented in this study. At the end of each historical outline, I present an analysis of the factors in their respective histories that have shaped each country’s processes of state creation, regime building, and democratization. I begin with the case of Jordan.
CHAPTER I

Jordan and its Unique Position in the Region

Introduction

Jordan holds a unique position in the Middle East. When the Ottoman Empire collapsed at the end of World War I, Western powers carved up the territory and created the modern borders of Jordan. Since its creation as a state, Jordan has prospered, remained stable, and played an integral role as a regional mediator and ally of the British and Americans. Though it has faced moments of instability, the original monarchy regime structure has endured. The case of Jordan raises a number of important questions: How has Jordan arrived at its current position as a regional mediator, maintained domestic stability, and managed to remain the beneficiary of significant amounts of foreign economic aid despite lacking natural resources? And why, despite its stability, has Jordan not yet democratized?

I first provide a brief overview of Jordan’s history. Then, I present original analysis of how Jordan’s history has shaped its processes of state creation and regime building, as well as why it has not democratized. I argue that the main issues to consider when examining Jordan’s processes of state creation and regime building are the deeply-entrenched tribal structure, foreign creation of the state borders, Jordan’s rentier economic system despite lacking lucrative natural resources, and the political impact of a rentier economic system combined with a monarchical regime.
Geography and Early History

The region of modern-day Jordan is an area composed of several distinct sections that run north to south. The territory has both mountains and deserts within a relatively small area. The Jordan River, which is the main source of water for the country, runs west to east. Perhaps one of the most infamous bodies of water, the Dead Sea, is located half in Jordan, and half in Israel. Present-day Jordan was historically the location of stopping points on major trade routes between Europe and East Asia, as well as on the Hajj, the Muslim pilgrimage to Mecca, though the region itself was never a destination point.

The first notable people in the region were the Nabateans, who were responsible for carving the famous landmark of Petra; their capital in the 4th century BC. During the Byzantine period, which lasted from 330 to 1453 AD, the inhabitants of the region built numerous churches and monasteries. In the last century of Byzantine rule, Arab influence rose, with Arabs eventually controlling the region, spreading their language and, most importantly, spreading the new religion of Islam. Throughout the region’s history, tribes have been the main social structure, and have played a key role in economic, political, and social aspects of life.

It is impossible to discuss the region of modern-day Jordan without an examination of its connection to Islam. Islam originated in Mecca, which is located in the western Hejaz region of the Arabian Peninsula, in the early 7th century AD. After its birth, Islam quickly spread to other regions. The Prophet Mohammad, the founder of Islam, aspired to establish an umma, or a widespread community, based on Islam. By 651 AD, Arab Muslim forces had conquered the area of modern-day Jordan, extending the governing body, the caliphate, into the region.
During the next decade, four major caliphs, the leaders of the caliphate, held power: Abu Bakr, Oman, Othman, and Ali. After Ali was killed in 661 AD, the Umayyads seized power, and established Damascus, located in modern-day Syria, as the capital of the caliphate. The Umayyad dynasty lasted for almost 100 years. In 750 AD, the Abbasids, a group originating in Persia, took power. After overthrowing the Umayyads, the Abbasids moved the capital of the caliphate to Baghdad, located in modern-day Iraq. Although the Abbasids continued to rule from Baghdad through the 13th century, their power grew limited and weak. While allowing the Abbasid caliph to maintain a figurehead position in Baghdad, the Fatimids and Ismaili Shiites ruled the region respectively until 1070 AD. In 1086 AD, the Seljuk Turks swept into the region from East Asia and took power. The Crusaders, who arrived from Europe in 1089 AD and captured Jerusalem in 1099 AD, soon challenged the Seljuks’ power. The Crusades threatened Muslim pilgrims’ Hajj route to the holy city of Mecca.

The Ottomans

For most of the region’s history, tribes were resistant to the attempts at power consolidation of any group that came to control the region. Tribal resistance weakened each governing body, thus enabling tribes to remain fairly autonomous. However, the Ottoman Turks were able to incorporate tribes into their empire more successfully than any previous power. Beginning in 1516, the Ottomans worked to forcefully consolidated their power by ousting smaller regional powers. For ease of governance, the Ottomans divided up the region into vilayets, or governorships. However, the vilayet system failed to cement a uniform administration in the Arab regions of the empire because of their great distance from the center of Ottoman power.
The failure of the vilayet system meant that tribes retained a high degree of autonomy from the central Ottoman government.\textsuperscript{157} Despite this setback, by the mid 19\textsuperscript{th} century the Ottomans had managed to establish stronger ties with the tribal periphery and to marginally consolidate their power.\textsuperscript{158} One way they did so was by implementing the tanzimat reforms. The tanzimat reforms established a more centralized bureaucracy and a more sophisticated system of provincial governorships.\textsuperscript{159} These changes disappeared with the fall of the Ottoman Empire at the end of World War I.

**World War I and the Creation of Transjordan**

World War I was a watershed moment for the region. In 1916, in the midst of the war, the British elicited the help of Sharif Hussein, the provincial ruler of Mecca and Medina, to launch a revolt against the Ottomans, who had allied with the Germans.\textsuperscript{160} In return, the British promised Sharif Hussein an independent Arab state in the peninsula.\textsuperscript{161} However, when the war ended with an Allied victory, and the Ottoman Empire collapsed, the British failed to deliver on their promise of a state. Instead, the British, along with the French, assumed control of the former Ottoman territory.\textsuperscript{162} The French and British quickly carved up their newly acquired territory. The French took what would become Syria and Lebanon, and the British took what would become Transjordan, later Jordan, and Iraq.\textsuperscript{163} They also carved out a territory for a Jewish homeland, which the British had promised to diaspora Zionist movements in US and Europe.\textsuperscript{164} To marginally compensate Sharif Hussein, the British agreed to make his three sons, Faisal, Abdullah, and Ali, the leaders of three newly created mandates. The three sons were given Syria, Transjordan, and Iraq respectively.\textsuperscript{165}
For his part, Abdullah viewed Transjordan as merely an extension of the Hijaz where his father had been in power. As part of the Hashemite family, which claimed direct heritage from the Prophet Mohammad, Abdullah saw his rule of Transjordan as a continuation of his rightful power as a Hashemite. Transjordan’s similar topography and tribal social structure to those found in the Hijaz, enabled Abdullah to easily assume governance of the territory under the supervision of the British. Many tribal factions rallied around Abdullah. In March 1921, Abdullah and his military force, comprised mostly of Bedouin tribe members, reached Amman, an old center of power under the Ottomans. A month later, the British and Abdullah had organized a government with an advising body called the “council of consultants” and later the “central authority.” Ultimate power, however, resided with Abdullah as emir. The British also continued to play a major role in the region, namely by providing economic subsidies. Collaboration between Abdullah’s central authority and local tribal leaders helped to increase core-periphery ties, and to connect distant rural areas to the central of power in Amman. In addition, tribal institutions of a system of tax collection, a justice/law system, and a system of commerce formed the basis of important institutions in Transjordanian society.

The period between 1921 and 1946 was a time of great political change in Transjordan. On May 15, 1923, Britain, aware that Transjordan had attained stability, recognized it as as a nation-state. Britain marginally lessened its presence in the country, but continued to support it with economic subsidies. The external economic aid transformed Transjordan’s economy into a rentier economic system, but one that was based on the purchasing of a natural resource. Rather, the British recognized Abdullah as a stable regional ally, and were willing to provide economic aid to maintain this stability.
Perhaps the most influential development of this time period occurred on February 20, 1928, when the British and Abdullah established the Anglo-Transjordan Agreement.\textsuperscript{179} This agreement recognized Transjordan as an independent territory and no longer simply as a British mandate.\textsuperscript{180} The treaty also established Organic Law, which formed the foundation for a later constitution, and called for a representative body, as well as allowed for the creation of political parties.\textsuperscript{181} In reality, however, this agreement did little to diminish the power of British advisors.\textsuperscript{182} Abdullah also continued to rely on Britain economic subsidies to support the state’s economy.\textsuperscript{183}

**Independence**

Just as the World War I was a turning point in the region, so too was World War II. In May 1946, soon after the end of the war, the British and Abdullah reached yet another agreement called the Anglo-Transjordan Treaty. This treaty established the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, as an independent state with Abdullah as its king.\textsuperscript{184} The British, who had suffered great losses during World War II, began to reduce their presence in the country. A new rising power, the United States, filled the void by becoming the main provider of economic aid to Jordan.\textsuperscript{185} The newly independent state of Jordan was soon tested as a regional actor during the Arab-Israeli war of 1948.\textsuperscript{186} The creation of the Jewish state of Israel after World War II had angered its Arab neighbors. During the 1948 conflict, Jordan assumed an important role by taking in Palestinians who had been displaced.\textsuperscript{187} As a result of the conflict, the Jordanian regime assumed control of the West Bank. In a unique decision, Jordan became the only Arab state to extend full citizenship to Palestinians.\textsuperscript{188}
Despite this act of inclusivity, not all Palestinians wanted to be Jordanian citizens. Tensions increased between the Palestinian population and the Jordanian government. In 1951, a disgruntled Palestinian who felt that the king had not done enough to protest Jewish settlements, killed King Abdullah.\textsuperscript{189} Abdullah’s son Talal succeeded him. Talal implemented one of the most important political developments in Jordan’s history: the 1952 Constitution. The 1952 Constitution outlined the structure of the government system in the country. It defined an executive branch, represented by the king. The king had the power to appoint the prime minister, a council of ministers,\textsuperscript{190} judges, twelve regional governors, and the mayor of Amman.\textsuperscript{191} In terms of parliament itself, the king had the power to appoint members of the Upper House of parliament called the Senate, or House of Notables, while the lower house, the Chamber of Deputies, was to be elected by the people.\textsuperscript{192} The king could also veto anything passed in parliament.\textsuperscript{193} At that time women could not vote.\textsuperscript{194} The 1952 Constitution is still used today, though it has been amended. Soon after establishing the constitution, Talal was forced to abdicate due to health reasons. On May 2, 1953, when Talal’s son Hussein turned eighteen, he assumed the role of king in a smooth transition of power.\textsuperscript{195}

The political system continued to evolve under Hussein. During the early 1950s, the number of political parties increased.\textsuperscript{196} In October 1954, there were parliamentary elections, but Hussein, citing a lack of freeness and fairness, dissolved the elected parliament and called for new elections scheduled for 1956.\textsuperscript{197} The decision diminished political activity.\textsuperscript{198}
Domestic and Regional Instability

Significant challenges to Jordan’s stability arose in the late 1960s and early 1970s. By 1967, Palestinian nationalist organizations, namely the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) had begun to operate out of Jordan to launch attacks against Israel. King Hussein became increasingly unable to control the PLO. He feared that the PLO’s repeated attacks against Israel would cause Israel to retaliate against Jordan. Hussein’s fears came true when Israel attacked the West Bank on November 13, 1966, easily defeating the Jordanian military. Syrian-Israeli tensions were also high, and in the spring of 1967, Israeli forces shot down a Syrian aircraft near the Jordanian border, making conflict seem imminent. On June 5, 1967, Israeli forces launched an offensive attack against Syria, forcing Jordan and Egypt to come to Syria’s aid. Even collectively, the Arab militaries were not powerful enough to defeat the Israelis. At the conclusion of the war, Israel occupied the Golan Heights in Syria, the West Bank in Jordan, the Gaza Strip, and the Sinai in Egypt. On November 22, 1967, the United Nations passed Resolution 242, which called for a ceasefire, and brought the war officially to an end. The goal of the resolution was “land for peace,” calling for the Israelis to withdraw from Arab territory, but not specifying how much, or which pieces of, territory.

Once again, as was the case after 1948, Jordan was forced to deal with an influx of displaced Palestinians from the West Bank. Exacerbating an already unstable situation with the Palestinian population, King Hussein further angered Palestinians when he decided to engage in talks with Israel. In response to this decision, Palestinian fighters, the feyadeen, who were linked to the PLO, increased their activity levels within the country. As a reply to the domestic instability generated in the aftermath of the 1967 war, King Hussein made an
influential political decision: he imposed martial law in 1967, effectively shutting down parliament, prohibiting political party activity, banning elections, and quelling any civil society that had begun to develop.  

Martial law did not halt all the PLO’s activities. Tensions between the PLO and the Jordanian regime came to a head on June 9, 1970 when there was an attempted attack on the king’s life. Then, on September 6, 1970, a group of feyadeen hijacked a commercial airline flight and took hostages in an attempt to demonstrate how far the PLO was willing to go to achieve autonomy in the West Bank. Soon after, on September 16, 1970, a group of feyadeen took over Irbid, a northern city in Jordan. These events came to be known as Black September. The US and Britain, whom King Hussein had asked for assistance in dealing with the PLO, facilitated a conference between the Jordanian government and the PLO in Cairo on September 24, 1970. On September 27, they established a ceasefire between the feyadeen and the Jordanian forces. By June 18, 1971, Jordanian forces had driven the feyadeen out the country completely. Though the threat to domestic stability created by the PLO had been eliminated, the king maintained martial law, leaving no room for dissent or protest. In the aftermath of Black September, Jordan found itself isolated from other Arab states. These states were angered not only by King Hussein’s actions against the PLO, but also by his desire for talks with Israel. 

Despite animosity between Jordan and its Arab neighbors, they were forced to put aside their differences when tensions with Israel once again flared up in 1973. Jordan helped Syria and Egypt prepare for an offensive against Israel in an attempt to regain territory lost in 1967. King Hussein assisted with war preparations, but stressed that he wanted Jordan to remain out of actual combat. On October 5, 1973, Egypt and Syria launched an offensive against
Israel on the Jewish holiday of Yom Kippur. United Nations Resolution 388, which called for a ceasefire, negotiations between Israel and the Arab states, and a “just and durable peace in the Middle East,” as well as upheld the stipulations of Resolution 242 in terms of land divisions, helped bring the war to an end. The new resolution also returned governance of the West Bank to the Jordanian regime. In 1978, US President Carter mediated the Camp David talks in an attempt to facilitate peace between Israel and its Arab neighbors. Jordan ultimately decided to reject the Camp David Accords, seeing them as a violation of Palestinian rights. Most other Arab states rejected them as well, except for Egypt, which became the first Arab state to recognize Israel.

In the 1980s, Jordan’s economy experienced a downturn. Many Jordanians began to call for an end to martial law as a way to ameliorate the situation by giving the population a greater political voice. King Hussein, however, believed that it would be difficult to hold elections with the political status of the West Bank undecided. In 1984, King Hussein went so far as to prohibit elections unless the West Bank was included, thus rendering any possibility of elections dependent on the status of the West Bank.

Instability in the West Bank caused King Hussein to think carefully about its status as part of Jordan. In 1987, angered by the ongoing authority of the Jordanian government, the PLO launched an intifada, i.e., an uprising. The Jordanian government ultimately suppressed the uprising, but King Hussein decided to end Jordan’s governance of the West Bank on July 28, 1988, effectively turning it over to the PLO. Once Jordan no longer controlled the West Bank, King Hussein had no further basis on which to prevent elections. In 1989, he ended the twenty-two-year period of martial law and allowed elections, political parties, and voting once again. The first elections took place on November 8, 1989 and were widely considered to be
free and fair. In an attempt to maintain Jordan’s modern image in the eyes of the international community, women, who had gained the right to vote in 1974, were allowed to vote and to run for office in 1989. The political changes managed to appease the population and restore stability within the country, but the economic situation did not improve much.

**Modern-Day**

The political changes of the late 1980s did not continue into the 1990s because the regime feared that too much political liberalization would pose a challenge to its authority. Outside of the domestic sphere, the First Gulf War launched by the US against Iraq challenged Jordan’s strong relationship with the US. In 1991 when the US invaded Iraq in response to Iraq’s invasion of Kuwait, Jordan supported UN sanctions against Iraq, but expressed its disagreement with the invasion. At the conclusion of the First Gulf War, Jordan was forced to contend with a massive influx of Iraqi refugees, which added further stress to the country’s faltering economy.

In 1994, exacerbating an already tense situation in the country, King Hussein became the second Arab state to sign a treaty recognizing Israel. Five years later in 1999, King Hussein passed away a respected leader. Upon his passing, his second son, Abdullah, became King Abdullah II in a smooth transition of power. During his first few years as king, Abdullah II was forced to address a number of challenging domestic and international issues, including Jordan’s economy, the events of September 11th, 2001, a collapse of the Palestinian/Israeli peace process, another Palestinian intifada in 2000, and the US wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. Under Abdullah II’s leadership, Jordan continued to play a vital role in the region that went beyond the
scope of its economic and military means. After the events of 9/11, ties between Jordan and the US grew stronger, and Jordan backed the US’s military campaign against the Taliban in Afghanistan. This support led to an increase in US economic aid to the country. The second US war in Iraq in 2003 was less popular in Jordan. Many Jordanians were upset that the regime allowed the US to use Jordan as a base of military operations against another Arab state.

Recently, King Abdullah II has worked to strengthen ties between Jordan and other international powers, including the European Union, as well as with international economic institutions such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Trade Organization (WTO). He has also worked to strengthen Jordan’s relationship with Arab Gulf States and Egypt. Throughout the course of his reign thus far, King Abdullah II’s main goal has been economic improvement within the country, but the cost of this focus has been that political liberalization has remained largely stagnant. However, in 2013, he authorized the establishment of the Independent Election Commission (IEC) to oversee elections; the freeness and fairness of elections has increased since then. Despite this change, levels of political participation remain low, as do levels of contestation. Additionally, civil society in Jordan remains weak.

I now turn to an analysis of state creation and regime building processes in Jordan and posit arguments as to why Jordan has not democratized.
ANALYSIS

Jordan did not exist as a state, or even as a defined territory, prior to the start of the 20th century. The region was not a destination point; rather it was a throughway for trade and religious pilgrims to Mecca and Medina. The region that is now Jordan was composed of nomadic tribes, did not have a core elite group, or even a central city. The tanzimat reforms implemented by the Ottomans in the 19th century helped to consolidate their power in the region somewhat, though tribes continued to resist increased power consolidation. Thus, it can be proposed that before that 20th century:

_Hypothesis 1_: The tribal structure of society and the transitory nature of the region up until the 20th century prevented the emergence of a core elite group able to design a power center. Their absence hindered the formation of an indigenous state.

_Hypothesis 2_: The tanzimat reforms implemented by the Ottoman Empire helped Ottoman leadership to consolidate its power in the region.

However, the process also encountered a counterforce:

_Hypothesis 2a_: Tribal resistance to increased consolidation of Ottoman power hindered the effective incorporation of the periphery into the Ottoman core.
As I already explained, the 20th century marked a turning point for the region. The collapse of the Ottoman Empire at the conclusion of World War I paved the way for state creation in the region. The British and French carved up the territory into mandates under their respective leaderships. The British had received help from the provincial ruler of Mecca, Sharif Hussein, in rebelling against the Ottoman Empire. In return, the British had promised him a state in the Arabian Peninsula. At the conclusion of the war, the British failed to keep their promise, and instead granted Sharif Hussein’s three sons, Abdullah, Faisal, and Ali, power in the new mandates of Transjordan, Syria, and Iraq respectively. Abdullah’s new government had an insufficient tax base, and thus Transjordan was forced to rely on British economic subsidies for economic revenue. Foreign economic subsidies created a rentier economic system in the fledgling state. Given Transjordan’s early history, it can be proposed that:

**Hypothesis 3**: Upon defeating the Ottoman Empire, the Allied forces dismantled the institutional framework that the former had built. The continued presence of the Allied forces in the region hindered an indigenous state creation process.

**Hypothesis 4**: Foreign economic subsidies created a rentier economic system in Transjordan. The rentier economic system, combined with a monarchical regime structure, prevented the regime from being accountable to the population. The lack of accountability hindered participation and contestation and precluded the creation of a democratic regime.
In 1923, the British and Abdullah negotiated a treaty that recognized Transjordan as a nation-state that could someday become independent. The British, however, retained a significant amount of power in the country and continued to provide economic support. During the 1920s, Abdullah managed to reduce the number of cross-border raids between tribes in Transjordan and the Hijaz region of what would become Saudi Arabia. He also managed to marginally increase the government’s ability to collect taxes from the population. In 1928, Abdullah and the British established another treaty that defined Transjordan as its own territory and no longer simply a mandate. The 1928 treaty also created a legislative council, allowed for political parties, and established Organic Law, which served as rudimentary constitution. Given the developments in Transjordan during the 1920s, it can be proposed that:

_Hypothesis 5:_ Decreased tribal raids in the 1920s helped to define the borders of the state and to increase the incorporation of the tribal periphery into the power center. Both measures aided the process of consolidating and legitimizing the power of the state.

_Hypothesis 6:_ The creation of Organic Law, a legislative council, and the establishment of the first political parties increased contestation. These developments marginally increased political liberalization.

Transjordan gained full independence in 1946. Transjordan had been drawn into World War II on the side of the Allies through its ties with Britain and at the conclusion of the war, the two established another treaty. The treaty renamed the country the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan with Abdullah as its king. After the war, the British decreased their presence in the
country but continued, along with the United States, to provide large quantities of economic aid. Soon after gaining independence, Jordan took in a large number of displaced Palestinians as a result of the 1948 Arab-Israeli war. The regime also assumed control of the West Bank and became the first Arab country to extend full citizenship to Palestinians. Harboring Palestinians resulted in domestic tension. Issues with Palestinian segments of population came to a head in 1951 when a disgruntled Palestinian assassinated King Abdullah. In 1952, Talal established the constitution that is still used today. The constitution provided a foundation for increased political participation and contestation, although women could still not vote. During the early 1950s, the number of political parties increased, but due to domestic instability and tension with Palestinian segments of the population, Hussein dissolved parliament in 1954. In 1967, Jordan was drawn into the conflict between Israel and Syria/Egypt. As a result of the war, Jordan lost the West Bank, as well as Arab Jerusalem, and received another influx of Palestinians. Due to the instability generated by the war, King Hussein declared martial law in 1967, dissolving parliament, and banning political parties and elections. Soon after, King Hussein expressed a desire to come to an understanding with Israel. This decision angered many in the PLO, namely its political fighters, the *feyadeen*. The situation between the PLO and the Jordanian regime became increasingly unstable, with events coming to a head in September of 1970. Eventually, Jordanian forces were successful in expelling the PLO from the country, but King Hussein maintained martial law. Given this part of Jordan’s history, it can be proposed that:

*Hypothesis 7*: The large presence of Palestinians in Jordan after 1948 engendered political disunity and undercut the process of unifying the state.
**Hypothesis 8:** The 1952 Constitution provided the foundation for increased political participation and contestation. This development increased political liberalization.

Despite the aforementioned political development, another major event undercut increased political liberalization:

**Hypothesis 9:** When King Hussein imposed martial law in 1967, he prohibited elections and outlawed political party activity. This measure decreased political participation and contestation, and therefore stymied political liberalization.

The domestic climate in Jordan calmed after the events of Black September in 1970, and the subsequent ousting of the PLO. However, regional tensions remained high when Syria and Egypt decided to launch an offensive against Israel on Yom Kippur in 1973 in an attempt to regain lost territory from 1967. The war mostly resulted in a territorial stalemate, but Jordan regained governance of the West Bank. A year later, in 1974, the regime granted women the right to vote in order to maintain its international image as a modern state. More political changes followed in the 1980s as Jordan’s economy deteriorated and the regime searched for ways to appease the population and maintain stability. In 1988, King Hussein announced that Jordan would be turning over governance of the West Bank to the PLO, a measure that reduced pressure on the Jordanian government to try to effectively govern the West Bank. Finally, in 1989, King Hussein ended martial law, reinstated elections and voting, and allowed political parties to operate once again. King Hussein hoped that these measures would reduce the instability generated by deteriorating economic conditions. The 1989 election was generally
considered free and fair, and the election successfully established a representative lower house of parliament. Given this part of Jordan’s history, it can be proposed that:

**Hypothesis 10:** Women gained the right to vote in 1974. This measure increased political participation and consequently the level of political liberalization.

**Hypothesis 11:** The end of martial law in 1989 and the restoration of elections, political parties, and voting increased political participation and contestation. These measures further increased the level of political liberalization.

The political liberalization initiated by King Hussein 1989 did not last into the 1990s. Jordan remained reliant on the US for economic subsidies, which placed the former in a precarious position during the First Gulf War, when the US invaded Iraq. Jordan was forced to support the invasion due to its need for economic subsidies from the US, though politically, it opposed the invasion. The war created an influx of Iraqi refugees into Jordan, putting additional economic pressure on the country. In 1994, Jordan became the second Arab state, besides Egypt, to sign a peace treaty with Israel. Soon after establishing this treaty, and after ruling for almost fifty years, King Hussein passed away in 1999. His second son, Abdullah II, assumed power. King Abdullah II’s main focus has been on the economy, as well as on Jordan’s international position. Ties between Jordan and the US grew stronger after the events of September 11, 2001 when King Abdullah II pledged to help the US fight terrorism. A trend in recent political elections has been a high degree of freeness and fairness, particularly since the creation of the
IEC. Participation in Jordan’s political processes, however, remains low. The country also continues to rely heavily on economic subsidies from the US. Additionally, civil society in the country remains weak. Given Jordan’s recent history, it can be proposed that:

**Hypothesis 12**: The creation of the IEC in 2013 helped to ensure free and fair elections. This measure increased the level of political liberalization.

Undercutting the significance of the aforementioned development is the following:

**Hypothesis 13**: Jordan’s ongoing rentier economic system, combined with a monarchical regime structure, prevents the regime from being accountable to the population. This lack of accountability prevents full participation and contestation, which in turn obstructs political liberalization.

**Conclusion**

The monarchical regime structure in Jordan remains strong. The regime appears to initiate increases in levels of political participation and contestation in response to popular pressure in times of economic downturns. However, there is also precedent of social unrest leading to decreased levels of political participation and contestation, as was the case in 1967. How the regime will respond in the future to ongoing regional instability and a faltering domestic economy remains to be seen. In addition, civil society remains weak and the royal family
remains unchallenged. It will be crucial to monitor the social, economic, and political conditions of the country moving forward to see if there are any conditions present for regime change or further political liberalization.
CHAPTER II

Saudi Arabia and its Regional Hegemony

Introduction

Saudi Arabia presents a slightly more complex case than that of Jordan. Unlike Jordan, Saudi Arabia possesses copious amount of a vital natural resource, oil. Due to Western extensive purchases of oil, Saudi Arabia has a rentier economic system in the traditional sense. Rents from Western oil purchases have made Saudi Arabia a powerful regional actor, a position augmented by its status as the protector of Mecca and Medina, the two holiest cities in Islam. Though foreign powers did not set the borders of the state as they did in the case of Jordan, Western oil purchases contributed significantly to the fast pace at which Saudi Arabia’s state power was consolidated. The regime of Saudi Arabia continues to be a monarchy comprised of family members of the founder of the state, Ibn Saud, and remains inextricably linked to the strict Wahhabi branch of Islam. The conservative-modern paradox that has been present throughout Saudi Arabia’s history raises a number of questions: To what extent has Wahhabism influenced Saudi Arabia’s processes of state creation and regime building? Are there any indications that social and economic liberalization, particularly in recent years, could translate into political changes?

As in the previous case, I first provide a brief overview of Saudi Arabia’s history. Then, I offer original analysis Saudi Arabia’s state creation and regime building processes, as well as why it has not democratized. I argue that the main issues to consider when examining the processes of state creation and regime building in Saudi Arabia are the prevalent tribal structure
of society, the use of religion to legitimize the regime’s power, and foreign purchases of oil creating a rentier economic system.

**Geography and Early History**

The modern-day state of Saudi Arabia occupies most of the Arabian Peninsula. The peninsula is a plateau made up of desert with limited water.\(^{249}\) For most of the region’s history, the predominant social structure has been a nomadic tribal system.\(^{250}\) The main tribal factions were Bedouin tribes who lived a nomadic, or semi-nomadic, lifestyle.\(^{251}\) During Ottoman times, the great distance of the peninsula from the center of Ottoman power resulted in a high degree of autonomy for the tribal populations. Society in the peninsula has always been extremely homogenous, both ethnically and religiously.\(^{252}\)

It is impossible to separate the history of the region from the development of Islam. The rise of Islam, which I discussed in the previous chapter on Jordan, cemented the region’s status as a destination point. By the 10\(^{th}\) century, Islam had spread far beyond the points of origin in Mecca and Medina, and the *caliphate* had begun to fracture; its sheer size making governance challenging. The Hashemite tribe, who claimed direct descent from the Prophet, gained power in Mecca and Medina from the 10\(^{th}\) century until World War I.\(^{253}\) Only in 1517, thirty-four years after the Ottoman Empire had begun to consolidate its power in the present-day Middle East, did the Hashemites accept marginal Ottoman control in the Hejaz. Despite this, the Hashemites retained a fair amount of autonomy given the Hejaz’s distance from the center of Ottoman power in Constantinople.\(^{254}\)
The Al Saud Tribe

The Hashemites had no control in the eastern part of the peninsula. In 1744, the Al Saud tribe, originating in the eastern Nejd region, began to rise to power under the leadership of Mohammad ibn Saud. Mohammad ibn Saud successfully gathered the support of other local tribes by forming an alliance with Mohammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab, the founder of the strict Wahhabi branch of Islam. The Al Saud tribe began to expand and consolidate its power across the peninsula using Wahhabism as a source of legitimacy.

When Mohammad ibn Saud died in 1765, parts of central and eastern Arabia were under Saudi/Wahhabi control. Upon Mohammad ibn Saud’s death, his son Abd al-Aziz succeeded him, expanding the tribe’s power even further, until his death in 1803. Abd al-Aziz’s son, Saud, succeeded him. On the Wahhabi side of the alliance, Mohammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab died in 1792. As a result of the Al Saud tribe’s expansion, the central Ottoman leadership began to take more notice of the tribe’s activities at the turn of the 19th century. Conflict ensued between the Al Saud tribe/Wahhabis and the Ottomans, and in 1804, the Al Saudi tribe captured Medina, briefly extending its power across portions of the whole peninsula. In 1814, Saud died, and his son, Abdullah, succeeded him. Abdullah was unable to continue expanding and consolidating the Al Saud tribe’s power. In 1818, when a period of fighting with the Ottomans concluded, many Saudi and Wahhabi leaders were sent to Constantinople to be executed. Saudi expansion of power was temporarily stymied.
Ibn Saud

The second period of Al Saud dominance in the peninsula began in 1824. Mohammad ibn Saud’s grandson, Turki, reasserted Saudi leadership by establishing a center of power in the city of Riyadh.⁶¹ Turki’s son, Faisal, succeeded him, and ruled until 1865.⁶² During Faisal’s rule, though the Hejaz remained under Hashemite control, the majority of Northern Arabia recognized Riyadh as the seat of power. Faisal continued to expand and consolidate Saudi power.⁶³ When Faisal died in 1865, succession disputes ensued. These disputes weakened the Al Saud tribe’s ability to maintain power in the peninsula, and in 1891, the Rashid tribe conquered Riyadh.⁶⁴ The second period of Al Saud dominance in the peninsula had come to an end.⁶⁵

Upon conquering Riyadh, the Rashid tribe exiled many members of the Al Saud leadership and their families. The future founder of Saudi Arabia, Ibn Saud, was exiled to Kuwait. During his exile, he became educated and built up a military following. In 1901, Ibn Saud and a small armed force marched to Riyadh and defeated the Rashid governor in 1902.⁶⁶ With Riyadh once again under Saudi control, Ibn Saud began to consolidate his power within the peninsula. Like previous Saudi leadership, Ibn Saud relied on Wahhabism to lend his efforts legitimacy.⁶⁷ Part of his strategy to gain control in the peninsula involved creating a stronger administration and establishing a stronger a military force.⁶⁸ In 1912, Ibn Saud established the _ikhwan_, a military force made up primarily of Bedouin tribe members.⁶⁹ The _ikhwan_ also assumed the role of a moral and religious police force, upholding the values of Wahhabism.⁷⁰

By the turn of the 20th century, Ibn Saud’s power was still concentrated in the eastern and central parts of the peninsula. The British incorporated the Hashemites into their war efforts in World War I, but the territory controlled by Ibn Saud remained out of the war.⁷¹ Despite the
lack of any physical intervention on the part of the British, they nonetheless helped pave the way for eventual Saudi statehood by weakening Hashemite power in the Hejaz and by contributing to the region’s economic development through oil subsidies. In terms of the former, the British weakened Hashemite power after the events\(^5\) surrounding Sharif Hussein and his sons transpired.\(^{272}\) With the Hashemites weakened in the Hejaz, Ibn Saud attacked Mecca and Medina, effectively extending his power across the entire Arabian Peninsula.\(^{273}\) In terms of the latter, British and American purchases of oil, which they had discovered in the early 20\(^{\text{th}}\) century, helped the region’s economy develop rapidly. Large sums of money flowing into the region in the form of oil rents cemented a rentier economic system that helped Ibn Saud develop the future Saudi state.\(^{274}\)

Throughout the 1920s, Ibn Saud used the wealth derived from oil to modernize the territory. He implemented a rudimentary system of tax collection and established communication and transportation systems that helped increase peripheral ties to his center of power.\(^{275}\) Ibn Sau struggled to establish a balance between conservative elements and those who favored modernization.\(^{276}\) Realizing that he could not consolidate his power without the support of conservative Bedouin factions, he worked to gain their support by using Wahhabism as a legitimizing force.\(^{277}\) Eventually, Ibn Saud was able to consolidate his power across the vast territory. He connected the periphery to the center of power in Riyadh through increased communication and transportation and used Wahhabism as a legitimizing tool. In 1932, he declared himself the ruler of a new state, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, with Riyadh as its capital.\(^{278}\)

\(^{5}\) I outlined these events in the previous chapter on Jordan.
The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

Upon establishing the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Ibn Saud began to further consolidate his power by implementing a national budget and a stronger system of taxation. The ulema had significant power within the government. Members of the ulema served in advisory roles to the Saudi regime on matters such as education and even foreign policy. Wahhabism proved to be a useful political tool for binding together various factions of society, effectively forming the basis of a national identity in the state. Additionally, Islamic Shari’a law formed the basis of state law. No other formal constitution was created, nor were there any institutions that represented real checks on the king’s power. Ibn Saud ruled as an absolute monarch and even the religious establishment had to defer to him for the final say on any domestic or international policy.

During the first years of his tenure as king, Ibn Saud saw to the unification of the western and eastern regions of the peninsula, but the final borders of the new state took some time to become firmly cemented. To the north, there were ongoing tribal raids across the Transjordan-Saudi Arabia border. To the south, only after border conflict with Yemen ended in 1934, did the present-day Saudi Arabia-Yemen border become established. Borders with Saudi Arabia’s other neighbors became firmly fixed by the 1950s.

The Effects of Oil

Rents stemming from Western purchases of oil began to exponentially shape the Saudi economy and society in the 1940s. By 1941, at the beginning of World War II, the British and Americans had fully exploited Saudi oil reserves. To manage oil production and the resulting wealth, the
Americans, in collaboration with the Saudi government, established ARAMCO, the Arabian-American Oil Company.²⁸⁴ During World War II, an increased need for oil to fuel Allied war efforts led to a dramatic spike in oil wealth in Saudi Arabia. Large oil rents allowed the regime to provide its citizens with extensive subsidies without them having to significantly contribute to the state’s economic revenue in the form of taxes.²⁸⁵ Oil wealth also allowed for continued modernization of transportation, communication, infrastructure, public schools, and education.²⁸⁶ These developments led to greater consolidation of state power.

There were, however, downsides to the oil wealth. Saudi leaders’ heavy reliance on wealth derived from oil discouraged them from diversifying the state’s economy, thus increasing the risk of Dutch Disease.⁶ Furthermore, unsurprisingly, the dramatic spike in wealth caused increased corruption, wastefulness, and lavishness within the regime. Though initially faced with an economic surplus, the Saudi government was forced to begin borrowing in the 1950s due to a rising deficit from a lack of prudent financial management of its oil wealth. Furthermore, the modernizing changes taking place caused a rift between conservative religious elements and the regime.²⁸⁷ Ibn Saud himself became overwhelmed with the fast-paced nature of societal changes. On November 9, 1953, he died, disappointed with the trajectory of his country.²⁸⁸

**Conservative-Modern Tensions**

Upon Ibn Saud’s death, Saud, his eldest son, succeeded him. Saud’s ascension to the monarchy represented a continuation of the old regime. However, Saud’s selected heir, Crown Prince

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⁶ Dutch Disease is when a country relies so heavily on one industry for economy revenue that it fails to diversify its economy. A collapse or downturn in the industry upon which the country relies then has devastating effects on the country’s economy because it relies solely on that industry to generate revenue (Hertog, “Shaping the Saudi State,” 539).
Faisal, advocated for modernizing the country. Throughout the 1950s, the rivalry between Saud and Faisal hindered effective governance. The wider royal family became increasingly worried about the trajectory of the country under Saud. \(^{289}\) In March 1958, a council composed of members of the royal family took a vote to oust Saud and put Faisal in power. \(^{290}\) Over the next few years, Faisal assumed an increasing number of responsibilities, and on November 2, 1964, he became king with the support of the *ulema*. \(^{291}\) As king, Faisal lived up to expectations: he increased the efficiency of the state bureaucracy and used Saudi Arabia’s Islamic hegemony to place it in a powerful regional position. \(^{292}\) He also continued to invest oil wealth in the development of infrastructure, job training programs for public sector positions, healthcare and welfare services, and communication services. These developments helped him consolidate state power. \(^{293}\)

As the budget, bureaucracy, and prosperity of the state continued to expand throughout the 1960s, a new middle class developed in society. \(^{294}\) Faisal, however, sought to ensure that it did not become too powerful. \(^{295}\) He also attempted to increase his control over the *ulema* by creating roles within the government for members of the *ulema* that were directly accountable to him. \(^{296}\) Faisal also strengthened Saudi Arabia’s ties with the United States not only in an economic sense, but also in a strategic sense. \(^{297}\) Encouraged by the US, he used oil rents to augment Saudi Arabia’s military forces. \(^{298}\)

**A Regional Giant**

Cognizant of its influence as a major producer of oil, Saudi Arabia formed the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) in the 1960s to represent these countries’ oil interests.
However, Saudi Arabia was unable to fully nationalize its oil until 1988. Saudi Arabia’s ongoing economic and strategic alliance with the US roped the kingdom into the Cold War. For the US, Saudi Arabia was a key factor in maintaining a balance of power in the Middle East, since Saudi Arabia actively disagreed with Nasser’s Pan-Arab, left-leaning, ideology in Egypt. The balance of power provided by Saudi Arabia ensured regional stability and an uninterrupted flow of oil to Western states.

Despite the strong Saudi-American alliance, relations were not always cordial between the two states. In 1973, when the US supported Israel in the 1973 Yom Kippur war, Faisal retaliated by decreasing the amount of oil Saudi Arabia supplied to the US in hopes of creating a shortage. Oil prices in the US spiked dramatically in 1973, yet the US did not change its policy or its actions vis-à-vis Israel, as Faisal hoped it would. Instead, Saudi Arabia’s actions merely compelled the US to engage in greater oil exploration and find alternative sources of the resource, hurting Saudi Arabia’s economy.

King Faisal was assassinated in March 1975. His half-brother, the Crown Prince Khaled, succeeded him, and Prince Fahd became the new Crown Prince. Economic and social development increased under Khaled. The 1979 Iranian Revolution and the subsequent rise of Ayatollah Khomeini’s theocratic Shia government posed a direct challenge to Saudi Arabia’s regional power and Islamic hegemony. Both events helped resurface the centuries-old Sunni-Shia tensions. Soon after the Iranian Revolution, there was an attack on the Great Mosque in Mecca. A group of religiously radical rebels, citing a need to target immoral behavior and corruption in the country and royal family, seized the mosque. The Saudi government blamed Iran, yet it turned out that a Saudi national had led the rebels. In response to this event and the Iranian Revolution in general, the Saudi regime took measures to augment the strict religious
nature of society to rival such changes in Iran.\textsuperscript{307} Women were prohibited from being in public without being completely covered, and the number of women in the workforce declined.\textsuperscript{308} In essence, the Iranian Revolution pushed Saudi Arabia to evolve into the strict, overtly religious, society it is today.\textsuperscript{309}

On June 3, 1982, King Khaled died; he was succeeded by Crown Prince Fahd. As king, Fahd maintained Saudi Arabia’s close relationship with the United States and increased the country’s purchases of military equipment from both the US and Britain. In keeping with the post-1979 societal changes, Fahd worked closely with the \textit{ulema} to further his religious image.\textsuperscript{310} Fahd was concerned with safeguarding the Saudis’ connection with Wahhabism, mostly as a means to oppose Iran’s rising religious influence in the region.\textsuperscript{311} Saudi Arabia faced a series of domestic and international challenges in the late 1980s and early 1990s, including a downturn in oil prices, ongoing tensions with Iran, and Iraq’s invasion of Kuwait, and subsequent US invasion of Iraq. The slump in oil prices forced the government to cut back on the welfare programs on which the public had come to rely. Furthermore, when Iraq invaded Kuwait in an attempt to gain control of Kuwait’s oil reserves, Saudi Arabia felt its stability and security threatened. The regime quickly called in US reinforcements, much to the displeasure of the domestic population and other Arab states.\textsuperscript{312} The regime was forced to obtain a religious decree, or \textit{fatwah}, in an attempt to legitimize its collaboration with the US.\textsuperscript{313} The US’s invasion of Iraq during the First Gulf War, during which the US military operated, in large part, out of Saudi Arabia, created further anger amongst the population.\textsuperscript{314} As a result, there was a resurgence of religious activism within the country in protest of the war and the continued presence of the US military.\textsuperscript{315}
Modern-Day

Today, the Saudi regime continues to rely on strict Wahhabi principles to lend it legitimacy. The Saudi-Wahhabi alliance remains a powerful status quo that is impossible to challenge, especially given that Saudi Arabia has a weak civil society and the *ulema’s* influence within the state apparatus. On an international level, Saudi Arabia continues to have a special relationship with the United States, despite disagreement on human and women’s rights.

Saudi Arabia has still not managed to effectively diversify its economy. A recent decline in oil prices and rising unemployment amongst its young population are threatening the domestic stability of the state. There are some members within the regime who realize that modernization and social change must take place in order to preserve stability within the state. In 2011, King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz Al Saud granted women the right to vote in an effort to maintain Saudi Arabia’s modern image in the eyes of the international community. Recently, the current Crown Prince, Mohammad bin Salman, or MBS, expressed a desire to move Saudi Arabia away from its reliance on oil. Additionally, this past November, he cracked down on corruption within the regime by targeting influential members of the royal family and jailing them for dishonest fiscal activities. However, his actions lacked transparency and it remains unclear as to his motives. MBS has called this crackdown, “shock therapy” to root out corruption. Some of the social changes MBS has supported are allowing women to drive as of June 2018 and creating women-only sections at sports stadiums. MBS shows no intention, however, of supporting or initiating political change. Furthermore, tensions with Iran remain high over which state has Islamic hegemony. This tension continues to play out in devastating proxy wars across the Middle East, most recently in Yemen and Syria.
ANALYSIS

Saudi Arabia covers most of the Arabian Peninsula. The vastness of the territory made it difficult for any single tribe or group to consolidate power prior to the 20th century. The peninsula’s population has always been fairly homogenous, and the predominant social structure has been a tribal one. The 1744 alliance between the Al Saud tribe and the Wahhabi branch of Islam provided the Al Saud tribe with a source of legitimacy. This legitimacy allowed the tribe to begin to conquer the peninsula, consolidate its power, and subjugate and unify tribes. Given Saudi Arabia’s early history, it can be proposed that:

**Hypothesis 1:** The vastness of the territory and the tribal structure of society prevented the emergence of a core group of elites able to unify economically and politically and consolidate their power.

Other factors, however, undercut the significance of the aforementioned condition:

**Hypothesis 2:** The region’s homogeneity helped the central Al Saud leadership to establish core-periphery ties and consolidate its power.

**Hypothesis 3:** Wahhabism lent the Al Saud tribe legitimacy that helped tribal leadership to establish core-periphery ties and to consolidate its power.
The second era of Saudi expansion began in 1824. By 1891, internal disputes had weakened the Al Saud tribe, and the Rashid tribe took Riyadh and exiled Ibn Saud, the future founder of Saudi Arabia, to Kuwait. In 1902, Ibn Saud rallied a group to march to Riyadh and reclaim power from the Rashids. He expanded and consolidated his power with the help of a newly strengthened alliance with the Wahhabis. In 1912, Ibn Saud established the *ikhwan*, which he used to continue to expand his power across the peninsula. During World War I, the Al Saud tribe remained neutral, but in the Hejaz, the Hashemites were incorporated into the war efforts by the British. After the war, the Hashemites’ position was significantly weakened. The weakened state of the Hashemites greatly aided Ibn Saud’s efforts to expand and consolidate his power. By the end of World War I, he was finally able to conquer the Hejaz and take the holy cities of Mecca and Medina. In addition, wealth from oil, which had been discovered in the early 20th century, helped Ibn Saud expedite a process of state creation. Foreign purchases of oil also led to the rapid development of the region’s economy. After a decade in the 1920s of using oil wealth to build up state apparatuses and bureaucracies, and to modernize the country, Ibn Saud declared the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in 1932.

The rentier economic system that developed in Saudi Arabia due to foreign oil purchases ensured that the state’s economy would develop without significant contributions from citizens in the form of taxes. Within the political system, Ibn Saud held ultimate power as king, and his family members filled other positions in government. The *ulema* played a large role in the regime as well. Islamic Shari’a law formed the basis of the new state’s constitution, and Ibn Saud allowed religious leaders to have influence in areas not normally within their jurisdiction, such as foreign policy. Wahhabism, which had long been an effective unifying force, proved to
be an effective basis of national identity as well. Given this part of Saudi Arabia’s history, it can be proposed that:

**Hypothesis 4:** The creation of the *ikhwan* helped to draw Bedouin tribes into Ibn Saud’s center of power prior to the creation of the state. This measure increased the ties between the core and the periphery and helped Ibn Saud to consolidate his power prior to the creation of the state.

**Hypothesis 5:** The development of the oil industry, and the economic subsidies derived from it, aided Saudi Arabia’s state creation process.

*Hypothesis 5a:* Improvements in infrastructure, communication and transportation as a result of oil wealth increased core-periphery ties and aided with the consolidation of state power.

*Hypothesis 5b:* However, Saudi Arabia’s rentier economic system, combined with a monarchical regime structure, reduced the regime’s accountability to the population. This lack of accountability hindered participation and contestation and precluded the development of a democratic regime.

State creation and Ibn Saud’s power consolidation did not occur without challenges. A struggle emerged between conservative and modernizing elements within the country as rapid developments took place in society. Additionally, border disputes with neighboring states such as Transjordan and Yemen challenged the borders of the new state. Despite these challenges, Ibn Saud was able to use the economic subsidies derived from oil to increasingly consolidate his
power and establish strong core-periphery links. During World War II, when the Allied powers’ need for oil increased, there was a spike in oil wealth flowing into the country. Ibn Saud used this wealth to make additional modernizing changes, including developments in communication, technology, and transportation. By the 1950s-1960s, the strength and scope of the state’s bureaucracy and administration had increased. The political system, however, remained stagnant, participation and contestation remained nonexistent, and civil society continued to be weak. Large quantities of oil wealth had negative side effects. In the 1950s and 1960s, corruption and misuse of government funds were prevalent within the regime. Furthermore, tensions between the regime and the conservative ulema continued to rise as a result of the rapid modernization. Given this part of Saudi Arabia’s history, it can be proposed that:

**Hypothesis 6**: Border disputes over the first few decades of Saudi Arabia’s statehood posed a threat to the physical scope of the state, challenging Ibn Saud’s ability to consolidate state power.

Another factor, however, undercut the significance of the aforementioned condition:

**Hypothesis 7**: Wealth from oil rents contributed to the strengthening of state bureaucracies and the state apparatus. This development allowed Ibn Saud’s to further consolidate state power.

In terms of the political regime:
**Hypothesis 8**: Corruption within the regime prevented state institutions from serving the population effectively. This condition obstructed political liberalization.

The nature of Saudi Arabia’s society changed after the 1979 Iranian Revolution. The revolution challenged Saudi Arabia’s status as the regional Islamic hegemon, and since that time, relations between the two states have been tenuous. The Iranian Revolution prompted the Saudi regime to tighten its control over society and augment the strict religious nature of the state. The regime granted the ulema more influence in all aspects of Saudi society.

By the 1980s, Saudi Arabia had become the largest producer and exporter of oil. Increasing revenue from oil led to economic and social changes, yet the political system remained stagnant. However, the lack of economic diversification meant that any decrease in oil prices, such as those that occurred after Saudi Arabia’s attempted embargo on shipments to the US in 1973, threatened the welfare of its citizens.

Some unprecedented changes have taken place in recent years. In 2011, women were granted the right to vote and as of June 2018, women will be allowed to drive. The current Crown Prince, MBS, is attempting to move the country away from its reliance on oil, so as to diversify the economy. Despite social and economic changes in recent years, the population has no political outlet for protest and civil society remains weak. Political positions within the regime remain limited to the royal family. Given Saudi Arabia’s recent history, it can be proposed that:

**Hypothesis 9**: Societal changes after the 1979 Iranian Revolution, and the ongoing influence of religious establishment, have led to societal conditions that hinder equal
status for half the population. This exclusion hinders the potential for political liberalization.

**Hypothesis 10:** The view of democracy as an inherently Western concept, combined with prevalent anti-Western sentiment and a weak civil society, decreases the chance that the population will call for greater political liberalization.

Despite the aforementioned conditions, recent social liberalization indicates that, perhaps, political liberalization could follow in the future:

**Hypothesis 11:** Women gaining the right to vote in 2011 increased political participation. This measure is a positive indicator for potential political liberalization. In addition, recent social changes for women provide greater equality for half the population. These changes could also represent positive indicators for future political liberalization.

**Conclusion**

The monarchical regime structure of Saudi Arabia, still comprised of Ibn Saud’s family members, remains strong. However, a decline in oil prices and reserves have forced some leaders in the regime to begin to think about alternative ways to stimulate the Saudi economy. If the Saudi regimes hopes to is critical that it does so since the population has come to rely on economic subsidies. Should these subsidies cease, there could be popular uprisings that would
threaten the stability of the regime. For the moment, participation and contestation remain almost non-existent, and civil society remains weak. There have been social changes recently that have granted women greater rights and opportunities within society, however these changes have not spilled over into the political sphere. It will be crucial moving forward to continue to monitor the social, economic, and political conditions to see if there are any indicators of potential regime change or political liberalization.
CHAPTER III

Iran and the Political Liberalization that Could Have Been

Introduction

Iran presents the most complex case of the three considered in this study. The region had a rich history prior to the 20th century characterized by a cycle of conquerors. Despite the myriad of powers that controlled the region, the population retained a strong sense of its pre-Islamic Persian identity. In the 20th century, Iran had a significantly more intricate process of regime building than did the other two previous cases. Unlike Jordan and Saudi Arabia, Iran experienced a variety of regime types throughout the 20th century. Within the same century, Iran evolved from a monarchical system, to an authoritarian system, to experiencing increasing political liberalization, to a theocracy based on politicized Shiism. The questions I address in this chapter are threefold: How has the population managed to maintain a strong sense of its pre-Islamic cultural and linguistic identity? How and why has the regime changed in the way it has? Will the regime remain a theocracy or could it politically liberalize in the future?

As in the previous two cases, I first provide a brief overview of Iran’s complex history. I then posit an original analysis of Iran’s processes of state creation and regime building, and why it has not democratized. I argue that in the case of Iran, the main factors influencing its processes of state creation and regime building are a strong sense of cultural and linguistic Persian identity, the creation of a rentier economic system as a result of foreign oil purchases, foreign intervention in the state’s political regime, and the role of politicized Shiism.
Geography and Early History

The area of present-day Iran is a plateau of land enclosed by three mountain ranges: the Zagros, the Elburz and the Kuh-e-Taftan. Two rivers, the Tigris River in the West to the Oxus River in the East represent the Western and Eastern borders of the region. The climate is mild in the desert and plains, however two-thirds of Iran is wasteland, with a rugged terrain and bad soil. The large landmass of the territory made transportation, communication, and maintaining consolidated power challenging prior to the 20th century.

Tribes have been a powerful social force for much of the region’s history, and often resisted each new central authority’s attempts to consolidate power. Religion in the region has been complex. Prior to the Arab conquest and spread of Islam, the main religion in the region was Zoroastrianism. Today, 99% of the population is Muslim, and the majority are Twelver Shiites. Despite the deep impact Islam has had on the region, the population maintains a strong sense of its pre-Islamic Persian identity, as demonstrated by the survival of the Persian language through the Arab, and subsequent, conquests.

The Sassanians were the first major power of note in the region. The Sassanians initiated a process of power consolidation, whereby independent areas became increasingly tied to a more unified administration. This process strengthened core-periphery ties. The official religion of the government was Zoroastrianism. The main cause of the Sassanians’ downfall was the Arab conquest of the region around 630 AD. By 651 AD, the conquest was complete, and the Persian population had been incorporated into the new Arab caliphate. The spread of Islam irrevocably shaped the region -- the Zoroastrian religion declined, but the Persian language and culture survived.
Persian elites established roles for themselves in the administration of the Arab caliphate, converting to Islam in order to maintain their power. After the collapse of the original four Arab caliphs, the Umayyads who assumed power continued to rely on Persian elites in their administration. The Abbasids defeated the Umayyads after the latter had ruled for almost 100 years. A Persian man named Abu Muslim initiated the Abbasid revolt in support, albeit false support, of Shiism. Despite having risen to power with the support of the Shiite population in the region, the Abbasids embraced orthodox Sunni Islam after establishing their caliphate. Like the Umayyads, the Abbasids relied on Persian administrators and borrowed many aspects of Persian culture. Eventually, the vast size of the territory controlled by the Abbasids posed a challenge to effective consolidation of their power and their caliphate weakened, though it did not collapse until 1258.

The next major power to sweep through the region were the Seljuk Turks in the mid 11th century. Again, Persian elites played a central role in the Seljuk administration. By the end of the 12th century, however, the empire under the Seljuks had split into various factions ruled by different tribes. The Seljuks were unable to maintain their power in the empire.

The Mongols, a highly skilled army of warriors originating in East Asia charged into the region. By 1258, they had ousted the Seljuks and had established a capital in Tabriz. The Mongols effectively brought an end to Abbasid power. As under previous rulers, Persian language, culture, and poetry survived. Persian scholars and administrators maintained their power by making themselves indispensable to the Mongol leadership. By the late 15th century, Mongol control over the region had weakened due to tensions within the central leadership. The next power to sweep the region were the Safavids, a Turkish tribe from the East. The Safavids deserve to be discussed separately from the rest of the pre-20th century
powers given the extent to which they shaped the political, cultural, and economic systems in the region.

**The Safavids**

The Safavids initiated a process of political, cultural, and economic changes in the region. The most noticeable change was the population’s rejection of Sunnism and their adoption of Twelver Shiism. This change has endured—today, Twelver Shiism remains the dominant form of Islam in the region. By the end of the 15th century, the leader of the Safavids, Isma’il, had expanded Safavid influence. He conquered Tabriz, the Mongol capital, and declared himself Shah at the age of fourteen. Isma’il made a great effort to distinguish his empire from that of the Sunni Ottomans to the West. One of the ways in which he did so was by proclaiming Twelver Shiism the official religion of the government. The Ottomans posed a significant challenge to the Safavids, and the two empires continually vied for power.

In 1587, Shah Abbas, best known as Abbas the Great, assumed power and undertook a series of reforms. He established a standing army at Isfahan, the Safavid capital, and also started a series of reformative policies such as land taxation. In addition, Abbas increased the amount of land dedicated for religious purposes. This measure cemented a strong relationship between the religious establishment and the government. Abbas was more successful in consolidating his power than any previous leader because he institutionalized Shiism, created a sophisticated administration, and set territorial boundaries. Abbas died in 1629 and a decade later, after frequent territorial conflicts, the Ottomans and the Safavids established a tentative peace.
By the 18th century, the Persian Empire under the Safavids had strong borders, a fairly strong economy that included trade with Europe, a functional regional administration, a system of taxation, albeit rudimentary, and a powerful army. However, throughout the 18th century, the Safavid empire began to weaken as a result of foreign influences.\textsuperscript{363}

**Foreign Intervention**

In 1736, Nader, a Safavid military leader, regained some territory that had been lost to the Ottomans. He subsequently declared himself Shah, effectively ending the period of the Safavid rule.\textsuperscript{364} In 1616, the Safavids had formed an alliance with the British East India Company and allowed it to start trading in Persia.\textsuperscript{365} As Shah, Nader strengthened such existing economic ties with foreign powers. He also formed a military alliance with Russian forces on the northern border of the region in the Caucasus.\textsuperscript{366} Furthermore, he allowed the British to continue using the region to trade and gain access to their colony in India.\textsuperscript{367}

In 1786, the Qajar tribe, led by Agah Mohammad, conquered the city of Tehran, and established it as their capital.\textsuperscript{368} Tehran remains the capital to this day. Under the Qajars, foreign intervention in Persia increased exponentially.\textsuperscript{369} The British East India Company increased its trade with the region, and Russia began to make claims to territory in the Caucasus.\textsuperscript{370} Fath, Agha’s nephew and successor, attempted to maintain control over what would become the state of Georgia, but his efforts to hold onto the territory failed. By 1799, the Russians had established themselves as protectorates of the territory.\textsuperscript{371} After losing territory during the Caucasus Wars in the late 18th-early 19th centuries, the Persians reached a treaty with the Russians in 1813. The treaty gave the Russians control over the territory they had conquered,
forced the Persian government to pay reparations, and enabled the Russians to increase their influence in Persian governmental affairs.\textsuperscript{372} Despite increased foreign intervention, the Qajars managed to maintain control of the Persian Empire throughout the 19\textsuperscript{th} century. This condition would change in the 20\textsuperscript{th} century.

**Persia in the 20\textsuperscript{th} Century**

By the 20\textsuperscript{th} century, the Qajars were still in power, but some segments of the population began to call for measures to limit the power of the Shah.\textsuperscript{373} In 1906, inspired by the West, members of the bazaar class\textsuperscript{7} launched the Constitutional Revolution.\textsuperscript{374} As a result of their protests, the Shah at the time, fearing instability, agreed to ratify the proposed constitution. The constitution established a judicial body and called for a representative national assembly, the *majles*, which met for the first time in 1906.\textsuperscript{375} The *majles* was elected on partial suffrage: only middle to upper class men, members of the *ulema*, and merchants could vote.\textsuperscript{376} The constitution also declared Shiism as the official religion of the government.\textsuperscript{377} The constitution was ratified on December 30, 1906, and between 1907 and 1908, the elected *majles* implemented tax, finance, education, and judicial reforms.\textsuperscript{378} Though most of the reforms did not endure past 1911 when the next Qajar Shah assumed absolute power,\textsuperscript{379} the constitution itself endured until 1979.\textsuperscript{380}

Another transformative event in the early 20\textsuperscript{th} century was the discovery of oil. In 1901, William Knox D’Arcy, a British entrepreneur, obtained a concession from the Persian government to explore for oil.\textsuperscript{381} The discovery of the lucrative natural resource led to increasing foreign intervention in the region, and ultimately to the development of a rentier

\textsuperscript{7} The bazaar class was a low social class comprised of small market merchants who engaged in trading and bartering in outdoor markets, the bazaar. This class eventually became the basis of the Iranian Revolution in 1979 (Axworthy, *Empire of the Mind*, 211).
economic system. A rising power, the United States, also began to play an increasing role in the region as a result of the discovery. When World War I began in 1914, Persia was roped into the war efforts because it could provide the Allies with oil. At the conclusion of the war in 1918, the Allies’ victory meant a defeat of the Ottoman Empire, which had made the fatal mistake of allying with the Germans. A long-time rival of the Persian Empire had been eliminated.

Reza Khan

After World War I, the British began to prep a Qajar military leader, Reza Khan, to assume power in the empire. Encouraged by the British, Reza Khan marched with a military force to Tehran and on February 16, 1921, defeated the Qajar leadership and assumed power. In 1921, the fourth majles, an institution that had endured authoritarian Qajar Shahs and the collapse of the Qajars, convened and gave Reza its full support. In 1923, Reza Shah made himself prime minister, and the old Qajar Shah went into exile in Europe. A new regime had begun.

To modernize the country, and to initiate a process of state creation and power consolidation, Reza Khan implemented a number of reforms. His top priorities were to strengthen the armed forces, regulate state revenue, and modernize the region’s infrastructure. Most of those changes, however, were limited to Tehran. In addition, Reza invested in industry and expanded education. Not all of Reza’s changes were welcomed. In order to maintain his power, he limited freedom of speech and expression, and increased censorship of the press. One of his most controversial changes was banning the veiling of women and forcing Western-style dress on the whole population. Reza had hoped that modernization would
lead to greater autonomy from foreign powers, but due to the desirability of oil, Reza was forced to accept continued foreign economic intervention.\textsuperscript{392} Though Reza was successful in consolidating his power and initiating a process of state creation, he did so in an authoritarian manner at the expense of a liberalized, representative government.\textsuperscript{393} The institution of the \textit{majles} continued to exist, but its power was severely diminished.\textsuperscript{394}

Alongside his processes of state creation and power consolidation, Reza engaged in a process of nation building. One of his main goals was to define the ‘Iranian nation’.\textsuperscript{395} In 1926, Reza declared himself Shah, taking the last name Pahlavi.\textsuperscript{396} This name stemmed from pre-Islamic Persian times, and Reza hoped to harken back to Persia’s early roots as a way of binding together the population.\textsuperscript{397} He also ‘Persianized’ the Persian language, although he retained the use of the Arabic script. He also changed the nascent state’s name from ‘Persia’ to ‘Iran’, the ancient name for the region.\textsuperscript{398} As Reza Shah built up the nation in the 1920s and 1930s, the \textit{ulema} lost many of its powers, but began to develop a separate identity that would manifest itself later on in the century.\textsuperscript{399} Despite his complicated relationship with the \textit{ulema}, Reza realized he had to embrace Shiism as a unifying factor.\textsuperscript{400} He legitimized his rule by gaining the approval of the \textit{ulema},\textsuperscript{401} which resulted in the creation of a connection between the religious establishment and the state.\textsuperscript{402}

The new state of Iran was unable to escape the impact of World War II. Leading up to the war, Reza had grown increasingly frustrated with British and Russian intervention in the state. When the war began, he allied himself with the Germans.\textsuperscript{403} In response, the British and Russians increased their presence in the country in an attempt to maintain their access to oil.\textsuperscript{404} Reza’s frustration with the British and the Russians prompted him to establish stronger ties with the United States. At the end of the war, Germany’s loss meant that Reza Shah was forced to
surrender to the Allies and abdicate the throne to his son Mohammad Reza Shah. The period of Reza’s ability to shape the Iranian state had come to an end.

Mohammad Mossadegh

Iran experienced several important domestic political changes during the 1940s. The number of political parties increased, as well as the dissemination of information through the use of radio and newspapers. In 1944, men of voting age—women did not get the right to vote until about twenty years later—elected the first general representation majles since the 1920s. In the election of 1950, the Leftist/Communist Tudeh party, led by Mohammad Mossadegh, won a number of seats in the majles. The Tudeh party had run on a platform of increased political participation and the nationalization of the country’s oil. When the Shah-backed Prime Minister, Ali Razmara, was assassinated in 1951, Mossadegh became prime minister. Under his leadership, the majles voted to nationalize Iran’s oil on March 15, 1951. Nationalization did not have the intended effect -- the British imposed a blockade that prevented oil from being exported which in turn destabilized Iran’s economy. Mossadegh’s actions as prime minister made the US increasingly worried about Communist influences within the country. With Britain’s help, the US derived a plan to oust Mossadegh. In 1953, the CIA launched a coup against Mossadegh, and put power entirely back into the hands of Mohammad Reza Shah. The people of Iran, who viewed Mohammad Reza Shah as a puppet of the West, were furious at the breach of their sovereignty.

The religious establishment took advantage of the population’s anger. In 1963, a religious figure named Ayatollah Khomeini began preaching against the Shah’s government,
claiming that it was neglecting the poor and failing to preserve Iran’s sovereignty against the West. Khomeini also railed against Iran’s sale of oil to Israel. In 1964, the Shah had Khomeini arrested and exiled. Members of the religious bazaar class immediately protested, and confrontation between the Iranian military and the protesters ensued. In an attempt to save face with the population, Mohammad Reza Shah implemented some social and political changes, including granting women the right to vote in 1963.

**The Iranian Revolution**

Mohammad Reza Shah’s efforts to appease the population were insufficient. His crackdowns on dissent and a faltering economy angered the population. Iran’s ongoing rentier economic system led to the emergence of a movement led by the deeply religious bazaar class, who protested the country’s continued reliance on Western oil subsidies. Unstable domestic conditions reached a peak in the winter of 1978, during which time there were numerous protests and acts of violence. December 11, 1978 marked a day of particularly violent protests in Tehran that resulted in a prevailing lack of law and order and mass desertions from the army. On January 16, 1979, the Shah lost control of the country and fled. Soon after, Ayatollah Khomeini returned to Iran after being in exile and established a theocracy based on politicized Shiism.

Upon assuming authority, Ayatollah Khomeini established a series of revolutionary committees responsible for rounding up the remaining members of the Pahlavi regime. The Shia ulema became powerful and gained prominent positions in the new regime. By the autumn of 1979, liberal and moderate groups had been marginalized within the political system; overshadowed by Khomeini’s Islamic Republic Party (IRP). The IRP scrapped the old
constitution, but drafted a new one similar in structure and stipulations to that of the old one. The new constitution provided for a cabinet-like body, the Assembly of Experts made up of members of the ulema, an elected president—as opposed to a prime minister previously—a majles, and municipal councils. In addition, it established the Council of Guardians made up of twelve clerics and jurists, which was responsible for approving candidates before elections. The constitution granted Khomeini supreme power and the authority to appoint members to the Council of Guardians.

In November of 1979, shortly after Ayatollah Khomeini took power, a group of students broke into the United States embassy in Tehran and took hostages. Ayatollah Khomeini backed the students’ actions. Khomeini began to crack down on Westernizing influences in society. In addition, he forced women to veil themselves and closed universities to discourage Leftist activities.

During this same period, Iran faced a major challenge from one of its immediate neighbors. In 1980, Saddam Hussein, the dictatorial leader of Iraq, attacked the IRP headquarters and his forces invaded Iran. An eight-year war followed, during which both sides, but particularly Iran, suffered massive losses. In 1988, acknowledging the weakness of its position, the Iranian government accepted UN Resolution 598, which called for a ceasefire. The war with Iraq damaged Iran’s economy and infrastructure, and many people were left homeless. Ayatollah Khomeini passed away on June 3, 1989, but the theocratic regime he had created endured.
Modern-Day

Ayatollah Khamenei succeeded Ayatollah Khomeini. Hashemi Rafsanjani, Iran’s president at the time, had promised the Iranian people improved living standards and economic conditions after the destructive war with Iraq. Khamenei obstructed the implementation of many of Rafsanjani’s policies. And yet, despite post-war conditions, the theocratic regime managed to improve infrastructure, health services, and education. Social and legal equality for women, however, decreased, though they retained the right to vote.

After Rafsanjani’s failure to bring about economic improvement, many in Iran rallied around Mohammad Khatami in the 1997 elections. As Rafsanjani had done, Khatami ran on a platform of economic reform. His victory energized many young people and gave them hope for changes in the future, including liberal political reforms. Under Khatami, press freedom did increase, and a reformist 6th majles was elected in 2000. However, Ayatollah Khamenei continued to block progressive changes, and Khatami was unable to deliver on many of his campaign promises. President Khatami also advocated increased openness with the United States, but the hardline religious leadership also impeded the attempt.

The events of September 11, 2001 drastically shaped Iran’s relationship with the United States. Iran condemned the event and Khatami even offered to provide assistance to the United States against the Taliban in Afghanistan in 2001. However, US President George W. Bush refused the offer. He rewarded Khatami’s offers of assistance by categorizing Iran as part of the “Axis of Evil”, along with Iraq and North Korea, in his State of the Union speech in 2002. Bush’s words angered many Iranians, and their anger was reflected in the election of President Ahmadinejad in the 2005. Ahmadinejad had a colder view of the US than that of his
predecessor, and his presidency signaled the beginning of a more confrontational relationship between Iran and the US.\textsuperscript{445} Though Ahmadinejad also failed to deliver on many of his economic reform promises, he was successful in using the West, particularly the United States, as a scapegoat for domestic issues in Iran.\textsuperscript{446}

Today Iran’s civil society remains weak, peaceful demonstrations are often broken up, and the dress code for women continues to be enforced.\textsuperscript{447} A major issue for the Western community is Iran’s development of nuclear materials, and its failure to meet nuclear safety standards.\textsuperscript{448} The US and Israel have repeatedly said that they will not allow Iran to create or acquire a nuclear weapon. Israel has justified its rhetoric given its proximity to Iran, and Iran’s repeated calls for the destruction of Israel.\textsuperscript{449} Iran is also at the center of another major source of regional tension – its struggle with Saudi Arabian as to which power will be the Middle East’s Islamic hegemon. Iran being Shia and Saudi Arabia being Sunni have carried out their struggle for power in a series of devastating proxy wars in Iraq, Lebanon, Yemen, and Syria.\textsuperscript{450} Exacerbating the tension has been the United States’ close alliance with Saudi Arabia, and the increased hostility between Washington and Tehran over nuclear weapons.\textsuperscript{451}

ANALYSIS

The vastness of the early Persian Empire made communication, travel, and governance of remote areas challenging. Before the 20\textsuperscript{th} century, Iran was subject to a constant cycle of conquerors who rose to power, expelled the previous leadership, and eventually met their own downfall. The first of these powers were the Sassanians. Under the Sassanians, the predominant social structure was a tribal one, and the official religion of the government was polytheistic
Zoroastrianism. The Sassanians initiated a process of consolidating their power by increasing core-periphery ties, yet they were not strong enough to resist the Arab conquest and the spread of Islam.

The spread of Islam irrevocably altered the region. Most of the population eventually converted to the new monotheistic religion, which soon became a large part of Persian identity. Under the four original caliphs, as well as under the Umayyads and the Abbasids, Persian elites assumed prominent roles within the respective administrations of these powers. Holding prominent positions in each administration enabled Persians to ensure the endurance of the Persian language and culture.

The Seljuks Turks next conquered the region. Like the previous leaders of the Persian Empire, the Seljuks relied heavily on Persian elites in their administration. Rapid territorial expansion under the Seljuks prevented the central leadership from effectively consolidating its power across the vast territory. Core-periphery ties weakened leaving the territory susceptible to conquest.

The Mongols took advantage of the Seljuks’ weakness. Once in power with a capital in Tabriz, the Mongols continued the trend of utilizing Persian elites in running their administration. By the late 15th century, Mongol control over the empire had weakened due to both internal challenges and the external threat of the growing Ottoman Empire.

The next major power, the Safavids, irrevocably altered the political, cultural, and economic systems within the Persian Empire. The Safavids imposed Shiism on society and made it the official religion of the government. To this day, Shiism, particularly the branch of Twelver Shiism, remains the predominant religion. In making Shiism the official religion of the government, the Safavids set a precedent of politicizing Shiism. By the time the Safavids
assumed control of the Persian Empire, the Ottoman Empire was a powerful entity, one that repeatedly challenged the scope and strength of the Persian Empire. Another challenge to Safavid power was increased interaction with Western powers, namely the British and the Russians. The most influential Safavid leader, Abbas, consolidated his power more effectively than any previous leader. However, the Safavids were not strong enough to endure continual conflict with the Ottomans and foreign intervention in the territory.

Foreign intervention continued under the next rulers of the Persian Empire, the Qajars. Constant guerilla-style battles with the Russians in the Caucasus, and ongoing struggles with the British for control of trade routes in the Persian Gulf, hindered the ability of the Qajars to completely consolidate their power. The Qajars did, however, establish an enduring capital in Tehran. Thus, prior to the 20th century, it can be proposed that:

**Hypothesis 1:** The tribal structure of society, the vastness of the territory, and the constant cycle of conquering hindered the ability of leaders in the early Persian Empire to consolidate their power.

**Hypothesis 2:** Foreign intervention in the Persian Empire during the 18th and 19th centuries hindered the ability of leaders in the Persian Empire to effectively consolidate their power.

Other factors, however, undercut the significance of the aforementioned conditions:
**Hypothesis 3:** The role of the Persian elites in each new conqueror’s administration ensured the endurance of the Persian language and culture. This development would eventually help the processes of state creation and nation building in the 20th century.

**Hypothesis 4:** The establishment and endurance of Tehran as the official capital under the Qajars gave their leadership and subsequent governments a central point around which to consolidate their power, increase core-periphery ties, and initiate the process of state creation.

In 1906, while the Qajars were still in power, the bazaar class initiated the Constitutional Revolution. Their proposed constitution called for elections, an elected representative body, the *majles*, and a judicial body. Only men could vote at the time. By 1911, though many of the reforms initiated by the revolution had collapsed when a new Shah had assumed power, the institutions established by the constitution and the *majles* endured. Around the same time that these political changes were taking place, the economic system in Persia was irrevocably altered when the British discovered oil in the Persian Gulf. This discovery ensured a continued foreign presence in the region, and Western oil purchases created a rentier economic system in the region.

World War I eliminated Persia’s major regional rival, the Ottoman Empire, but the war also weakened the Qajars. In 1921, Reza Khan, a military figure, launched a coup against the Qajar leadership with the support of the British. Upon taking power, Reza initiated a process of state creation and consolidation of his power. Between 1921 and 1930, Reza built up a stronger military, developed a more efficient system of taxation, and implemented modernizing,
Westernizing, changes in society. In an effort to foster a sense of nationalism, he assumed the last name ‘Pahlavi’ and named the new state ‘Iran’. Reza was an authoritarian ruler who modernized the state and consolidated his power in a manner that left no room for dissent. He often came into conflict with the religious establishment due to the rapid pace of modernization.

During World War II, foreign intervention increased due to the Allied powers’ need for oil to fuel the war efforts. Frustrated with the British and the Russians, Reza made the fatal mistake of allying with the Germans. Despite their victory, the war weakened the British. As a result, at the conclusion of the war, the US replaced Britain as the major benefactor of the Iranian economy. Furthermore, with Germany having lost the war, the Allied powers forced Reza to go into exile. His son, Mohammad Reza Shah, replaced him. Iranians did not fully support Mohammad Reza Shah. Their disenchantment was reflected in the 1950 majles election, in which the Leftist/Communist Tudeh party, led by Mohammad Mossadegh, won many seats. As prime minister, Mossadegh began to deliver on his party’s promised reforms. In 1951, the majles voted to nationalize Iran’s oil. Mossadegh’s rhetoric alarmed the US and Britain. In 1953, the CIA backed a coup that overthrew Mossadegh and placed decision-making power back in the hands of the Shah.

The 1953 coup soured the Iranians’ view of the West, and of the Western-backed Shah. By late 1978, tensions between the population and the Shah had reached a tipping point, and the Shah had fled Iran. In February 1979, Ayatollah Khomeini returned to the country and established a theocracy based on politicized Shiism. Khomeini and his party, the IRP, implemented a new constitution that, though similar to the old one, outlined more of a role for the religious establishment. The majles, and the role of the prime minister, now the president, remained intact. Khomeini also implemented societal changes. For example, women were
forced to cover their heads in public, though they retained the right to vote which they had gained in 1963.

Throughout the last few decades of the 20\textsuperscript{th} century, there were a number of presidents who attempted to bring liberal reforms to the country, yet the powerful religious establishment repeatedly blocked the attempts. Despite the highly religious nature of the Iranian regime, there have been significant modernizing changes since 1979. The most recent aspect of Iran’s modernization is its quest to produce nuclear material and obtain a nuclear weapon. This pursuit has not helped to ameliorate relations between Iran and the West. In addition, Iran’s relationship with Saudi Arabia has been tenuous since 1979. The two countries continue to vie for regional power through a series of destructive proxy wars. Given Iran’s history in the 20\textsuperscript{th} century, it can be postulated:

\textit{Hypothesis 5}: As a result of the Constitutional Revolution, elections, albeit with partial suffrage, a representative body, and political parties were established. These developments increased political liberalization.

A few factors throughout Iran’s 20\textsuperscript{th} century history have undercut the liberalizing effect of the Constitutional Revolution:

\textit{Hypothesis 6}: Foreign purchases of Iranian oil created a rentier economic system. Iran’s rentier economy, combined with an authoritarian regime, prevented the regime from being accountable to the population. This development hindered participation and contestation and precluded political liberalization.
Hypothesis 7: Reza’s authoritarian style of leadership and focus on militarization enabled him to create the state and consolidate his power. However, these same factors hindered participation and contestation and, as a result, obstructed political liberalization.

Hypothesis 8: Mossadegh’s platform of political and economic reform indicated a trend toward increased political liberalization. However, the CIA’s intervention to oust Mossadegh stymied liberalization of the political system.

Hypothesis 9: The 1979 Iranian Revolution was a response to the 1953 coup and the changes implemented by the Shah thereafter.

Hypothesis 9a: The Shia theocracy created by Ayatollah Khomeini after the Iranian Revolution decreased political participation and contestation.

Hypothesis 10: The view of democracy as an inherently Western concept, combined with prevalent anti-Western sentiment and a weak civil society, decreases the chance that the population will call for greater political liberalization.

The only positive indicator for political liberalization in this period of Iran’s history was women gaining the right to vote in 1963. This measure marginally increased political liberalization.
Conclusion

Iran’s theocracy remains strong, and its anti-Western rhetoric has fueled popular antagonism towards the United States. Tensions between Iran and the international community remain high over its creation of nuclear material. Though participation and contestation continue to exist in the political system of the state, civil society is weak. Furthermore, elections are not always entirely free and fair, and the president and majles only have a certain degree of influence -- the religious establishment continues to have ultimate authority. Given Iran’s rich history of regime transformation and use of popular protest to bring about regime change, there is the possibility that the regime may yet again transform. It will be crucial to monitor Iran’s social, economic, and political conditions moving forward to determine whether or not the conditions are right for regime change and potential political liberalization.
CHAPTER IV

A Comparative Analysis of the Processes of State Creation and
Regime Building in Jordan, Saudi Arabia, and Iran

The three states presented in this study share a number of important characteristics. First, none of the original leaders intended to create a democratic regime, and none of the regimes is currently democratic. Second, social and geographic conditions in each territory prior to the 20th century and prior to state creation hindered the ability of elites in the territory to consolidate their political power and engage in a process of state creation. Third, foreign intervention played a large role in each country’s process of state creation, though the way in which they did was different in each case. Finally, the role of religion impacted the processes of state creation and regime building in each case, but to very different degrees.

This final chapter attempts to provide a comparative analysis in the form of hypotheses of the various ideas presented in each of the case studies and their respective analyses. I begin the chapter with presenting general time period-related hypotheses and conclusions on the processes of state creation and regime building in the case of Jordan. Afterward, I provide the same analysis for the cases of Saudi Arabia and Iran, but in a comparative format using the general conclusions derived from the case of Jordan as the baseline conditions and theory. The case of Saudi Arabia is significantly more complex than the case of Jordan, and the case of Iran is markedly more complex than either Jordan or Saudi Arabia. In essence, Saudi Arabia and Iran are both more intricate, and each one will add complexity to the theoretical framework created by Jordan. I then highlight general hypotheses and posit a tentative theory of state creation, regime building, and democratization for the Middle East derived from these three cases.
The processes of state creation and regime building are related. Political regime building takes places alongside state creation, but a democratic regime cannot fully develop without a state in place. Furthermore, the nature of the state and the political regime often keeps evolving throughout a country’s history, though to greater or lesser degrees. In his discussion of state creation processes, Stein Rokkan identifies a number of factors that were integral to state creation in the case of European states. Many of these factors highlight the importance of ethnic and linguistic unification of the population in order to increase core-periphery ties. Rokkan also identifies the role that religion can play in a process of state creation. Charles Tilly proposes that state creation in Europe was largely affected by the presence of extractable resources and how homogenous the population was of the territory. He also highlights that having a powerful military can shape the process of state creation. Like Tilly, Samuel Huntington identifies the role that a military can play in determining a territory’s process of state creation. He uses the United States to conduct his analysis and outlines the role that state militias and subsequently the US federal military played in the process of the consolidation of power in the US. Writing about Latin America, Frank Safford highlights the role that economic integration, geography, and religion played in the state creation processes of Latin American states. Fernando López-Alves also describes the role that war and conflict played in the processes of state creation in Latin American states.

Though none of the aforementioned authors wrote about state creation in the Middle East, others have. There are two issues pertinent to the existing literature on state creation in the Middle East. First, none of the authors outlines the actual processes of state creation. Second, none of the authors discusses the processes in individual states; instead they tend to examine the
Middle East as a whole. However, it is still worthwhile revisiting what many of them have said with regards to state creation in the Middle East.

Roger Owen argues that in the Middle East, there is less distinction between the state, regime, and government than in European states. This condition makes the nature of the state in Middle Eastern countries fragile since if one aspect of this relationship collapses, so would the rest. He categorizes state creation in the Middle East as occurring in three phases: the colonial state, the immediate post-independent state, and the authoritarian state. None of those phases however, explains the actual process within each stage. Owen also discusses the importance of a rentier economic system and the military in shaping state creation in the Middle East. Beverley Milton-Edwards, in turn, argues that state creation in the Middle East was often artificially motivated by foreign powers. Finally, Simon Bromley argues that even before the 20th century, there were indicators of potential state creation in the Middle East such as the tanzimat reforms in the 19th century Ottoman Empire.

The hypotheses on state creation and regime building that I present in this section support or refute to varying degrees the aforementioned arguments and are guided by the following questions:

1. What conditions prevented political elites in the territories from coming together to consolidate their power and initiate an early process of state creation?
2. What conditions in the territories prevented ties between the political core and the, often tribal, periphery?
3. What conditions facilitated or obstructed political liberalization and the creation of a democratic regime?
I divide up the following hypotheses on state creation, regime building, and democratization by time-period, focusing on pre and post state creation.

Pre-State Creation

Jordan

Prior to its creation by outside powers, the area of modern-day Jordan was a transitory area with a tribal social structure. Eventually, the region came to fall under the governance of the powerful Ottoman Empire. More so than any previous power, the Ottoman Empire began to shape the social, economic, and political systems of the region. One of the ways in which it did so was through the tanzimat reforms that increased the consolidation of Ottoman power and attempted to increase ties between the Ottoman core and the tribal periphery.

Jordan Hypothesis 1: The entrenched tribal structure of society undermined the Ottomans’ attempts to implement the tanzimat reforms in order to consolidate their power prior to the 20th century.

After World War I, the collapse of the Ottoman Empire and the carving up of the territory by the British and French enabled the mandate of Transjordan to come into being and to be governed by Abdullah with ongoing assistance from the British. The territory quickly developed a rentier economic system thanks to economic subsidies provided by the British in return for Abdullah’s alliance. The rentier economic system helped Abdullah to consolidate his power and
engage in an eventual process of state creation. Society at the time, however, remained largely tribally structured.

*Jordan Hypothesis 2:* The enduring tribal structure of society hindered the ability of the central Transjordanian leadership to consolidate its power.

The aforementioned condition, however, was counterbalanced by,

*Jordan Hypothesis 3:* Foreign economic subsidies facilitated the creation of a rentier economic system in the territory. Transjordan’s rentier economic system helped the central leadership to consolidate its power, increase core-periphery ties, and initiate the state creation process.

*Saudi Arabia*

Like Jordan, Saudi Arabia was a vast region with a tribally structured society prior to its creation as a state. However, unlike Jordan, the state did not form as the result of foreign powers carving out its borders. Additionally, the Ottoman Empire had less influence and control of the region than in Jordan given the distance of the Arabian Peninsula from the center of Ottoman power. A defining event in the region was the birth of Islam. This event cemented the peninsula’s, and eventual state’s, status as a destination point. Another key development in the region was the Al Saud tribe’s alliance with the Wahhabis. This alliance helped the Al Saud tribe consolidate its power in the peninsula and helped it to eventually initiate a process of state
creation. Saudi Arabia’s early processes are similar to those of Jordan, with some additional nuances.

**Saudi Arabia Hypothesis 1**: The vast territory and tribal structure of society, prevented elites from effectively consolidating their power in order to initiate a process of state creation.

Despite the aforementioned factor, other conditions undercut its significance. The following factors were *not* present in the case of Jordan. Though the nature of society in Jordan was homogenous, this condition was not as significant in Jordan’s early history as it was in Saudi Arabia’s:

**Saudi Arabia Hypothesis 2**: The homogenous nature of society helped the central leadership of the Al Saud tribe to consolidate its power and increase core-periphery ties.

**Saudi Arabia Hypothesis 3**: The alliance between the Al Saud tribe and the Wahhabis gave the Al Saud tribe legitimacy that helped it to consolidate its power across the peninsula.

After World War I, the Al Saud tribe was able to gain control of the Hejaz and thus the cities of Mecca and Medina. The discovery of oil in the early 20th century, and resulting Western purchases of oil, created a rentier economic system in the territory. The rentier economic system helped Ibn Saud to consolidate his power and carry out the state creation process. In addition,
the creation of the *ikhwan*, Ibn Saud’s personal army, helped him consolidate his power and increase ties between his center of power in Riyadh and the tribal periphery.

These two conditions differ from the conditions present in the case of Jordan in the period after World War I. Though Jordan was a rentier economic system, it was one based on foreign recognition of a strategic regional alliance rather than on foreign exploitation of a lucrative natural resource. Additionally, though in Transjordan Abdullah also had an army, the *ikhwan* was able to provide Ibn Saud with religious legitimacy in addition to being a regular army.

**Saudi Arabia Hypothesis 4:** The discovery and sale of oil to Western powers created a rentier economic system in the territory controlled by Ibn Saud. Oil rents enabled Ibn Saud to expand and consolidate his power within the peninsula.

**Saudi Arabia Hypothesis 5:** The *ikhwan*, which was responsible for helping to increase ties between tribal populations and the central leadership, constituted an important force in the consolidation of Ibn Saud’s power.

**Iran**

Iran underwent many of the same processes prior to its creation as a state that Jordan and Saudi Arabia did. Like Saudi Arabia, the eventual state was not created by foreign powers physically setting the borders. However, foreign powers did play a role in Iran’s creation as a state in other ways. Furthermore, as was the case in Jordan and Saudi Arabia, the territory of the Persian
Empire was vast, and society was structured along tribal lines. Prior to state creation, the Persian Empire was subject to a cycle of conquerors and this cycle greatly affected the process of power consolidation in the region. Furthermore, unlike either Jordan or Saudi Arabia, in Persia there was a strong sense of cultural identity in the region even prior to state creation. This identity was based on the endurance of a pre-Islamic Persian culture and language. Finally, a center point in the region was cemented well before Iran’s creation as a state with the establishment of Tehran as the capital under the Qajars. Thus, Iran’s early processes are similar to those in Jordan and Saudi Arabia, though with some additional factors.

Iran Hypothesis 1: The vastness of the region, the constant cycle of conquering, and the tribal structure of society hindered the ability of elites to effectively consolidate their power and initiate the state creation process.

Unlike Jordan or Saudi Arabia, the following conditions were true in Iran prior to state creation:

Iran Hypothesis 2: The role of Persian elites in each new conqueror’s administration ensured the endurance of Persian language and culture. In turn, the language and culture eventually formed the foundation of a national identity.

Iran Hypothesis 3: The establishment of Tehran as the capital of the region gave the region’s leadership a point around which to consolidate its power. This development aided with the future state creation process.
A pivotal event in Iran prior to the creation of the state was the 1906 Constitutional Revolution. Neither Jordan nor Saudi Arabia experienced attempts prior to state creation to establish a constitution and increase political liberalization within the existing political system. Furthermore, as was the case in Saudi Arabia, a rentier economic system developed in the region due to foreign oil purchases. Unlike in Saudi Arabia, where oil rents allowed the Al Saud tribe to begin to rapidly consolidate its power even prior to state creation, oil rents in Iran did not play a large role in regional development until the state creation period, and thus I do not posit a hypothesis about this factor for Iran at this time.

_Iran Hypothesis 4:_ The 1906 Constitutional Revolution established a legislative body, elections, albeit with partial suffrage, and political parties. These developments increased political liberalization.

**Initial State Creation and Regime Building**

_Jordan_

Jordan became an independent state in 1946. During the 1940s and 1950s, the Jordanian state became cemented and unchallenged internationally or domestically. However, political unity was not so easily achieved. The regime in Jordan was a monarchy led by King Abdullah. In the 1950s, there was a marginal increase in political participation and contestation levels, yet by the 1960s, these changes came to an end in favor of regime stability and security. The three most
influential events in the 1940s and 1950s in Jordan were the end of World War II, the Arab-Israeli war, and the creation of the 1952 Constitution. The rentier economic system in Jordan also affected its state creation process and power consolidation, as well as the political climate in the new state.

*Jordan Hypothesis 4:* The losses suffered by Britain during World War II decreased its ability to take an active role in Jordan and, as a result, increased Jordan’s autonomy.

*Jordan Hypothesis 5:* The large influx of Palestinians after the 1948 war set the foundation for future domestic instability. This development undermined political unity in the state.

In terms of developments within the political regime of the new state:

*Jordan Hypothesis 6:* The creation of the 1952 Constitution laid the foundation for increased political participation and contestation. This development increased political liberalization.

Undercutting the aforementioned political development was the following factor:

*Jordan Hypothesis 7:* Jordan’s transformation into a rentier state, combined with a monarchical regime structure, prevented the regime from being accountable to its
population. This lack of accountability hindered political participation and contestation and precluded political liberalization.

**Saudi Arabia**

After working to consolidate his power during the 1920s, Ibn Saud established the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in 1932. He declared himself king and established a monarchy comprised of his family members. Unlike in Jordan, the monarchy was inextricably linked with religion. The *ulema* had significant influence within the regime, and Wahhabism provided the regime with a source of legitimacy. As in Jordan, the rentier economic system that had developed in the early 20th century greatly shaped the state creation process of Saudi Arabia. However, Saudi Arabia’s rentier economic system was based on oil, while Jordan’s was not. Ibn Saud was able to rapidly consolidate state power and modernize in a way that would not have been possible without oil rents. As was the case in Jordan, the rentier economic system of the new state affected its political climate. World War II pushed Allied powers to increase oil purchases, which resulted in massive amounts of oil wealth flowing into the Saudi territory. The exponential increase in oil wealth had a number of effects on Saudi Arabia’s political regime.

In terms of the state creation process and consolidation of state power, the two following factors demonstrate how Saudi Arabia’s processes differed from those of Jordan:
**Saudi Arabia Hypothesis 6**: The Saudi/Wahhabi alliance lent the central Saudi leadership legitimacy that allowed it to effectively consolidate its power, initiate a process of state creation, and create a cohesive state national identity.

**Saudi Arabia Hypothesis 7**: Oil wealth enabled the regime to expand state bureaucracies in the 1950s and 1960s. This development increased the consolidation of state power.

In terms of the political climate in Saudi Arabia, the following factor was relevant:

**Saudi Arabia Hypothesis 8**: Saudi Arabia’s rentier economic system, combined with its monarchical regime structure, hindered the regime’s accountability to the population. This lack of accountability prevented political participation and contestation and, thus, precluded political liberalization.

**Iran**

Unlike Jordan, but similar to Saudi Arabia, the state of Iran was created without foreign intervention to set the state borders. However, the British were responsible for prepping Reza Khan to overthrow the Qajars and initiate a process of state creation in 1921. Reza used oil rents from foreign oil purchases to rapidly consolidate state power and modernize the country. He established an authoritarian regime, and continued to use Persian identity as a socially unifying force in the new state. Different to either Jordan or Saudi Arabia’s regime, Iran’s regime
continued to evolve throughout the next few decades. After World War II and the loss of Reza’s ally, Germany, the Iranian authoritarian regime became increasingly unstable.

The role of oil rents in the state creation process in Iran was similar to the role that rents played in both Jordan and Saudi Arabia’s state creation processes. However, a strong cultural identity was a factor of state creation present in Iran but not in either Jordan or Saudi Arabia.

**Iran Hypothesis 5:** Foreign oil purchases, which created a rentier economic system, enabled Reza to rapidly consolidate the power of the state and modernize the country.

**Iran Hypothesis 6:** A strong sense of Persian identity formed the basis of a national identity and aided Reza in consolidating the power of the state.

In terms of political climate, Iran, Jordan and Saudi Arabia shared the following characteristic:

**Iran Hypothesis 7:** A rentier economic system, combined with an authoritarian regime structure, hindered the regime’s accountability to the population. This lack of accountability hindered political participation and contestation and precluded political liberalization.

**Evolution of the Political Regime**

Though the state was firmly cemented by the mid 20th century in each of the three states, the political regime, and political and social climates in each one continued to evolve. Often, as in
the case of Jordan and Saudi Arabia, regional events shaped the evolution of their respective political and social climates. It is important to note that in neither of these cases did the actual political regime type change. In the case of Iran, however, foreign intervention brought about domestic instability and political change, which eventually engendered change in the structure of the political regime.

**Jordan**

The 1960s and 1970s in Jordan were a time of domestic unrest fueled by its position in the region. The 1967 war threatened Jordan’s domestic stability, which led King Hussein to declare martial law. This action quelled political activity. He was forced to lift martial law in 1989 in response to an economic downturn and popular calls for greater political participation. Twenty-two years after martial law had been implemented, political activity was once again permitted, signaling a slight increase in political liberalization. Another important measure for political liberalization that took place was the granting of voting rights to women in 1974. Though this measure helped increase political participation, the political regime remained unchanged.

*Jordan Hypothesis 8*: The prioritization of domestic stability and regime security in the face of regional instability led King Hussein to impose martial law. His decision abruptly stymied political participation and contestation, which hindered political liberalization.

Later, however, two events marginally reversed the effects of martial law on the liberalization of the political system:
**Jordan Hypothesis 9**: Women gaining the right to vote in 1974 increased political participation. This development marginally increased political liberalization.

**Jordan Hypothesis 10**: The economic downturn and resulting popular demands for change led King Hussein to lift martial law. As a result, participation and contestation levels increased.

**Saudi Arabia**

As was the case in Jordan, regional events challenged the domestic stability and political climate in Saudi Arabia. In the case of Saudi Arabia, it was one major international event that disrupted its political stability: the Iranian Revolution. The Iranian Revolution challenged the Islamic hegemony of the Saudi regime. The revolution also contributed significantly to social changes within Saudi society. These changes impacted the participation of women in society. In Jordan, regional instability led the regime to enact significant political changes for the whole of society. To appease the population, those changes were later reversed by the regime in favor of marginally increased political liberalization. In Saudi Arabia, however, regional events led the regime to make significant changes in society that disenfranchised half of the population. In addition, the Saudi regime never attempted to appease the population, as had the Jordanian regime had, by increasing political participation. Again, as in the case of Jordan, it is important to note that the political regime type in Saudi Arabia did not change at this time.
**Saudi Arabia Hypothesis 9**: The 1979 Iranian Revolution, which pushed Saudi Arabia to become more socially conservative, fostered domestic conditions that largely excluded half the population. The lack of social participation for women hindered the potential for political liberalization in Saudi Arabia.

**Iran**

With the rise in contestation that occurred after World War II in Iran, Mossadegh’s Leftist party was able to gain power. Mossadegh promised and implemented political reforms, such as increased political participation. However, Mossadegh’s efforts to reform the political system in Iran were cut short. Unlike Jordan and Saudi Arabia, foreign intervention impacted Iran’s political regime long after the process of state creation had taken place. In 1953, the CIA launched a coup against Mossadegh’s Leftist government to oust him. The event would eventually transform Iran’s political regime. Unlike in Jordan or Saudi Arabia, the coup did cause Iran’s political regime type to change.

**Iran Hypothesis 8**: Prime Minister Mohammad Mossadegh’s platform of political reform and nationalizing Iran’s oil marginally increased political liberalization.

The decision severely undercut the power of Iran’s duly elected political leader. This type of intervention did not take place in either Jordan or Saudi Arabia:
**Iran Hypothesis 9:** The CIA-initiated coup that overthrew Mossadegh abruptly stymied any political liberalization that had occurred during his tenure as prime minister.

The major repercussion of the 1953 coup was not felt until 1979, when the Iranian Revolution took place. The revolution was in response to a rise in anti-West sentiment and anger at the Shah. Before the revolution, the Shah had attempted to save face with the population by granting women the right to vote, amongst other political reforms. These measures were not enough to appease the population. Unlike in Jordan or Saudi Arabia, the political regime type in Iran did change as a result of the 1979 revolution. In power, Ayatollah Khomeini created a theocracy based on politicized Shiism. As a result, there was an exponential rise in the role of the religious establishment within the government. The creation of the theocracy was accompanied by social changes for half the country’s population.

**Iran Hypothesis 10:** Women gaining the right to vote in 1963 increased political participation. This development marginally increased political liberalization.

Severely undercutting the aforementioned factor, a development that did not occur in either Jordan or Saudi Arabia, was the following:

**Iran Hypothesis 11:** The Iranian Revolution resulted in a theocratic Shia regime. The theocracy headed by Ayatollah Khomeini decreased political participation and contestation in Iran’s political processes. This development stymied political liberalization.
Present Day Conditions

Jordan

The climate of political liberalization initiated in Jordan in 1989 did not endure. Today, there is full participation, but levels of participation in elections, and levels of contestation, i.e., political parties with real power, remain low. In addition, civil society remains weak. The recent establishment of the IEC has increased the freeness and fairness of elections. Although Jordan is the case in which there has been the most political liberalization, there are still few indications that it can, or will, politically liberalize further.

Jordan Hypothesis 11: The creation of the IEC and its role in monitoring the freeness and fairness of elections has lent transparency to Jordanian elections. This development is an important foundation for the potential creation of a democratic regime.

Saudi Arabia

Recently, the regime has initiated economic and social changes. Women were granted the right to vote in local elections in 2011 and will be able to drive as of June 2018. Additionally, the current Crown Prince is looking to find alternative sources of energy and revenue for the Saudi economy to reduce the country’s reliance on oil. Despite these developments, there is no indication at present that the regime will engage in political liberalization. Political participation and contestation remain almost non-existent and civil society remains weak. A major factor that
undermines democratization in Saudi Arabia is a prevalent anti-West view amongst its people. This condition is not present in Jordan.

**Saudi Arabia Hypothesis 10:** Anti-West sentiment and the conviction that democracy is an inherently Western concept, combined with a weak civil society, decrease the chance that the people will call for greater political liberalization.

In recent years, however, there have been indications that certain emerging conditions could undercut the aforementioned factors’ impact on political liberalization.

**Saudi Arabia Hypothesis 11:** Recent changes vis-à-vis the status of women in society indicates a slow, but positive, trend toward greater participation of women socially. These developments indicate the potential, albeit small, for increased political liberalization.

**Iran**

As in Saudi Arabia, the people of Iran do not have a favorable view of the US. Unlike the Saudi Arabian regime, the Iranian regime’s view of the US is also unfavorable. Tensions have increased between Iran and the US over Iran’s nuclear program. Iran and Saudi Arabia also continue to vie for regional hegemony. In the political sphere, the theocracy remains strong, and political participation and contestation remain low in the country. In addition, civil society remains weak.

As in the case of Saudi Arabia, the following condition is present in the case of Iran:
**Iran Hypothesis 12**: Increased anti-Western sentiment and the view that democracy is an inherently Western concept, combined with a weak civil society, decrease the chances that the population will call for greater political liberalization.

**GENERAL HYPOTHESES**

Having conducted a comparative analysis of the time period-specific hypotheses of the processes of state creation, regime building, and democratization in each of the three cases, I now derive some tentative general conclusions. The following hypotheses are what I infer from the case of Jordan, and how the cases of Saudi Arabia and Iran substantiate, refute, or add nuance to the basic theoretical framework. I start by stating the general hypothesis and then proceed to add an explanation.

**General Hypothesis 1**: In the Middle East, a deep-rooted tribal structure in society have hindered the ability of elites to consolidate their power and initiate a process of state creation.

In their respective work, both Linz and Owen discuss the impact of a tribal social system on the state and the regime. Linz more broadly outlines a tribal system of authority, and Owen posits specifically that family rule continues in places with strong historical tribal structures.
Owen’s claim seems to be substantiated by the cases of Jordan and Saudi Arabia, however he does not discuss an additional impact of a tribal social structure: its role in the processes of state creation and power consolidation. A tribal social structure was present in all three cases outlined in this study and impacted the process of state creation and power consolidation in each case. As in Jordan, the tribal structure of society in Saudi Arabia and Iran respectively prevented the elites in the central leadership from coming together to consolidate its power and initiate a process of state creation.

**General Hypothesis 2**: In the Middle East, a homogeneous population helps central leadership to establish core-periphery ties, consolidate its power, and initiate a process of state creation.

As Tilly discusses, a homogenous population is a necessary prerequisite of state creation and power consolidation. The cases of Saudi Arabia and Iran both substantiate this condition. In these cases, as in Jordan, the population was homogenous, so when a process of state creation began, the homogenous nature of society made the process easier.

**General Hypothesis 3**: In the Middle East, a rentier economic system, combined with a monarchical or authoritarian regime structure, decreases the regime’s accountability to the population. This lack of accountability hinders political participation and contestation and precludes political liberalization.
Karl discusses the role that natural resources, namely oil, play in state formation. Owen discusses the impact of a rentier economic system on the expansion of state power in many Middle Eastern states. However, neither analyst makes an argument about the effect that a rentier economic system combined with a monarchical or an authoritarian regime type has on the political system of a state. It is important to recognize that it is only a rentier economic system in combination with a monarchical or an authoritarian regime type that leads to a decrease in political participation and contestation. The aforementioned condition is present in both Saudi Arabia and Iran. However, the nature of the rentier economic system is different in all three cases. In Jordan, the rentier economic system is based on foreign subsidies provided in return for the Jordanian regime’s strategic alliance. Saudi Arabia is a rentier economic system in the traditional sense. It receives foreign aid in return for providing a lucrative natural resource, oil. Finally, Iran’s rentier economic system more closely matches that of Saudi Arabia’s: it is based on foreign purchases of oil, though it has diversified its economy more so than Saudi Arabia.

**General Hypothesis 4**: In the Middle East, strongman rulers are good, even necessary, for stable state creation, but in the long run, they hinder democratization.

**General Hypothesis 4a**: Authoritarian measures, such as implementing martial law, reduce participation and contestation levels, prohibit the development of a civil society, and hinder political liberalization.

**General Hypothesis 4b**: Pressure from below to improve social and economic conditions within the state can sometimes result in regime-initiated changes toward greater political liberalization.
As to be expected, authoritarianism damages the process of democratization within a state. The aforementioned conditions that were present in Jordan were also present in the cases of Saudi Arabia and Iran, with a few important revisions. In Saudi Arabia, the regime never imposed a period of martial law on the country as the regime in Jordan did. After the Iranian Revolution, the Saudi regime increased the conservative nature of society, but this action was not the same as imposing martial law. Furthermore, it is important to note that Saudi Arabia has never experienced popular pressure to improve the social or economic conditions within the state. As a result, the regime has never initiated political changes or liberalization in an effort to appease the population. Iran has also never experienced a period of martial law. However, there were periods in its 20th century history in which there was more or less political openness, as in the case of Jordan. Furthermore, Iran, like Jordan, experienced a period of pressure from the population to change the political system. Popular calls to alter the political system resulted in the 1906 Constitutional Revolution and greater political liberalization. The Iranian Revolution generated a popular call for political change but it did not result in increased political liberalization. The result was the opposite -- the resulting theocracy decreased levels of political participation and contestation.

The theoretical framework derived from the analysis of Jordan is not enough to fully explain the processes of state creation and regime building in the cases of Saudi Arabia and Iran. I begin with the nuances to the basic theoretical framework provided by the case of Saudi Arabia. From the case of Saudi Arabia, I add:

*General Hypothesis 5*: A regime’s use of religion to legitimize its authority in a highly religious society helps consolidate the power of the state.
Tilly discusses the importance of homogeneity of religion in state building. He makes the claim that having a uniform religion amongst the population renders the process of state creation easier. In all three cases presented in this study, the majority of the population was Muslim, whether Sunni in Jordan, Wahhabi in Saudi Arabia, or Twelver Shia in Iran. In other words, there was homogeneity of religion present in all three cases. What makes the case of Saudi Arabia unique is the role that religion played in the state creation process. The Al Saud tribe used religion as a tool of legitimacy right from the initial process of state creation. In Jordan and Iran, religion was not used as a tool in initial state creation. Both states were originally created as secular states. Religion was a tool of legitimization in Saudi Arabia’s regime building process as well as in its process of state creation. In Jordan, religion has not been an influence in the regime building process. In Iran, though religion did not play a role in the initial regime building process of the early state, religion came to play an important role in regime building leading up to, and after, the 1979 revolution. Shiism had remained a large part of the bazaar class’s identity even throughout Iran’s secular regimes, and anger with the Shah’s regime caused a resurgence in religiosity that resulted in the 1979 revolution. After 1979, the regime in Iran became inextricably linked with religion.

Another factor that was present in the case of Saudi Arabia, and that adds nuance to the basic theoretical framework, is the following:

**General Hypothesis 6:** The view of democracy as an inherently Western concept, combined with prevalent anti-Western sentiment and a weak civil society, decreases the chance that the population will call for greater political liberalization.
Nowhere in existing literature on this subject is the connection drawn between a lack of civil society and the population’s view of the West and democracy, and how this combination of factors affects the likelihood of political liberalization. In Jordan, there is less prevalent popular dislike of the West than exists amongst the populations of Saudi Arabia and Iran. Thus, it follows that Jordan is the country that has experienced the most political liberalization, and in which, at the moment, further political liberalization seems most likely. The case of Iran substantiates this hypothesis based on the case of Saudi Arabia.

The theoretical framework derived from the analysis of Jordan and Saudi Arabia is still not enough to fully explain the processes of state creation and regime building in the case of Iran. From the case of Iran, I add:

**General Hypothesis 7**: A strong, enduring, sense of cultural identity provides an important foundation for a national identity. This sense of identity strengthens the leadership’s ability to consolidate the power of the state.

Tilly discusses the role of ethnic homogeneity, but that is not quite the same as the argument I pose here. In all three cases presented in this study there was religious, linguistic, and ethnic homogeneity. What I am arguing, however, is that a strong sense of common *culture* bound together the Iranian population, whereas a sense of common culture was lacking in Jordan and Saudi Arabia at the outset of their respective state creation processes. Though the regime in Iran came to be connected to religion later in the 20th century, a common culture in Iran aided with the initial process of state creation and power consolidation. Furthermore, some authors discuss the role of Islamic identity and religion in the state and nation building of ‘the Middle
however, none of the authors explicitly identifies the role of Iran’s *non*-religious Persian linguistic and cultural identity in shaping Iran’s processes of state creation and consolidation of power.

Another factor that was present in the case of Iran, and that adds nuance to the basic theoretical framework, is the following:

**General Hypothesis 8**: Foreign intervention to initiate regime change infringes on the sovereignty of a state and can alter the nature of the regime. The instability created by this type of intervention can hinder political participation and contestation and preclude political liberalization.

In their respective work, Owen, Milton-Edwards, and Bromley all discuss the role that foreign powers played in the physical creation of many Middle Eastern states, and the economic, military, and political aid that foreign powers provided to the nascent states. However, the CIA’s intervention in Iran does not qualify as this type of intervention. Of the cases outlined in this study, Iran was the only one to experience foreign intervention to alter the structure of the regime *well after* its initial processes of state creation, power consolidation, and regime building had occurred. The US’s intervention shaped Iran’s political system and the nature of its regime.
CONCLUSIONS

Having derived a tentative theoretical framework from the three cases and having demonstrated how the cases of Saudi Arabia and Iran build upon the case of Jordan, I now summarize my findings for each case. At the end, I provide some concluding thoughts about areas for future research.

The tribal nature of Jordanian society, its artificial creation as a state by foreign powers, its rentier economic system, and the monarchical regime lead me to derive some tentative arguments about state creation, regime building, and democratization in Jordan. The tribal nature of society prevented the effective consolidation of elite power in the region prior to the 20th century. When the British set the boundaries of the eventual state after World War I, this action and the rentier economic nature of the state expedited the process of state creation in Jordan. British rents helped Abdullah to consolidate his power in the territory and increase core-periphery ties that linked rural populations to his center of power in Amman. British rents helped Abdullah to overcome the tribal structure of society to initiate a process of state creation and consolidation of state power.

Abdullah built was a secular monarchical regime without the aid of religion. While there were no outright checks on the king’s power, the 1952 Constitution established by Talal provided for executive, legislative, and judiciary institutions. The king filled most of the positions in these institutions, however the lower house of parliament did provide Jordanians with an outlet for expressing their political opinions. Women, however, could not vote. The impact of the monarchical regime on political liberalization in the country was magnified by the rentier economic system. Political participation and contestation were severely limited by the
lack of accountability that the regime felt toward its people because they did not generate the country’s economic revenue. This lack of accountability prevented full political participation and contestation and thus hindered full political liberalization.

Measures such as the imposition of martial law under King Hussein also severely limited political liberalization by restraining political participation and contestation. The regime has not been completely impervious to popular calls for greater political liberalization, however. Martial law was brought to an end by popular calls for greater political participation and contestation in response to an economic downturn. The regime, in order to preserve its stability, reinstated elections and political parties. Women getting the right to vote in 1974 was also an important measure for increasing participation within the political system. These measures to appease the population worked and are unique to the case of Jordan. Popular calls for increased political liberalization, however, were ultimately unsuccessful in Iran and there have never been any such initiatives in Saudi Arabia. Though levels of political participation and contestation are currently higher in Jordan than in either Saudi Arabia or Iran, they are not high enough to meet Dahl’s criteria of a polyarchy.

Another criterion of democracy, free and fair elections, has only recently come about in Jordan with the creation of the IEC. Prior to that, elections were often mired in opacity and favoritism. The work of the IEC is beginning to help Jordan achieve this criterion of democracy, yet there is still further to go to achieve full freeness and fairness of elections. Additionally, civil society is weak. This means that it is difficult for the population to challenge the political status quo.

Many of the same factors and conditions of state creation, regime building, and democratization that are present in the case of Jordan are also present in the case of Saudi
Arabia. However, the role of religion in the processes of state creation and regime building, and an anti-West view amongst the population, must be included in the case of Saudi Arabia. As in Jordan, the tribal nature of society prevented full consolidation of elite power prior to state creation. However, it was not foreign delineation of borders that eventually initiated a process of state creation. Instead, the Al Saud tribe was successful in using Wahhabism to gain legitimacy with tribal populations and to consolidate its power in the peninsula. Ibn Saud used the legitimacy afforded by Wahhabism, combined with a rentier economic system, as was also present in the case of Jordan, to engage in a process of state creation. The process of state creation in Saudi Arabia differed from that of Jordan because of the use of religion to help the central leadership consolidate its power.

The monarchical regime structure that developed in Saudi Arabia, combined with a rentier economic system had the same effect as this set of conditions in Jordan -- the regime felt no accountability to the population, which hindered political participation, contestation and, consequently, political liberalization. Unlike in Jordan, the regime in Saudi Arabia developed with the aid of religion as a tool of legitimization. The close links between religion and the regime have given the religious establishment power within the Saudi regime that the religious establishment in Jordan does not enjoy. Furthermore, unlike in Jordan, in which the regime was forced to marginally liberalize the political system in response to popular pressure, the Saudi regime has never experienced such pressure from the population. As a result, there has been no trend toward greater regime-initiated political liberalization in Saudi Arabia as there has been in Jordan. Why is this the case? Often regimes will increase political liberalization in response to not only negative social or economic conditions, but also to increased economic prosperity as
Saudi Arabia is incredibly economically prosperous thanks to oil wealth, yet the aforementioned development has not taken place.

As in Jordan, civil society in Saudi Arabia is weak. However, this condition, combined with an anti-West view prevalent amongst the population, means that democracy is hindered in a way that it is not in Jordan. A weak civil society means that the population is unable to challenge the political status quo. This factor, combined with a lack of desire for democratization, decreases the chance that political liberalization will occur. Furthermore, of the cases presented in this study, Saudi Arabia granted women the right to vote the latest; not until 2011. Since then, there have been increased social equalities granted to women. Whether there is a connection between these changes and an increase in political liberalization remains to be seen. The Saudi political system meets almost none of the prerequisites for polyarchy as outlined by Dahl.

Many of the factors present in the cases of Jordan and Saudi Arabia are also present in the case of Iran. However, Iran is the most multilayered case presented in this study. The role of an enduring cultural and linguistic identity, foreign intervention in the political regime well after state creation, and many regime transformations, including the most recent change to a theocracy, lead me to draw conclusions about nuances in the case of Iran. The tribal structure of society prevented the consolidation of elite power prior to state creation. As in the case of Saudi Arabia, foreign powers did not physically delineate the state of Iran. However, the British did prep the eventual leader of the Iranian state to launch a coup and oust the Qajar leadership. As in Jordan and Saudi Arabia, a rentier economic system, one based on foreign purchases of oil like in Saudi Arabia, allowed Reza to rapidly consolidate his power and to engage in a process of state creation and modernization. However, unlike in either of the two previous cases, a strong
sense of non-religious Persian identity aided Reza with a process of state creation. Though religion would come to play a large role in the state later on, at the inception of the state, it was an enduring sense of Persian cultural and linguistic identity that formed the basis of a national identity.

The initial regime type of the state was an authoritarian one. A rentier economic system combined with this regime type had the same effect as a monarchical regime type combined with a rentier economic system in Jordan and Saudi Arabia: participation and contestation were limited and political liberalization was obstructed. However, as in Jordan, the population in Iran has an outlet for voicing a political opinion. The constitution established in 1906, and the revised one created by Ayatollah Khomeini, provide for the institutions of a parliament, elections, and political parties.

The regime in Iran has changed in a much more radical manner than those of Jordan or Saudi Arabia. After World War II, the population used its limited political power to elect a Leftist/Communist party. The party’s platform was one of greater political participation, but its plans were abruptly stymied when the CIA intervened to oust the leader of the party, Mohammad Mossadegh. Foreign intervention in the regime well after state creation was a unique occurrence in Iran. Neither Jordan nor Saudi Arabia experienced such intervention in the trajectory of their respective regimes. The outcome of this intervention was yet another regime change twenty-six years later. The Iranian Revolution, fueled by a strong anti-West sentiment, resulted in the development of a theocratic regime. The theocracy endures today, and though the majles and political party activity endure, the religious establishment has severely checked political participation and contestation. Interestingly, Iran granted women the right to vote the earliest of the three cases presented in this study.
As is the case in Saudi Arabia, anti-West sentiment is strong amongst the population of Iran and within the regime. In addition, as in both the previous cases, civil society is weak and the population is unable to challenge the political status quo. This condition, combined with a strong anti-West view, has the same effect as these two conditions do in Saudi Arabia: they decrease the chance that the population will push for political liberalization. Furthermore, the inextricable link between the regime and the religious establishment has limited political participation and contestation. Furthermore, another criterion for democracy, free and fair elections, is not being entirely met in Iran. Elections under the theocracy have been mired in opacity, illegitimacy, and favoritism. However, unlike in Saudi Arabia, but similar to Jordan, Iran does have precedent of the population calling for greater political liberalization and regime change. Perhaps this precedent will translate into yet another regime transformation in the future. At the moment, low participation and contestation, and the lack of free and fair elections prevent Iran from meeting Dahl’s criteria of polyarchy. In all three cases, it will be important to continue to monitor social, economic, and political conditions to see if there are indications in the future of greater political liberalization.

Future Research

This study leaves room for future studies to build upon. One way in which this study could be expanded would be to take on a similar process of analysis and theory creation for countries in the Middle East not examined here. Another way in which this study could be expanded upon would be to continue the analysis of the cases presented here in the future. This study can only examine the cases up to a certain point in their respective histories. Naturally, the political,
social, and economic conditions in these three countries will continue to evolve in the future, and any changes will be worth examining. For example, if there ever were to be popular protest for increased political liberalization in Saudi Arabia, as has never happened before, this would be a major development for the political climate of the country and would be important to delve into.

There is also room to, in the future, engage more extensively with literature on the Middle East so as to build upon, and add additional nuance to, the arguments presented in this study. This study has placed the cases in a global context. However, there is room to further examine the domestic conditions that shaped the processes of state creation and regime building in each country.
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55 Ibid., 7. In this sense, the processes of state creation in Latin America differed from those of the Middle East. After the Spanish left Latin America, the states had to decide where to draw their borders, and who would rule what. The Spanish left in place viceroyalties that encompassed multiple present-day states. When the Spanish left, a few wars ensued between various nascent states to determine who had control of what. The original viceroyalty of New Spain, later Mexico, became the Mexican Empire for a brief period, and eventually, Central American states broke away from the empire and created their own confederation of Central American states. That confederation then evolved into distinct Central American states (Hybel, *The Making of Flawed Democracies*, chapter1).


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