KAREL ČERNÝ

INSTABILITY IN THE MIDDLE EAST

STRUCTURAL CHANGES AND UNEVEN MODERNISATION 1950–2015

KAROLINUM

Instability in the Middle East
Structural Changes and Uneven Modernisation 1950–2015

Karel Černý

———

Published by Charles University,
Karolinum Press
Translation by Phil Jones
Cover and layout by Jan Šerých
Typesetting by Karolinum Press
First English edition

ISBN 978-80-246-3427-2
ISBN 978-80-246-3191-2 (pdf)

Charles University
Karolinum Press 2017

www.karolinum.cz
ebooks@karolinum.cz

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION: CHRONIC INSTABILITY IN THE MIDDLE EAST

MODERNISATION AS THE CAUSE OF INSTABILITY IN THE MIDDLE EAST – TOO SLOW OR TOO FAST?

The academic, media and public discourse regarding the development of the post-colonial Middle East has long featured two viewpoints that, on the face of it, are diametrically opposed. The first claims the region is backward and rigid, with change taking place too slowly, if at all. The second believes that the region is transforming too quickly and that this is traumatising and destabilising local societies.

This book offers an alternative way of looking at the issue that brings together these two apparently contradictory viewpoints. It conducts a theoretically original and empirically substantiated analysis of the structural causes of Middle Eastern social and political instability, an instability manifest externally in many different forms: the protracted crisis of governing regimes and their ideologies and legitimacy; an upsurge in different ideologically driven opponents of these regimes in the form of oppositional political Islam and pro-democracy movements; a surge in political violence in the form of terrorism, civil wars or revolutions during the Arab Spring; the chronic post-revolutionary instability of the region, the collapse of many local states and the erosion of social order resulting in chaos, anarchy and interregnum.

Monitoring these external, constantly changing manifestations of pan-regional instability means understanding the Middle East as a dramatic chessboard full of constantly materialising and disappearing state and non-state actors enforcing their interests, promoting their ideologies, and competing with each other, while at the same time entering into often unexpected coalitions or, indeed, dissolving them equally unexpectedly. However, the aim of this book is to offer an explanation of the deeper causes of a chess game that is being played ever faster and during which new pieces are being added and the chessboard itself being redrawn, along with the very rules of the game. A new Middle East is emerging, one completely different to that which we have been accustomed to for decades.

How is it possible that, while over the last fifty years the Middle Eastern political chessboard was one of the most stable, predictable and boring in the world, controlled as it was by the same figures playing in accordance with

the same strategies, over the last few years the pace of history has sped up beyond recognition? I will argue that this is the consequence of the impacts of long-term, subterranean social changes that have been taking place over the last fifty years but have been hitherto unobserved, since most observers have concentrated on the political game and not on the changes to its deeper demographic, social, economic and political determinants. And yet the character of these changes is strikingly reminiscent of what was a politically and socially destabilised Europe during the 19th and early 20th centuries. Reminding ourselves of recent European demographic and social history offers the possibility of better understanding the causes of the current turmoil in the Middle East.

EXCESSIVELY SLOW SOCIAL CHANGE

Those subscribing to the first viewpoint referred to above see the Middle East as an underdeveloped region, in which islands of modernity, progress, education and Western culture are surrounded by an ocean of medieval ignorance, obscurantism and Islamic-backed reactionary forces. According to this analysis, the region is experiencing a form of schizophrenia, with one leg in the camp of modernity, and the other still firmly planted in tradition (e.g. Longrigg, Jankowski 1963). More sophisticated versions of this line of argument describe the Middle East as a region inhabited by people who for the most part have not yet adapted psychologically to the modern world. Mentally they languish somewhere in the Middle Ages and its traditions. They cannot be described as "modern" because they are not sufficiently educated, socially mobile and informed. The boundaries of their community are the boundaries of their world. They are stuck in a time warp of tradition. They are walking backwards into the future, as it were, so as to replicate as faithfully as possible the patterns of behaviour, identities and aspirations of previous generations, which represent their role model and authority. They do not possess new, expanding consumer and career aspirations, and as a consequence lack an advanced sense of empathy, namely the ability to imagine alternatives to their life and the organisation of their community or wider society. They do not perceive themselves to be an active subject capable of changing the course of history according to a programme conceived of in advance, but as a passive object simply being dragged along by history and destiny (e.g. Lerner 1964, cf. Bah 2008). The more vulgar, borderline racist interpretation of the immutability of the region speaks of what it calls the "*Arab mind*", a specific, unchanging personality archetype common to all Arabs characterised by an aversion to manual work, an obsession with sexuality, an overabundance of pride, a partiality for conspiracy theories, a reluctance to accept reality, an unwillingness to submit to anything other than power, and a comprehensive backwardness (e.g. Patai 1973, Friedman 2006).

The latest perspective on the region is the influential series of studies entitled the Arab Human Development Report (2002, 2003, 2005, 2009), compiled under the auspices of the UN by Arab scholars and intellectuals. These reports traced the deeper cause of the backwardness of the Arab world back to a *combination of three deficits*: the freedom deficit, women's empowerment, and the knowledge deficit. Democratisation and the promotion of constitutional liberalism are not taking place, while, on the contrary, authoritarian and oppressive regimes persist. The status of women is not improving fast enough. The participation of women in different social spheres remains low, while oppression and discrimination remains high. As a consequence the human potential of an entire half of the population lies idle. Finally, the reports' authors say, the region is unable to mount an effective fight against illiteracy and to produce a sufficiently well educated population. It is unable to generate innovation and new knowledge. On top of this it is unable to avail itself of the innovations and knowledge generated elsewhere in the world. The Arab world lags behind other global regions in all respects.

One of the consequences is a lack of economic growth. In addition, what economic growth there is fragile, since it is wholly dependent on the export of raw materials, a burgeoning, ineffective state sector, and on family businesses from the informal sector on the boundary of the grey economy that are incapable of generating stable jobs or expanding because they cannot apply for bank loans. By contrast, the sophisticated output of stable firms with high value added plays a minimal role. Job creation is sluggish and the region is unable to compete within the global economy. Another consequence of the three deficits is the lack of functioning state institutions that would ensure effective, transparent and high quality governance and thus a reliable framework for economic development and a tranquil, safe life for the population. Quality of life lags behind other regions of the world because of the ongoing risk of poverty, poor health and deteriorating nutritional and ecological standards (AHDR 2002, 2003, 2005, 2009).

The approach taken by the Arab Human Development Report team selects developmental indicators from the many gathered by the World Bank and highlights those that show the Arab world to be lagging behind other regions. Not only does the Arab world occupy a lowly position in these rankings, but the situation is improving at a slower tempo (cf. Amin 2006). Such studies point out with relish that not a single Arab university features among the 500 top universities in the world. The Arab publishing market represents only 1% of global book sales, a figure completely incommensurate with population statistics. While Turkey and Iran have multiplied several times over their scholarly output over the last decade as measured by specialist articles, the Arab world does not research or publish and is stagnating academically. The Arab world has low newspaper circulation per capita, limited telephone

coverage, and translates only one book a year per one million of the population: in Hungary and Spain these figures are 519 and 920 respectively. All of this is intended to illustrate the region's intellectual stagnation and its aversion to new ideas (e.g. Zewail 2011).

One variant of the argument that the Middle East is developing too slowly involves a narrative of chronically unsuccessful modernisation projects and developmental strategies imposed on a top-down basis by enlightened dictators on a subservient and backward population. This often involves reformist leaders recruited from the army, who, face to face with military defeat and their country's obvious technological and economic inferiority as compared to the West, attempt to implement a *defensive modernisation strategy aimed at closing the gap*. Above all they attempt to establish a modern, powerful army and to embrace new technology so as to be able to resist the pressure of the West and play a commensurate role in international politics. However, generally speaking they are only able to create a strong army having first established a functioning secular education system and an effective state bureaucracy based on a codified, Western-style legal system. This strategy, based on the assumption that successful modernisation also requires a certain degree of cultural Westernisation, was first attempted by the Ottoman Turks, followed by the Arabs, Iranians, and Afghans. However, for the most part the strategy failed and encountered opposition on the part of a population unsettled by attempts at what they saw as excessively rapid change. What ensued were repeated waves of Islamic fundamentalism driven by the belief that, on the contrary, the region lagged behind the West because it had deviated from its own culture and religion (e.g. Lewis 2003a, 2003b).

Both the more sophisticated scholarly and the more vulgar non-academic versions of the slow-development theory of the Middle East region and its allegedly medieval character are often close to the *discourse of orientalism*, i.e. the set of widespread and deeply entrenched Western ideas, clichés and stereotypes regarding the Orient. Orientalism is based on the binary opposition of two interdependent categories – the Occident and the Orient, civilisation and barbarism – each of which makes no sense on its own. The idea of a Muslim Orient as the antithetical image of Europe, and later the United States, had always enabled the West to define itself by virtue of what it was not, locate its essence, and confirm its positive self-image as being in contradistinction to that of the Other, Oriental and inferior. This stereotype views a citizen of the West as broadminded, rational, active, industrious, peace-loving, progressive, dynamic and civilised, while the Oriental is prone to despotism, slavery, irrationality, savagery, fanaticism, indolence, violence, unbridled sexuality, primitiveness and barbarism (Said 2008, Halliday 2005, Barša 2012). The basis of the Orientalist discourse is *essentialism*, i.e. the idea that the present attributes of Oriental people are determined by an ancient

barbaric culture of primitive desert Bedouins, whose influence they cannot shake off, and that these attributes are intrinsic, not subject to historical development, and fixed in time. The only thing that can liberate the Oriental from being suspended in timelessness and stagnation is an external shock or intervention in the form of colonialism or neo-colonialism (Abdel-Malek 1963).

In Western popular culture Orientalism is manifest, for instance, in television programmes and Hollywood films in which for a hundred years Arabs have been depicted as one of the "three Bs": belly dancer, billionaire or bomber (Shaheen 2001, 2008). In Western politics Orientalism is then manifest in the justification of military intervention (Afghanistan, Iraq) in order to spread democracy, freedom, human rights and the emancipation of women. It is assumed that any change to this inflexible region can only come from without, and it is emphasised that the backwardness and absence of democracy in the region breeds violence and terrorism (Amin 2004, Amin 2006, Zogby 2012). The first to come up with the argument, still being recycled to this day, that justifies Western political violence against non-Western parts of the world was Napoleon Bonaparte during his expedition to Egypt in 1798 (Said 1981, Wallerstein 2008).

The basic premise of this book will perhaps seem counterintuitive in that it takes Middle Eastern societies to be relatively modern, a viewpoint at odds with the discourse of Orientalism. The fact is that over the last few decades Middle Eastern societies have changed far faster than have Western ways of thinking about the Orient, which remain rigid and incapable of adapting to the new reality. This is why we have a problem in understanding and correctly analysing the *new* Middle East.

EXCESSIVELY RAPID SOCIAL CHANGE

The opposite opinion views the Middle Eastern region as changing rapidly, a fact that over the last few decades has traumatised the population and driven them into the arms of both moderate and militant Islamists. For instance, in the religious revivals and the creation of new movements and sects, Saïd Amir Arjomand sees a globally intensifying process taking place in parallel not only within the framework of mainly Muslim regions, but within the framework of many other religious traditions. The common denominator is excessively rapid social change that all over the world sees the recycling of local versions of traditional fundamentalisms. This flies in the face of mainstream modernisation theories. The processes that were supposed to lead inevitably to secularisation and the death of religion have instead resulted in a renaissance and even the politicisation of Islam and other religions (cf. also Huntington 2001).

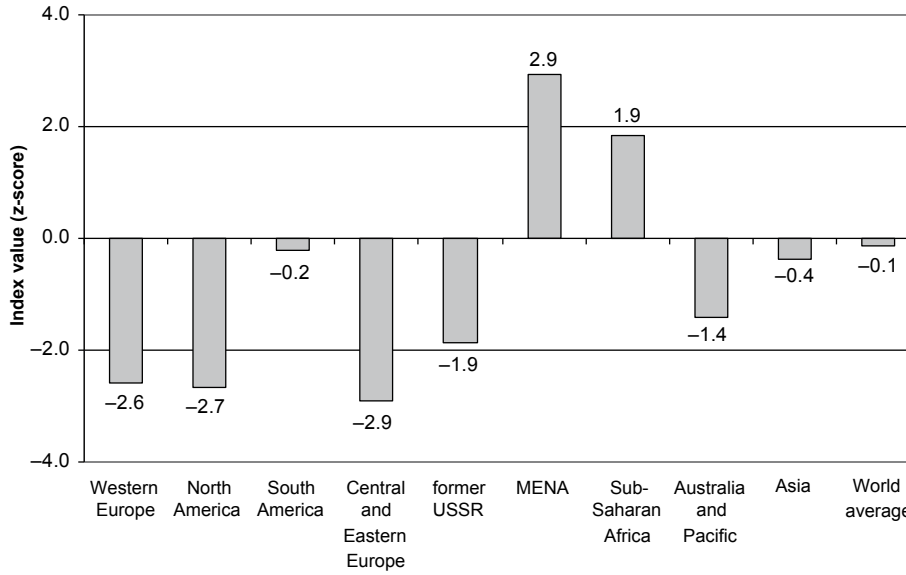
In the case of Muslim societies this involves, in approximately chronological order, the following processes, now running in parallel and overlapping, that escalated after World War II: (1) the integration of the Islamic world into the international economic and political system in the form of colonialism, imperial intervention, Christian missions, and economic, cultural and political globalisation, (2) the expansion of communication and transport technology and infrastructure, (3) the acceleration of urbanisation, (4) increased literacy and greater access to education in general, and (5) the creation of centralised nation states and the politicisation of the masses accompanied by repression on the part of regimes (Arjomand 1986, 2006). While the first four processes follow a similar trajectory in all countries and lead, arguably, to the unification of revivalist religious movements, the last factor is variable and leads to diversification as the character of political regimes forms to a significant extent the character of Islamist movements within each nation state (Arjomand 1995).

An approach that emphasises the rapid *social change* taking place in the Middle East often attempts to use this fact in order to explain the rise of oppositional political Islam, which has been going on since the 1970s. Though Islamic movements are highly heterogeneous internally and the formative influence of the specific national context in which they are rooted can be tracked down in the case of each, this is a phenomenon of international dimensions. The main causes of this upsurge must therefore be common to all movements (Dekmejian 1995). Individual writers then argue as to whether affinities and analogies can be found between current Islamism and earlier European Marxism (Gellner 1995, Roy 1992, 2004, Eisenstadt 2003), Russian anti-Tsarist anarchism (Gray 2004), German Nazism (Lewis 1990, 2003, Buruma and Margalit 2005), or secular nationalism (Juergensmeyer 1994). However, they all agree that the broad and internally highly differentiated current of Islamism is far more the product of the modernisation of the Middle Eastern region in the same way that the European political movements referred to above were the product of modernisation in their time, and not the consequence or residue of the Middle Ages, as proponents of the secularisation theory still thought until recently. I would agree with Shmuel Noah Eisenstadt (2000, 2003) that these movements possessed significant ambitions to define themselves in respect of the Western version of modernity, to be inspired selectively by it, and to come up with an alternative version or variation also inspired by domestic tradition, be this "invented" or genuinely authentic.

This was the approach I myself highlighted (cf. Černý 2006), when, using empirical data, I operationalised Zbigniew Brzezinski's theoretical concept (1993, 2004) of the *global political awakening* of modernising societies. Developing countries of the Global South are at present describing a similar trajectory to the fast social change that Europe experienced during the 19th and

early 20th centuries: a growing population with an ever larger proportion of young people and a consequent pressure on resources; an exodus from over-populated rural and peripheral areas to cities and central regions making political organisation easier; a more educated population and the expansion of mass media accompanied by a rise in career, consumer and political aspirations; and the development of market economies creating visible inequality. In 19th and early 20th century Europe these processes led to the deracination of populations from traditional social and normative structures. The resulting vacuum was filled by new political movements offering new social frameworks, identities and orientation in a rapidly changing world. This all culminated in the expansion of mass political movements, the wholesale political mobilisation of the population in the name of new ideologies, and considerable political destabilisation. And so we had a century of nationalism and revolutions (the 19th century) and a century of killing sprees in the name of utopian ideas promising to create heaven on earth (the 20th century). This was the "Age of Extremes", the "short 20th century" (1914–1989) (cf. Hobsbawm 1998).

Fig. 1 The political awakening of world macro-regions 1975–2003



N.B.: The resulting synthetic index of political awakening is the arithmetic average of dimensionless quantities (z-score) taking into consideration the rate of population growth (1975–2003), the pace of urbanisation (1975–2003), the rate of the intergenerational increase in literacy (adult population versus the young), and the rate of economic growth (1990–2003). Unweighted population sizes of individual states. The author's calculations.
Data source: UNDP Human Development Report 2005; cited in Černý (2006: 117).

By the same token, moving forward in time we find rapid social change bringing analogous political destabilisation in developing countries. While mass political movements in the Global South are not obliged to seek their raison d'être in secular ideologies, the structural sources of their expansion are identical to those of the movements of European modern history (Brzezinski 1993, 1999, 2004). And so the Middle East, along with Sub-Saharan Africa, finds itself in a stage of history in which it is experiencing the most powerful combination of rapid demographic, social and economic change. This is why the political awakening is so strong here in comparison with other world macro-regions, where the process of political awakening has already subsided or is subsiding (see fig. 1, cf. Černý 2006).

However, for a long time the problem with this type of analysis was that subterranean demographic, social and economic changes were being played out beneath the surface of Middle Eastern political systems that on the surface appeared to be stable and displayed no visible signs of political awakening. Individual countries were ruled for decades by the same dictators, and the political and economic power in a country was divided up among cronies of the same families, tribes or religious beliefs (e.g. Hybášková 2004). In the meantime, beneath the smooth political surface invisible social and demographic changes were simmering and gathering momentum. The attention paid by researchers to visible events in the political sphere and their orientation on the chessboard of political actors meant that these deeper, inconspicuous and less easily grasped structural changes were overlooked. They were also underestimated because, given their fundamental character, they progressed in slow, gradual accretions, over decades rather than years. As a consequence, there was an overemphasis placed on stasis in the Middle East and a focus on explaining the causes of this anomalous stability (cf. Gause III 2011).

CREATING AN ALTERNATIVE THEORETICAL MODEL: UNEVEN MODERNISATION AND ITS CONTEXT

Both the viewpoints outlined contain an element of truth. However, by looking at things selectively and focusing only on particular aspects of Middle Eastern reality, neither viewpoint captures the whole picture. The fact is that certain aspects of Middle Eastern reality are indeed changing very quickly, with, for instance, sharp increases in the population, urbanisation, media diffusion, and education. However, other aspects are changing very slowly, if at all. For instance, over the last fifty years political regimes have been rigid and the capacity of states to govern effectively and discharge basic functions in their own territory has been eroded. And the

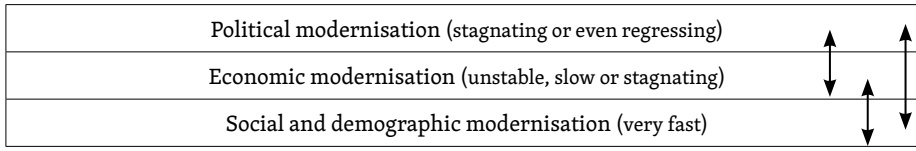
modernisation projects initiated by enlightened dictators have often failed, in the process discrediting the secular ideologies they had drawn on to justify their actions.

FIRST THEORETICAL INSPIRATION: UNEVEN MODERNISATION

For this reason, this book will pursue an alternative approach that to a large extent integrates the two positions referred to above. It will do this by emphasising the highly *uneven and asynchronous pace* of development in individual *dimensions* of Middle Eastern social change (see fig. 2). In this alternative approach Middle Eastern modernisation in the post-colonial period is characterised by (1) a very high pace of *socio-demographic modernisation*; a demographic revolution characterised by sharp population growth and a greater proportion of younger generations within the population as a whole, urbanisation, an intergenerational increase in education, and the expansion of the media and other means of communication. These swift changes are accompanied by (2) a slower, irregular pace of *economic modernisation*; economic growth made volatile by external influences and deformed by its unbalanced dependence on natural resources, the slow diversification of economic sectors, and an ailing labour market and hence the absence of social mobility. And finally by (3) a very slow, non-existent or even regressive rate of *political modernisation*; the erosion of the ability of Middle Eastern states and their institutions to govern effectively, to enforce their own laws and to discharge basic functions in their own territory, including the state monopoly on violence; and the absence of democratisation and constitutional liberal principles making it impossible to co-opt ever more modern populations into political systems.

The result of the collision of the divergent, mutually unsynchronised pace of development in these three basic dimensions of social change is a region with sizeable and relatively *modern societies* living in *rigid and non-functional states* controlled for decades by the same archaic monarchies or military republican dictatorships, and populations that are unable to find sufficient life chances in *deformed rentier economies* that fail to generate suitable job opportunities and distribute the nation's wealth evenly throughout society. In other words, the Middle East is a region full of modern, metropolitan, educated, media savvy and mainly young people with high consumer, career, professional, civic and political aspirations. However, closed, inflexible economic and political systems are unable to meet the growing demand in people for upward social mobility and self-fulfilment and *co-opt* these populations into an economic and political system. Modern societies are therefore excluded from participating in economic and political systems and stand outside them. This generates instability in the Middle East.

Fig. 2 Model of uneven modernisation: The interaction and tensions of the three dimensions of social change



N.B. Possible interactions and tensions are shown by the arrows.

The mutually unsynchronised rate of development in these three basic dimensions of social change gives rise to *three general deficits*: a prosperity deficit, a democratic deficit, and a security deficit. The *prosperity deficit* is due to the excessively rapid rate of change in the socio-demographic sphere that developments in the economic subsystem cannot keep up with; a surfeit of well educated, urbanised and informed people are acquiring professional and consumer aspirations that outstrip the possibilities of the economic subsystem. The *democratic deficit* is due to the excessively rapid rate of change in the socio-demographic sphere that developments in the political subsystem cannot keep pace with and which remains closed to the majority of the fast growing population and is unable to co-opt new political actors and the ever larger group of politically mobilised masses. The *security deficit* is again due to the excessively rapid rate of change in the socio-demographic sphere that developments in the political subsystem cannot keep pace with. This results in weak, unreliable and unpredictable states unable to perform basic functions and enforce law and order, ensure internal and external security, and provide adequate infrastructure and a social safety net for all social strata. The combination of these three deficits is the source of the frustration and political instability in the region. In addition, the interaction between the political and economic system needs to be taken into account: the formation of a rentier economy retrospectively shapes the character of political systems in the direction of rigid authoritarianism. These steps in the analysis mean moving from the macro to the micro level, from an examination of the development of structures to an examination of how these uneven social changes impact on the frustration, motivation and actions of political actors (this theme is addressed in more detail below).

Our alternative model is inspired by a *critical* reading of *modernisation theories* (cf. Knöbl 2003, Lorenz 2006, Wucherpfennig and Deutsch 2009). The concept of modernisation is taken to be a *value-neutral* analytical tool that enables us to distinguish between individual dimensions of the modernisation process, e.g. the technological, economic, demographic, social, political, cultural, value or psychological changes (e.g. Apter 1968, Smelser 1959). However, while classical modernisation theory assumed synchronised, interconnected

development in individual, mutually dependent spheres – the development of education or the media was to result in the development of the economy and social structure, which would in turn culminate in democratisation and secularisation (e.g. Lerner 1958, Lipset 1959, 1994, Rostow 1960) – this book will, on the contrary, emphasise the *divergent tempo and inconsistencies* in the development of individual spheres. While classical modernisation theories assumed the smooth, harmonious and peaceful development of modernising societies as opposed to the revolutionary development of Marxist analyses, this book will emphasise the discontinuous, reversible and nonlinear character of modernisation and above all its many unintended consequences and politically destabilising potential (cf. Sztompka 1993, Keller 2007, Arnason 2010).

A key author in this respect is Samuel P. Huntington and his classic text *Political Order in Changing Societies* (1968), which, reacting to the first wave of modernisation theories, showed that the pace of development tends to be very uneven and mutually conflictual in individual social dimensions. For this reason the internal dynamic of emergent modernising countries – previously European countries, at present developing countries – generates intense political conflict and instability. This is due to the mismatch between the excessively rapid pace of socioeconomic change and the slow rate of change to rigid political systems. During modernisation, socioeconomic changes produce a mass-mobilised population and more and more political actors entering into contentious politics with each other: intellectuals, the middle classes, students, workers and finally peasants. However, the rapid politicisation of society is usually played out in the absence of adequate political institutions that could co-opt political actors into the political system and offer them rules and mechanisms for non-violent contention and the promotion of their interests. Political actors are banished to the peripheries of the political system. Their pursuit of political participation is then realised on the streets in the form of direct action: demonstrations, strikes, violent protests, coups and revolution. And so while traditional societies are (still) politically stable, modern societies are (again) politically stabilised. However, *modernising* societies are politically destabilised, with a higher risk of coups in the first stage of modernisation and a higher risk of revolution in the second stage, when a genuinely mass political participation has already been achieved. In short, *tradition* and *modernity* are accompanied by stability, and modernisation is accompanied by instability and escalating conflict (Huntington 1968, cf. Fukuyama 2006). Huntington comes up with a counter-intuitive finding: without commensurate political development, modernisation may result in tyranny, political and social chaos, civil war, and outbursts of political violence (cf. Fukuyama 2011).

In this respect the Middle East is no exception. It is politically destabilised for the same reasons as Europe was in the past and other regions of the

post-colonial world later on. The analyses of the rise of oppositional Islam by writers such as Vallerie Hoffman (1995) and Sami Zubaida (2009) focus on the uneven pace of change in the Middle East in individual social dimensions. In his essays on the Arab Spring, Francis Fukuyama (2011) examines the mismatch between the pace of social, economic and political developments and explicitly highlights the topicality of the approach taken by Samuel P. Huntington. Fukuyama also describes his teacher as one of the last researchers who attempted a genuinely comprehensive overview of social change and tried to create an all-encompassing theory of political change. According to Fukuyama, most theoreticians these days are specialised in one dimension of social change and do not try to understand the relationship between its political, economic and social dimensions. For this reason we have a problem understanding the Middle Eastern world (Fukuyama 2011).

However, Huntington conspicuously overlooked the role of *external factors* in the destabilisation of modernising post-colonial countries, above all the role of the geopolitical context characterised by the Cold War with its bloody, proxy conflicts being played out in the early stages of the modernisation of the Third World. In addition, he overlooked the role of premodern culture and above all *religion*, since he was writing in the spirit of the secularisation theory prevalent at that time, which anticipated a decline in the influence of religion in modernising societies. However, these factors can be consistently built into our provisional model of uneven modernisation, and we shall look to the latest theory of multiple modernities for inspiration.

SECOND THEORETICAL INSPIRATION: MULTIPLE MODERNITIES

Classical modernisation theory mistakenly assumes the existence of only a single universal model, applicable to all societies, of the modernisation process, which reads from the same script all around the world and culminates in an identical way of organising society in an identical version of modernity. According to this narrative the Western version of modernity ought to be asserting itself globally, since modernisation and Westernisation are seen as synonymous. However, the competing concept of *multiple modernities*, based on a comparative analysis of different forms of modernity in various parts of the world and in different stages of the development of individual societies, emphasises the existence of multiple models of modernity and the existence of multiple paths to modernity. In addition, modernity itself is never definitive but contingent upon self-reflection and critical questioning. Instead of "the End of History" we are witnessing rather the historical stratification of different models of modernity in the manner of geological strata (cf. Arnason 2009, 2010, Eisenstadt 2003, Spohn 2001).

What are the reasons for the institutional and ideological diversity of modernity? Firstly, multiple versions of modernity are the outcomes of conflict between different social and political movements promoting their own, mutually competing concepts of modernity, their own *programmes of modernity*. Islamists are an example of such a movement. They are both the product of swift social change and, through the promotion of their own project, the driver of accelerated change, as when, for example, they approach political power as an instrument for the radical transformation of society. Their utopian programme promises to create a new man and a new society, and even a new international order and a new collective identity that bridges the fragmentation of society into different national, ethnic, social, or regional identities. At the same time they have a predisposition toward totalitarianism, when, like the communists or Nazis, they deem the interest of the collective to be superior to that of the individual (Eisenstadt 2000).

Secondly, different versions of modernity are the outcome of a *positive or negative* profiling in respect of the Western model of modernity. The Western model operates as a *reference point* by virtue of its historical primacy, and as a consequence cannot be ignored but must be addressed head on, whatever the consequences (Eisenstadt 2000). Furthermore, individual versions of modernity cannot be studied in isolation because their *interdependence* is increasing and because non-Western versions of modernity are often the result of disparate reactions to the rise and global expansion of the Western version that they have had to confront (Arnason 2010). The Western version of modernity is regarded with ambivalence in the non-Western world, which is why we see there a "continuous selection, reinterpretation and reformulation of these imported ideas". For instance, Islamists define themselves in relation to the Western model of modernity. They attempt to select and adapt certain of its elements. However, they also reinterpret them within the concepts of the Islamic religious tradition: "These movements have attempted to dissociate Westernisation from modernity, denying the Western monopoly on modernity and rejecting the Western cultural program as the epitome of modernity." (Eisenstadt 2000: 15, 22).

Thirdly, different versions of modernity are the consequence of the interaction of universal modernising processes on the one hand, and local traditions, value systems, cultural assumptions and specific historical experience, including the experience and legacy of colonialism, on the other. For this reason, in the colonial and post-colonial period, modern and traditional sources are connected and combined, and this results in the formation of an ideological and institutional diversity of forms of modernity (Eisenstadt 2000). The relationship between and compatibility of more or less reconstructed or even invented traditional components and modern elements adapted to a varying degree to the local cultural context differs in individual versions of modernity.

Traditions can be used to legitimise modernity or to subject it to harsh critique. Temporarily suspended or repressed traditions can be rediscovered in reaction to modernity. Viable aspects of tradition can adapt and evolve and even prosper in symbiosis with modernity. Tradition itself therefore appears to be diverse, in the same way as modernity, and different elements of tradition interact with modernity in different ways (Arnason 2010). The fact that different pre-modern traditions and historical experiences (cultural zones) lead under the same degree of socioeconomic development to a different outcome in terms of value-based, and subsequently institutional (secularisation and democratisation), change has been empirically documented by the team led by Ronald Inglehart using data from the World Values Study (Inglehart and Norris 2004, Inglehart and Welzel 2006).

If, therefore, the classical theory of modernisation ignored or at least underestimated the role of the cultural and geopolitical context in which modernisation takes place, my model of uneven modernisation rectifies this state of affairs. A comparative analysis of the Middle Eastern pattern of modernisation will therefore take its context and the interaction of individual levels of uneven modernisation with this context into consideration (see fig. 3).

Firstly, we highlight the interaction of the modernisation process and the pre-modern cultural substrate, i.e. the primordial tribal or ethnical identities and above all the Islamic religion within the context of which uneven modernisation is taking place. In this respect Islam is co-forming and modifying modernisation. At the same time, however, within the context of objective experience with uneven modernisation certain aspects of Islam are being promoted to the detriment of others. Yet Islam is providing inspiration to opposing political actors and is becoming a source of the political imaginary, criticism and mobilisation. However, the point is not to ascertain what Islam says about current modernising processes and the impacts thereof and to become caught up in a never-ending dispute led by Orientalists and primarily Muslims themselves (cf. Roy 2004), but to attempt to indicate what Islamists and other inhabitants of the Middle East facing the impacts of uneven modernisation are saying about what Islam has to say about their experience that is relevant. The attempt, therefore, is to show what Islam-inspired discourses are being generated by uneven modernisation within the geopolitical context under consideration.

In this respect Islam is not to be seen as the main, or even sole, *independent* variable determining political instability, the character of political conflicts, and the repertoires of contention. Similarly, it is not the main variable determining the growth of political Islam. I do not subscribe to those culturological arguments proclaiming that Islam is showing its true face and is the cause of all problems. However, it is also not to be taken as a completely *dependent* variable, as a passive victim of cold-blooded abuse in political rivalry being

driven by social, economic and political circumstances and therefore vulnerable to the doctrinaire interpretations of a range of different interest groups. These two extreme positions either claim that Islam is responsible for everything or for absolutely nothing (cf. Juergensmeyer 2004). However, alongside uneven modernisation and the geopolitical context, I take Islam to be one of the independent variables that *only* in mutual *interaction* is playing a role in the growth of political Islam, shaping the character of political conflicts and the overall (in)stability of the region. The question of whether Islam has a destabilising or stabilising effect within the context of uneven modernisation will be put under the spotlight. At the same time, I incline to the hypothesis that, without Islamic social ethics and institutions, the Middle East would be unable to withstand the onslaught of uneven modernisation and there would be destabilisation and a far more dramatic breakdown of social order.

Secondly, I take into account the broader international political context of uneven modernisation in the region. This has long been characterised mainly by the effects of European *colonialism*, which created artificial, weak and unworkable post-colonial states. Beginning in the 19th century, French, British and Italian territorial expansion led to the creation of colonies, protectorates and other dependent zones. After the First World War this process culminated with the break-up of the Ottoman Empire and the carving up of its territory by the Europeans, with France and Great Britain, under the terms of a secret agreement (the Sykes-Pikot agreement of 1917), leading the way. The establishment of Middle Eastern states failed to respect the right of local peoples to self-determination and was driven purely by the interests of the great powers. As a result, local populations feel only a limited allegiance to their states, i.e. to their borders, power elites and institutions. Geographical boundaries do not respect the boundaries of particular communities. While in Europe a strong national identity tended to precede the emergence of an independent nation state, in the Middle East new artificial states often came into being that then retrospectively attempted to shape the national identity of the population. This also led to peoples being left without their own state (e.g. the Kurds, Palestinians, Druze, Yazidis) or, conversely, the existence of many different groups forced to live within the boundaries of one highly heterogeneous state (Libya, Lebanon, Syria, Iraq) with which they do not identify. Exceptions to this model are Egypt, Turkey, Iran, and perhaps Morocco, with their long traditions of statehood, or Tunisia with its relatively homogenous population. What we see are artificial and unclear borders that do not respect natural historical boundaries (e.g. of the Ottoman provinces), which lead to interstate conflicts, separatism, or the poor management of shared watercourses and irrigation systems (cf. Barr 2012).

The international political context of Middle Eastern modernisation is also characterised and shaped by the Israeli-Palestinian and the *Arab-Israeli*

conflict. This conflict has generated wave upon wave of refugees, repeatedly destabilised the region, and stood in the way of its economic and political development. Dictatorships have justified restricting political rights and civil liberties, increasing the defence budget and even their own failure by appealing to a state of war or the threat posed by Israel (cf. Hourani 2010, Laurens 2012). The international context of Middle Eastern modernisation is also characterised by the fact that, unlike the historical modernisation of Europe, it is not taking place in a global core, but on a *periphery*. If the core region of the world system is above all the geopolitically dominant West, Middle Eastern countries (with the exception of Israel) are located on the periphery or semi-periphery of the world system. For this reason, modernisation is not accompanied by world dominance, which would allow some of the proliferating population to be exported in sufficient numbers to other continents, as happened in the case of modernising Europe. Within the context of uneven modernisation, population pressure is generating social tension and political instability in the Middle East.

Finally, the Middle East is characterised by important natural resources (oil and natural gas), a geostrategic position between Europe, Africa and Asia, strategic routes of oil pipelines and sea lanes (Suez, the Strait of Hormuz), and the ensuing emergence of *rentier states* and strong interference on the part of the superpowers during the Cold War and significant external interventions after it ended. Colonialism and the intervention of the West in the affairs of the Islamic world had always provoked a response in the form of religious revivals (Kropáček 2003, Lewis 2003a, Dekmejian 1995). Thanks to its strategic sources of oil (two thirds of global reserves), after the Second World War the region became the leading battleground of the Cold War and remains a geopolitical epicentre to the present day (Brzezinski 1999, Amin 2004, Robejšek 2006, Šlachta 2007, Tomeš et al. 2007, Fawcett 2009).

However, Middle Eastern regimes have long feared the invasion of foreign ideas more than military invasion (Huntington 2006). The most elite military units are not created and trained to protect the nation from an enemy from without but opposition from within (Klare 2004). The vast oil wealth and other unearned income of rentier economies, combined with imports of the latest Western military and police surveillance technology, have allowed Middle Eastern regimes to create a sophisticated repressive apparatus that has no analogy in history or in other regions of today's developing world (Zakaria 2004).

Fearful of losing power, dictatorships alienated and isolated from the majority population (Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Egypt, Jordan and Iran up till 1979) have long counted on the comprehensive military, diplomatic, food and financial support of the West. However, the increasingly visible presence of American soldiers and Western companies in individual countries is itself

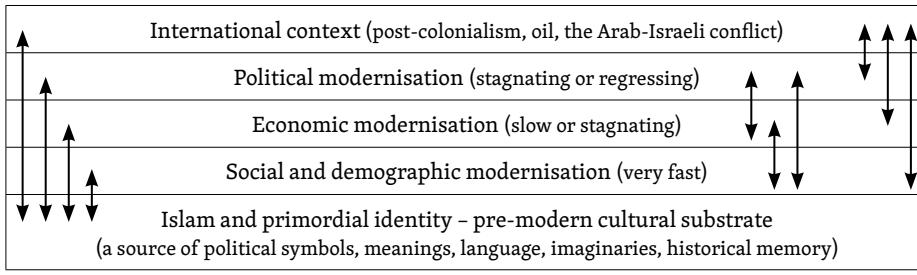
becoming an important factor in the destabilisation and delegitimisation of the regimes. It forces Western governments to intensify their activities in the region and to step up support for authoritarian regimes (Klare 2004, Pfaff 2010). This then plays into the hands of Islamists and other opposition groups, which criticise the West for its alliance with unpopular dictators while loudly proclaiming its support for democracy, freedom and human rights. A typical example of how this narrative is played out was the CIA-orchestrated overthrow of the democratically elected prime minister of Iran in 1953. More recently, the discrepancy between pro-democracy rhetoric and the realpolitik of the USA was clearly manifest in Washington's dismay at the success of Islamists in elections in Morocco, Kuwait, Jordan, and especially Egypt and Palestine. On the other hand, Middle Eastern regimes can easily be denounced by pointing to their links with the USA, a tactic frequently used by opposition groups in individual countries (Lewis 2003b, Ottaway 2010). The West thus becomes a secondary enemy of Islamists and other opposition groups, while the primary enemy remains their own regimes (Juergensmeyer 1994, 2002).

A NEW THEORETICAL MODEL OF MODERNISATION IN THE MIDDLE EAST

The new theoretical model that will inform all the analyses conducted in individual chapters of this book encompasses the mutual and multiple interaction of the following independent variables (see fig. 3): (1) Islam and its politically relevant imaginary, concepts, symbols and meanings, (2) rapid demographic and social modernisation; population explosion, swift urbanisation, a rise in literacy, a boom in higher education and the expansion of the media, (3) slower, fluctuating economic modernisation; the development of the labour market, economic growth, economic diversification, (4) negligible, even regressive political modernisation; a weak state and a lack of the democratisation that would enable ever larger numbers of new political actors to be assimilated into the political system, (5) the unfavourable broader international context of social change in the Middle East; the existence and maintenance of artificial post-colonial states, support for authoritarian regimes by the superpowers, the oil factor creating rentier political systems blocking democratisation and economic diversification, the Israeli-Arab conflict and geopolitical tensions disrupting stability and long-term development, and limited channels for sufficient emigration abroad (cf. Černý 2014).

I work on the assumption that primordial identities and Islam, with its politically relevant concepts, the unfavourable international and post-colonial historical context, rapid demographic and social change, slower economic

Fig. 3 A model of Middle Eastern modernisation and its context: the interaction of independent variables



N.B. Possible interactions and tensions are shown by the arrows.

development that is unstable over time, and a rigid political system, are *independent variables* that can *in themselves* only partially and *inadequately* explain the instability of the Middle East. For this reason, I do not consider analyses working in isolation with individual independent variables as effective. What is important is the overlapping and intersecting of these variables at a given time and space. Only the *mutual interaction* of independent variables generates the ensuing instability of the region. All variables are equally important in the model of mutual interaction; both the more or less static (the international context and political systems), and the relatively dynamic (demographic and social change). Overall, then, this is not a model that offers a mono-causal explanation of political instability (e.g. Islam/the demographic explosion is responsible for everything). On the contrary, it is a theoretical model that operates with multi-causal explanations.

This theoretical model is a somewhat approximate but necessary generalisation of a far more complex reality. It is an abstract construct emphasising those aspects of reality and the changes thereto that I deem important when analysing the causes of instability. Conversely, I leave to one side other aspects of reality in order to make sense of what would otherwise be an unmanageable complexity. The theoretical model therefore represents a kind of Weberian *ideal type*, which, albeit in simplified form, provides a basic guideline for orientation within a far more complex reality. In addition, an ideal type in the form of a theoretical model can be compared and contrasted with empirical reality and its legitimacy ascertained.

FOUR POSSIBLE MACRO COMPARISONS OF THE MIDDLE EASTERN PATTERN OF MODERNISATION

The theoretical model allows us to analyse the degree of unevenness of modernisation of the Middle East as a region, while taking into account the

broader context. However, it also provides a framework for four types of grand historical-sociological comparisons. This is made possible by the fact that the modernisation process represents a relatively universal historical phenomenon, which nevertheless has specific historical and geographical variations. The comparison will be both *synchronous* and *asynchronous*, i.e. it will compare processes running in parallel at any given time, as well as analogous processes running at different times or according to different phases. The purpose of these comparisons will be to determine in what respect the model of post-colonial Middle Eastern modernisation is *specific* and in what respect it is *universal* and comparable with other modernisation patterns.

Firstly, the main focus will be on a systematic comparison of the pattern of post-colonial Middle Eastern modernisation (1950–2015) and the modernisation pattern in other global macro-regions, especially post-colonial (Sub-Saharan Africa, South America, Asia, etc.) or post-communist. Here the main hypothesis will be that Middle Eastern modernisation has been significantly uneven over the long term in respect of the individual dimensions of social change in comparison with other macro-regions. This explains the current relatively high instability of the Middle East compared with other macro-regions, where modernisation over the last few decades was not as uneven, mainly because democracy's third wave was taking place in these regions or they reported stronger economic growth.

Secondly, the individual phases of post-colonial Middle Eastern modernisation will be compared in terms of how uneven the pace of development is within individual dimensions during individual periods. The main hypothesis here will be that the unevenness in the pace of development in individual dimensions has increased over time. In the 1950s and 60s it was less pronounced, but then peaked at the start of the 21st century, a fact that in part explains the timing of the Arab Spring. The Arab world especially, as a subset of the Middle Eastern region, stands out for the way the gap has inexorably widened between the pace of development of individual dimensions of modernisation.

Thirdly, the degree of unevenness will be compared of the post-colonial modernisation process across individual countries within the Middle Eastern region. Emphasis will be placed on a comparison of the Arab countries. The main hypothesis here will be that the degree of political stability/instability of individual countries during the course of the Arab Spring (2011) is partially explained by the degree of unevenness of the modernisation process of these countries.

Fourthly, I will conduct an additional historical comparison of current post-colonial Middle Eastern modernisation and early Western European modernisation. One of the premises of this book is that we achieve a better understanding of the contemporary Middle East through a deeper

understanding of our own modern history. The better we understand European modernisation, the better we understand its Middle Eastern counterpart. Furthermore, we will be in a position to see their similarities and differences. European modernisation took place in an analogous way from the end of the 18th century to the beginning of the 20th century and was accompanied by similar political destabilisation. However, while modernisation in the Middle East is being accompanied by a crisis of most secular ideologies and the rise of political Islam, early European modernisation was accompanied by heightened social and political conflict that was manifest externally by the dominance of secular ideologies, though conservative Christian ideology also played a role: from the French Revolution in 1789 via the revolutions of 1848 to the rise of communism and explosive nationalism at the start of the First World War.

My main hypothesis here is that the pace of social and demographic change in the Middle East is significantly faster than it was in modern Europe, when all changes took place at a more relaxed tempo. On the other hand, the pace of economic and above all political modernisation in the Middle East lags behind that of the historical development of the economic and political subsystems of early modern Europe. A historical comparison with Europe reveals the overall asymmetry of Middle Eastern modernisation to be greater. Western European modernisation was also uneven across its main dimensions, but *to a lesser extent*: there was a greater *cohesion* between rapid social and demographic change and economic change (the Industrial Revolution) and political change (the creation of centralised national states and rule of law, democratisation). *Structurally* speaking, then, a Middle Eastern region destabilised by internal conflict is more reminiscent of early, albeit less uneven, Western European modernisation with all of its secondary, unintended consequences than medieval Europe (a popular cliché).

However, a historical comparison with Europe reveals the broader geopolitical context of Middle Eastern modernisation to be extremely unfavourable. The process is being played out on the post-colonial *periphery* and not at the core of the global system during the era of colonial expansion, as it was in the case of Western Europe. For example, it was this fact that enabled European colonies to absorb the increased numbers of European citizens caused by demographic growth: migration to non-European continents effectively released the pressure of accumulating social and political tensions.

On the other hand, a cultural context characterised by the dominance of Islam, clearly absent in the case of early European modernisation, has ambivalent outcomes. For this reason we cannot say that, with its imaginary and institutions, Islam represents an incontrovertible factor in the political instability differentiating the Middle Eastern pattern of modernisation from its Western counterpart, which is often the conclusion of Western analysts.

Indeed, within the context of Middle Eastern uneven modernisation, Islam is often a stabilising factor. Primordial identities such as extended family, clans and tribes operate in a similarly ambivalent way.

OPERATIONALISATION OF THE MODEL OF UNEVEN MODERNISATION AND SOURCES OF EMPIRICAL DATA

The aim of *operationalisation* is to link up theoretical and empirical findings by converting a theoretical model into empirically comprehensible, investigable and falsifiable form. The individual dimensions of modernisation and its broader context will be represented by empirical indicators so that it becomes possible to examine the degree of unevenness of Middle Eastern modernisation and undertake the relevant comparisons where appropriate. In order to operationalise and verify the model, many indicators will be used in the form of time series charting the development of the political, economic, social and demographic dimensions of modernisation.

The indicators will be presented in *non-aggregated* form, especially when comparing the unevenness of the development of individual countries in the region. They will also be presented in *aggregated* form when comparing the unevenness of the development of individual global macro-regions or the unevenness of individual stages (five-year periods or decades) of the modernisation of the Middle East. Similarly, I shall use *simple* statistical indicators (e.g. population growth rate), as well as *synthetic* indices I have calculated from several simple indicators (e.g. a state's capacity to govern).

Firstly, the relevant data will cover two sub-dimensions of *political modernisation*: the extent of political rights and civil liberties, and the capacity of a state to govern effectively within its territory. The first sub-dimension will draw on indices used by the organisations Freedom House and The Economist Intelligence Unit. It will also use data on the perception of corruption gathered by Transparency International and data on the freedom of the press gathered by Reporters Without Borders in its World Press Freedom Index. The capacity of a state to govern effectively within its territory will be covered by the many indicators of the World Bank (the World Governance Indicators, or WGIs).

Secondly, the dimension of *economic modernisation* will be examined using data on the overall pace of economic growth, the degree to which an economy is dependent on exports of natural resources, and Gross Domestic Product per capita figures as provided by the World Bank and the United Nations Development Report. Key data will include information on unemployment in general and youth unemployment in particular provided by the International Labour Organisation (ILO). Additionally, I will attempt to take into account

data on the level of social inequality and the proportion of the population living in absolute poverty. This data indicates the degree of inequality in the distribution of economic resources within a society and is reported by the World Bank. I will also look at the development of world food prices (the Food and Agriculture Organisation, or FAO) and the proportion of a family's budget that goes on buying food (United States Department of Agriculture, Economic Research Service).

Thirdly, the *social dimension* of modernisation will be examined using data on the development of educational systems, urbanisation, and the expansion of the media. Indicators will be used charting the quantitative expansion of *educational systems* as a proportion of the literate adult population, the proportion of children attending primary schools, and the number of young people attending secondary schools and universities. This data is updated every year by UNESCO. The quality of education is in part examined using data on the international testing of the knowledge and skills of pupils provided on a regular basis by two international research organisations: the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) and Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS). I will also work with other data, e.g. with the share of gross domestic product that a government allocates from the state budget to the educational sector. The World Bank periodically provides indicators charting the development of *urbanisation*, i.e. the number of people from the population as a whole living in cities. I shall also draw on the United Nations Development Report that shows the percentage of an urban population living in slums. The proliferation of the media will be illustrated by a host of indicators. The spread of television, the internet and mobile TV is monitored by the World Bank. The circulation of daily newspapers per thousand inhabitants is monitored by UNESCO. In addition, I shall draw heavily on representative sociological surveys examining individual media ratings (Pew Center, Zogby International, TESEV).

Fourthly, I will examine the *demographic dimension* of modernisation using indicators reported by the World Bank on the population growth rate and the proportion of young people (aged 15–24) of the population as a whole. I will also refer to the age pyramids provided by the UN demographic agency POPIN.

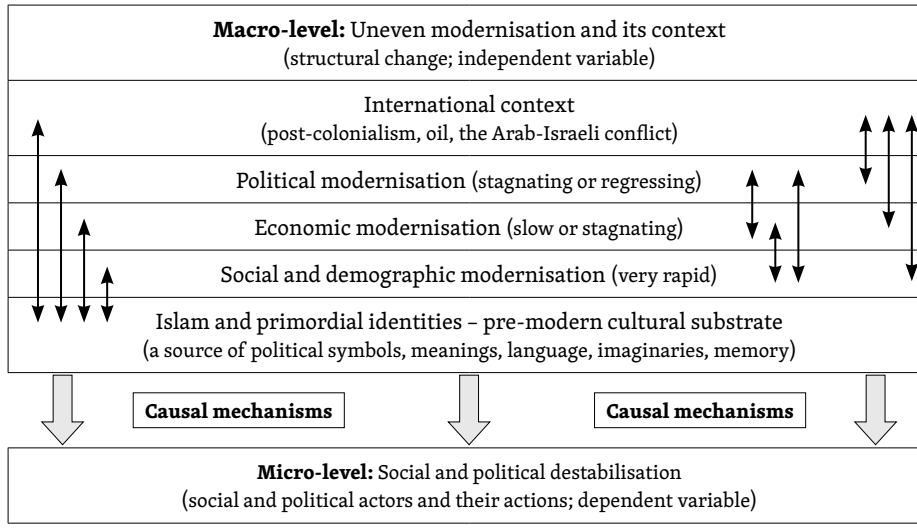
I believe that this is the first time the Middle East has been charted and compared so comprehensively and systematically. However, I was greatly inspired by the political economists Alan Richards and John Waterbury and their classic study entitled *A Political Economy of the Middle East* (3rd edition, 2008), in which, using numerous statistical indicators, they operationalise their own theoretical model and systematically compare the region of the Middle East with other world macro-regions. Similarly, the Russian team headed by Andrej Korotajev, Julia Zinkina and Alexandra Chodunov (2012)

attempted using a mass of statistical data to analyse systemically the causes of the Arab Spring.

FROM THE MACRO-LEVEL OF STRUCTURES TO THE MICRO-LEVEL OF ACTORS AND THEIR ACTIONS: MECHANISMS OF DESTABILISATION

The last step in our analyses entails a transition from the *macro-level* of uneven structural change to the *micro-level* of social and political actors and their actions, i.e. the transition from relatively long-term and gradually escalating and accumulating processes, summarised here as uneven modernisation, to the social and political consequences ensuing therefrom that generate social conflict and instability. This also involves the transition from *independent* variables to *dependent* variables, from causes to effects. In addition, it reflects the transition from less observable and relatively inconspicuous long-term trends to their visible, often dramatic and externally manifested impacts.

Fig. 4 Relationship between the macro and micro levels: from structural change to the actions of individuals



This step in my analysis will involve a detailed inventory wherever possible of all relevant *causal mechanisms* by which macro-processes can influence micro-reality and the actions of actors. It will therefore be a systematic inventory of particular causal mechanisms that, through a logical chain of cause and effect, link up uneven modernisation and its broader context with

the accumulation of frustration and social conflict, the decline of regimes, the rise of opposition groups, and social and political instability. I will therefore investigate systematically all the individual relevant interactions between the individual dimensions of uneven modernisation and its broader context, and trace on a micro-level the concrete social and political consequences of these uneven processes and the interactions between them (see fig. 4).

At this point the theoretical model of uneven modernisation and its context will provide us with a clear framework and a sound basis for a systematic investigation of the concrete causal mechanisms that can be identified in a highly confusing, almost impenetrable reality. For this reason the theoretical model will determine the structure of this book, the logic of its interpretation, and the sequence of individual analyses. When indentifying individual causal mechanisms I shall draw on the literature that already exists from a range of specialised fields, the field research conducted, and detailed case studies of individual countries of the region of the Middle East or of individual phenomena and the sub-processes being played out in this region. Though my work is based on comparative historical sociology analysing long-term historical processes, this level of analysis will also deploy to the full an *interdisciplinary approach* that will draw on Middle Eastern Studies as well as the sociology of religion, political sociology, political economy, social geography, demography, history and political science. I believe this approach to be valuable and innovative in that it identifies several dozen specific causal mechanisms of destabilisation in already existing literature that are often published in a highly implicit form and within very diverse research contexts. I bring together these causal mechanisms by embedding them within the framework of the theory of uneven modernisation, and in doing so clarify and systematise the interpretation of the multiple causes of instability in the Middle East. However, by investigating individual causal mechanisms I also justify and defend the relevance of the uneven modernisation model as a general explanatory framework for the interpretation of Middle Eastern instability.

Individual causal mechanisms will be gradually discussed in the subchapters of the book. For instance, the interaction of rapid demographic growth, behind which lags economic development and job creation, leads within the conservative cultural context of Islam, which emphasises the value of marriage and large families, to the demographic marginalisation of an entire generation of young people who do not have sufficient funds at their disposal to start a family. Such people no longer have the social status of children, but are still not regarded as adults, and this makes for uncertainty, disaffection, and potential political radicalisation. Similarly, the discrepancy between the rapid pace of demographic growth and closed, rigid political systems results in predominantly young populations being governed by ever older dictators.

The generation gap between the power elite and the majority population thus increases. This leads to mutual alienation and increases the potential for conflict. An analysis of these very concrete causal mechanisms will form the main part of this book.

Finally, mention must be made of the nature of the relatively *loose* relationship between macro-reality and micro-reality, between structure and action, between uneven modernisation and social destabilisation. By *social structure* we have in mind the complex of *relationships* between individual components of the social whole, i.e. an aggregate of relations by which partial components within one social system are connected. For this reason, my analysis of social structure will focus on the method by which the social whole is formed. It will analyse the set of mutual relationships between elements or the mutual *configuration* of individual parts of this whole; in this case the configuration of and relations between individual dimensions of the modernisation process and its broader cultural, historical and geopolitical context. These elements – and above all the relations, configurations and interactions between them – characterise the nature of the entire social system and differentiate it from other systems. That is why it is possible to undertake a comparative analysis of societies of a similar historical and cultural type; in our case of modernising societies. Although social structures are relatively *stable* in time, they too are subject to long-term, gradual historical change that I shall monitor using many different macro-indicators. This means that by focusing on social structure it is possible to analyse the development of a given society in time. The transformation of the main structural features of a given society then gives us a clue as to the character of the overall social change of this society; in our case the character of change in the Middle East is characterised by the high unevenness of the pace of the development of individual elements or social subsystems (cf. Velký sociologický 1996: 1239–1241, Giddens 1971 and 1976).

The key thing here is to understand structures as relatively stable *frameworks* for the actions of both individual and collective actors. The existence of structures precedes that of actors. Structures are external to actors and *shape* their *actions*. Structures do not determine the actions of actors, but place certain limitations on their freedom of choice and autonomy. However, they create *pressures* that mean that a certain mode of action is more probable than another within the framework of the structure in question. This leads to the formation of certain prevailing patterns of behaviour within any one structure. However, if actors and the patterns of their behaviour are directly observable, the same cannot be said of structures. If we want to explain the observable actions of actors, we must determine the concrete form of structural pressures acting upon them, and thus determine the status of a given actor within the social structure as a whole (cf. Arnason 2010, Giddens 2009).

In my analysis those structural pressures shaping the actions of individual and collective actors are causal mechanisms. Specific causal mechanisms can be traced within the structure of relationships and configurations of the individual elements of uneven modernisation and its context, and thus the origin of these structural pressures, i.e. causal mechanisms, can also be explained. However, causal mechanisms create only pressures and do not ever in themselves directly and unambiguously determine actions. If, therefore, the social structure does not directly determine social action and allows for considerable latitude in terms of response, this will result in a relatively high variability of responses on the part of actors to uneven modernisation.

Uneven modernisation in the Middle East is thus the most general common cause of the many diverse forms and external manifestations of the region's destabilisation: increased frustration and latent social tension and visible social conflicts; the collapse of the legitimacy of post-colonial regimes and a rise in the popularity of oppositional political Islam and pro-democratic liberal movements attempting to replace these regimes; mass migration and political terrorism on the part of people excluded from the economic and political subsystems; and unarmed but often violent revolutions and bloody civil wars fought by those who want to change the status quo or offer a new meaning and direction to their lives.

Similar structural pressures characteristic of the entire region are manifest at different times in different places. Different national contexts, with their own historical and political dynamic, also play a crucial role. And above all we must not overlook the freedom of choice of individuals, for instance socio-economically and demographically marginalised young people, who are unable to realise their potential in professional or family life and may find alternative means of self-realisation and sources of positive self-esteem as much in a militant religious movement as in a community of opposition bloggers and civic journalists. Similarly, the alienation of a predominantly young population from ageing dictators can be manifest in an apolitical stance and distaste for politics as such, as well as a tendency to subscribe to opposition movements comprising generationally closer activists.

The starting point of all individual analyses of the causal mechanisms leading to political destabilisation that form the subject matter of each chapter involves embedding these mechanisms within the structure of unequal modernisation viewed within its broader cultural, historical and geopolitical context. However, this structuralist approach is then combined eclectically with other theoretical approaches and paradigms that are relevant to the examination of individual dimensions of the process of unequal modernisation and endeavour to explain the conduct of political actors within this framework.

METHODOLOGICAL, TERMINOLOGICAL AND PERSONAL OBSERVATIONS

When the social sciences use the term "society", they are often implicitly referring to the nation state. The state as the basic unit of analysis prevails. The aim of this work is to overcome a *state-centric* and politico-centric perspective and think primarily in the category of the broader *macro-region*. This does not possess a unified political organisation or clearly and unequivocally defined borders. However, it shares a similar historical, geopolitical, cultural, demographic, social, economic and political *profile* (cf. Mauss 1929/1930, Durkheim and Mauss 1913, Arnason 2009). Furthermore, the Middle Eastern macro-region is so interconnected internally in terms of migration, communication and media, and local people identify with it to such an extent, that an event in one of its parts often unexpectedly influences events in other parts. As the leading American researcher in the field, F. Gregory Gause III, said self-critically of mainstream political science and Middle Eastern studies (2011): "What happens in one Arab state can affect others (...) As a result, scholars and policymakers can no longer approach countries on a case-by-case basis."

This is why in this book I work on the assumption that offshoots of instability in different parts of the region grow from the same structural roots, though at the same time they are modified by specific local, national and historical circumstances and also by the dynamics of a different form of reaction on the part of the relevant actors, above all governments. For instance, the Arab Spring (2011) had the same structural causes everywhere, which is why it resonated powerfully throughout the entire region. Nevertheless, its course and results differed dramatically in individual parts of the region. Generally it can be said that, though we observe symptoms of destabilisation across the entire region, these appear in very diverse forms in different places. This book aims to offer a common denominator in the shape of uneven modernisation and its broader context.

However, there is no consensus in the academic community as regards a precise definition of the Middle Eastern region. The region cannot be simply equated with the Islamic world or the Arab world (Šanc 2011). Some writers argue that the very unstable and variable borders of the region are what characterises the Middle East, a claim that clarifies nothing and if anything makes things even more obscure. They also speak of a dry climate and a lack of water, the existence of ancient civilisations, and the fact that the region is the birthplace of the three great monotheistic religions. In modern times, the character of the region has been shaped by a high level of religious, ethnic and cultural pluralism, which has generated disputes, conflicts and instability. Another feature attributed to the region is its rich reserves of oil (De Blij and Muller 2006).

From a slightly different perspective the historian Nikki Keddie (1973) identifies the Middle East with the territory that the Arabs acquired during the expansion of the 7th and 8th centuries. This territory is characterised by a desertified and semi-desertified environment where irrigated agriculture or a nomadic way of life predominates. The Middle East is clearly separated from neighbouring regions by impenetrable deserts and high mountain ranges (according to Šanc 2011). Politological definitions emphasise the authoritarian character of the local regimes, the rentier character of economies dependent on the extraction and export of oil, the spread of Islam, the long-standing Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and the geopolitically strategic location of the region at the intersection of Africa, Asia and Europe (cf. Sorli, Gleditsch and Strand 2005). Any definition of the region therefore tends to be arbitrarily adjusted to suit the character of the research objectives (Kropáček 1999, Šanc 2011).

For the purposes of this work I will use the definition of the region used by the United Nations, namely, the region of the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) containing the following countries: Israel, Iran, Turkey and predominantly Arab countries beginning with Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia and Libya (the Maghreb countries), via Egypt to Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Bahrain, Qatar, United Arab Emirates, Oman and Yemen (countries of the Arabian Peninsula), and ending with Lebanon, Palestine, Syria, Jordan and Iraq (the Mashriq countries). In individual analyses and interpretations I shall look at the subset of Arabic Middle Eastern countries. Wherever the region is to be understood in a different way, the reader will be clearly alerted.

A second brief comment relates to the difference between the scholarly perspective of the insider and *outsider*, i.e. the difference between immanence and transcendence (cf. Šubrt 1996). Though I travel frequently and often to the Middle East and have friends there, I am not a permanent inhabitant of the region, something I regard as an advantage when getting to know the region. The role of Central European outsider makes easier a disengagement from vested interests and ideologies that I would be embroiled in if I lived in the region. Another great advantage is the fact that the Czech Republic was never a colonial or neo-colonial power. If, therefore, knowledge and the means of its production tends to be strongly linked to power structures (cf. Said 2008), a Czech perspective on the region is not as encumbered and deformed by such power relations, bloodshed and historical grievances, notwithstanding the fact that the Kingdom of Bohemia used to be part of the Habsburg Monarchy, which for centuries competed with the Ottoman Empire (cf. Mendel, Ostřanský, Rataj 2007).

However, the role of outsider above all means being able to take a detached view of Middle Eastern society free of emotional baggage. When a researcher is part of a society and the very problems he is researching, his

ability to step back and look at things from a distance without emotion is severely compromised. It is more difficult to achieve a neutral, balanced analysis. A classic example of the potential effectiveness of the expert view of the outsider is the still unrivalled analysis of American exceptionalism written by the French aristocrat Alexis Tocqueville (1992), to which we might add the famous analysis of American racism written by the Swedish Gunnar Myrdal (1944).

My third observation relates to the conceptual definition of political Islam. The rise of Islamic movements took place to varying degrees, with various twists and turns, within roughly the same time period (from the start of the 1970s) in all countries of the Middle East. This mainly involves the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood and its offshoots present in most Arab countries. It would also include, for example, the Turkish conservative AK party and its numerous predecessors, the Algerian Islamic Salvation Front, the Tunisian Ennahda Movement, Palestinian Hamas, Lebanese Hezbollah, and the many Iranian revolutionary movements. It also involves a host of smaller militant groups, including Al-Qaeda and Islamic State (Kepel 1996, 2002).

What do these movements, organisations and political parties have in common? What alternative do they offer? There is no complete consensus in this respect. For instance, Mark Juergensmeyer (1994, 2008) classifies most Islamists within the broad category of *religious nationalism*. He views this as a new type of nationalism, one reacting to the crisis of secular ideology and resorting to traditional culture, values, and especially religion. The ambition of this global trend, which is not restricted to the Islamic world and the Middle East, is to bring together modern politics and traditional religion, thus arriving at its own version of modernity. Religious nationalists argue that the nation should be defined and the nation state legitimised using the religious traditions of the majority. At the same time this movement campaigns against unsuccessful secular ideologies and corrupt politicians, who, it claims, have failed utterly. Its political conflict with the latter is often seen as part of a metaphysical conflict between good and evil (cf. Černý 2009).

Other writers speak of *Islamist movements* and take these to be "activist groups that see both a political ideology and a religion in Islam", in order, paradoxically, that they may "part company with their own religious tradition". They are pitted against both the West and the regimes in their own countries, and offer as a remedy to both society and politics a return to what they perceive to be the true Islam. However, the question is to what extent visions are being propounded that are feasible, constructive, and applicable in practice (Roy 1992: vii). Common to all is an endeavour to replace existing corrupt political elites, the promotion of a conservative socio-political agenda, and a strong nationalism (Roy 2004). Simply speaking, Islamism can also be defined as the reduction of Islam to a politically and socially relevant

range of themes and problems (Kepel 2002, Hoffman 1995). Islamism sees Islam as a "total way of life", which does not distinguish between the private and public spheres, religion, politics, and the economy. It also assumes that the new challenges of our times call for a prudent reinterpretation of the basic sources of Islam. The main objective of the Islamists is to see Muslims return to their faith: hypocritical Muslims, religious in name only, must become "true" and devout believers (Kouřilová 2007).

The protracted political conflict between the corrupt, unsuccessful and unpopular political and economic elites and the emerging opposition Islamists has been playing out in all Middle Eastern countries since the start of the 1970s. One group attempts to hold onto its positions of power, the other seeks a radical transformation of the social order (Kepel 1996, 2002, Roy 1992, Ottaway 2010). At the same time, both parties increasingly compete for the support of the general public, which is then drawn into the political fray. Both parties then, in an attempt to reach the masses and mobilise supporters, increasingly seek refuge in Islam. This reinforces a long-term, deep change in political discourse in favour of the Islamic narrative (Starrett 1998).

Instead of the "bloody borders of Islam" and the conflict between civilisations (cf. Huntington 1993, 2001), in the region of the Middle East we are more witness to the rivalry *within* the borders of individual nation states, and the confrontation between Islamists and governments is sometimes violent (Sorli, Gleditsch, Strand 2005). Instead of the competing secular elites and counter-elites anticipated by half a century's classical modernisation theories (cf. Lerner 1964, Huntington 1968, Brzezinski 1993), we are witnessing de-secularisation, de-privatisation and above all the re-politicisation of religion (cf. Swatos 1999, Stark 1999, Lužný 1999, Halík 2003, Nešpor and Lužný 2007, Arjomand 1986, Kepel 1996). The causes of the rise of opposition Islamist movements in the Middle East, and their conflicts with the post-colonial power elite, will therefore form an important part of this book.

POLITICAL MODERNISATION: WEAK AND AUTHORITARIAN STATES

"You know what? These policeman are going to beat you until nightfall, when they will return home to eat and sleep. And then other policeman will arrive and will beat you until sunrise, when the first policemen will come into work and beat you until nightfall. Compared to us you're nothing. We are the government. Would you like to return to your family? Your mother and father must be worried about you..."
(Alaa Al-Aswany, The Yacoubian Building)

"System? What system? I am the system!"
(Habib Bourguiba, President of Tunisia)

"Where there is no tax, there is no need for representation. In the Middle East there is no need even for a population, which simply reduces the oil wealth of those who control them. Why share this income with a population they do not need? Why look after their safety? Why inform them? Why cultivate them? Why employ them? The Arab masses must be consolidated, stabilised, controlled and maintained on an income of between one and two euros per day."
(Jana Hybášková, Ambassador of the European Union in Iraq)

"I got to know another Morocco. A Morocco of poverty, shame and desperation. Examinations in the state hospital were free, but we had no drugs."
(Tahar Ben Jelloun, The Last Friend)

"We do not reject America, but we have the feeling that America is rejecting us. This isn't about envying America but more the feeling that we are hated by America. We want to be recognised and respected by America. But we feel that this isn't the case. We feel like rejected lovers."
(An Educated Lebanese)[1]

Although national service did not officially exist in Morocco at the end of the 1960s, barracks in the Sahara operated as boot camps for opposition--minded students flirting mainly with Marxism. In one of them, Sergeant Major Tadla, a bald, semi-literate ogre, welcomed new "conscripts" with the

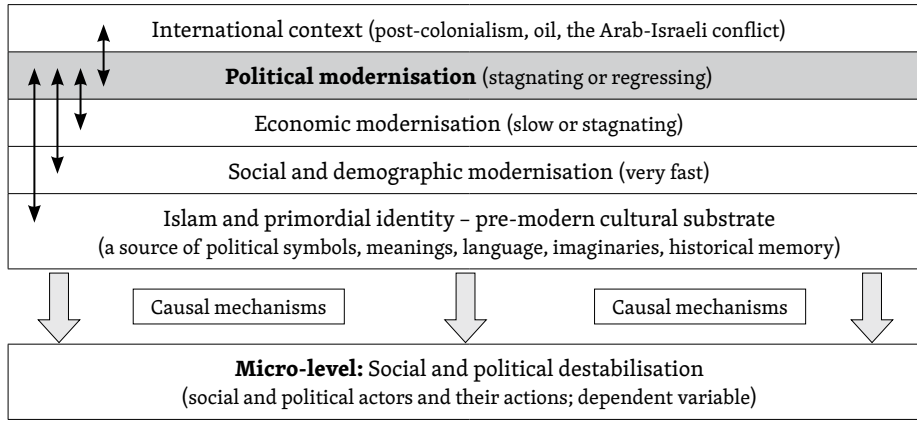
1 Al-Aswani 2002: 160, cited by Gombár 2007: 62, Hybášková 2006b: 2, Jelloun 2011: 105, Zogby 2012: 90.

following words: "I'm in charge here. I report to no one, not even the camp commander. You are just ninety-four spoiled kids. You're being punished. You wanted to be smart-asses, and I'm going to teach you a thing or two. There's no daddy and mommy here. You can yell all you like, nobody will hear you. In this place, I will dress you and change you. You'll no longer be spoiled kids, queers, children of the rich. Here Commander Tadla rules. Forget all that liberty-democracy crap. Here the slogan is: 'We belong to Allah, our king, and our country.' Repeat after me…" This is how the Moroccan writer Tahar Ben Jelloun evokes the authoritarian character of his country in the novel The Last Friend (2011: 87), a country that, as well as repressing its population, does not even respect its own rules and laws, while resorting to religion as the source of its own fragile legitimacy.

Modernising Middle Eastern societies continue to be governed by *weak* yet *authoritarian* regimes that over the last fifty years have barely changed, are ideologically burnt out, and are consequently incapable of co-opting newly emerging political actors. When I speak of rigidity and the stagnation of political systems, I am referring to the rigidity and stagnation of their structural parameters, which relates to the ability of regimes to survive, the ongoing preponderance of authoritarianism, and the low capacity over the long term of Middle Eastern states to govern effectively in their territory and to carry out the basic functions for their populations. Within the framework of these relatively unchanging political structures there are of course fascinating activities being played out on the part of politically relevant actors. However, the given structures do not have to take these into consideration and so certain patterns of behaviour are more probable than others. For instance, political regimes are willing to change almost everything in order that the political order remains the same and the political elites retain their power. They co-opt a minority while attempting to control, discipline or suppress the rest of the population.

In this chapter I shall examine the mechanisms by which an interaction takes place between corrupt Middle Eastern political systems and the Islamic political imaginary. I shall also look at the mechanisms that lead to conflict between these rigid political systems and the far more dynamic demographic and social developments taking place in the region, as a consequence of which these regimes and their cronies are becoming increasingly alienated from the rest of the population. The aim of this chapter, therefore, is not only to analyse the prevalent character of political regimes in the Middle East, but above all to examine the complex, agonistic interaction of this political system with other dimensions of the uneven modernisation process and its broader context (as played out in culture and on the international stage). This objective is shown in fig. 5.

Fig. 5 The interaction of the political system with other independent variables examined in this chapter



N.B. Possible interactions and tensions are shown by the arrows.

FROZEN POLITICAL MODERNISATION IN AN INTERNATIONAL COMPARISON: THE DEMOCRATIC DEFICIT

When we think of repressive regimes, what countries spring to mind? Russia, controlled by elites drawn from the secret services, the mafia, and gas company oligarchs? China, where a billion people are controlled by the million-strong caste of the communist party? Communist Cuba, bankrupted and crushed by economic sanctions? Belarus, over which the European Union is forever wringing its hands? Or famine-struck, fortress-minded North Korea? These regimes certainly have their problems. However, there is a blank space in our mental map where the West has long overlooked, downplayed or even justified repression in the name of preserving stability: the Arab world.

According to the *democracy index* published by *The Economist* (Democracy Index 2010), Kuwait, Morocco and Jordan are even more repressive than Russia (see table 1). However, they are long-term strategic allies of Washington in a geopolitically key region, and so the West conveniently ignores the undemocratic nature of these monarchies and, on the contrary, offers them support.

Similarly, the much maligned Cuba is actually slightly more democratic than the pro-American regime of Bahrain, where an American naval fleet has been based since 1971. The minority Sunnis have long persecuted the majority Shiites, who have been deprived of their political rights and a share in the country's oil wealth. In 2011, with fraternal Sunni military assistance provided by Saudi Arabia, Bahrain massacred demonstrators calling for fairer treatment and democratisation. Likewise, communist Cuba is a freer place to live

Table 1 Democracy Index: The Middle East and comparable countries 2015

Country	Overall ranking out of 167 countries evaluated	Final score and description of regime
Israel	34	7.77 (flawed democracy)
Tunisia	57	6.72 (flawed democracy)
Turkey	97	5.12 (hybrid regime)
Lebanon	102	4.86 (hybrid regime)
Morocco	107	4.66 (hybrid regime)
Palestine	110	4.57 (hybrid regime)
Iraq	115	4.08 (hybrid regime)
Mauretania	117	3.96 (authoritarian regime)
Algeria	118	3.95 (authoritarian regime)
Jordan	120	3.86 (authoritarian regime)
Kuwait	121	3.85 (authoritarian regime)
Bahrain	122	3.49 (authoritarian regime)
Comoro Islands	125	3.71 (authoritarian regime)
Qatar	134	3.18 (authoritarian regime)
Egypt	134	3.18 (authoritarian regime)
Oman	142	3.04 (authoritarian regime)
Djibouti	145	2.90 (authoritarian regime)
United Arab Emirates	148	2.75 (authoritarian regime)
Sudan	151	2.37 (authoritarian regime)
Libya	153	2.25 (authoritarian regime)
Yemen	154	2.24 (authoritarian regime)
Iran	156	2.16 (authoritarian regime)
Saudi Arabia	160	1.93 (authoritarian regime)
Syria	166	1.43 (authoritarian regime)
Selected predominantly Muslim countries		
Indonesia	49	7.03 (flawed democracy)
Malaysia	68	6.43 (flawed democracy)
Bangladesh	86	5.73 (hybrid regime)
Bosnia and Herzegovina	104	4.83 (hybrid regime)
Pakistan	112	4.40 (hybrid regime)
Afghanistan	147	2.77 (authoritarian regime)
Regimes most criticised by the West		
Burma	114	4.14 (authoritarian regime)
Cuba	129	3.52 (authoritarian regime)
Belarus	127	3.62 (authoritarian regime)
Russia	132	3.31 (authoritarian regime)

China	136	3.14 (authoritarian regime)
Uzbekistan	158	1.95 (authoritarian regime)
Turkmenistan	162	1.83 (authoritarian regime)
North Korea	167	1.08 (authoritarian regime)
Selected Western democracies		
Norway	1	9.93 (full democracy)
United States of America	20	8.05 (full democracy)
Italy	21	7.98 (flawed democracy)

N.B.: The Economist's Democracy Index ranks countries from 10 (democratic) to 1 (authoritarian). Ranked in descending order.
Source: Economist Intelligence Unit, Democracy Index 2015

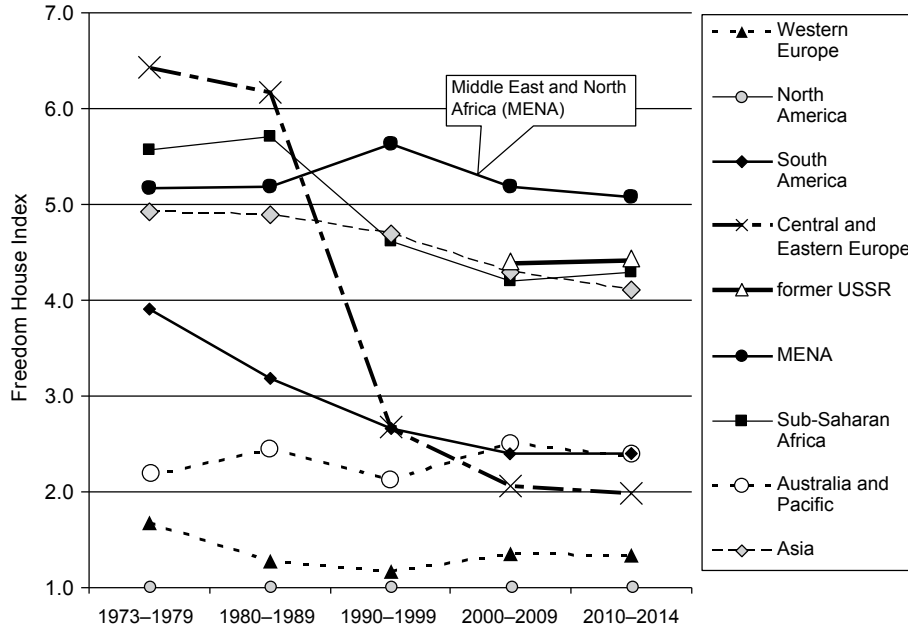
than the military dictatorship in Algeria supported by France, where in 1991 the army annulled the results of democratic elections won by the opposition Islamic Salvation Front, so plunging the country into civil war (1991–1997).

One might, for instance, compare China, long subject to criticism, with the degree of repression in Qatar and Egypt. Since the 1980s, Egypt has been receiving financial, military and food aid from the United States every year in exchange for peace with Israel and calm operations in the geopolitically strategic Suez Canal. The authoritarian states of Oman, United Arab Emirates, Tunisia and Yemen are considerably less democratic than China.

Finally, Saudi Arabia, constantly pampered and protected by the Americans and possessing the largest oil reserves in the world, has long been the least democratic Arab state of all. Along with North Korea, Turkmenistan and Burma it is the most repressive state in the world, less free even than the endlessly criticised Iran. The Saudi regime has no respect for human rights. No opposition whatsoever is permitted in the country. School textbooks are crammed full of intolerance and hatred for otherness. Not only the representatives of other religions are persecuted (Christians and Jews), but even Muslims simply professing a slightly different concept of Islam (including Shiites). The large numbers of foreign workers in the country are treated almost like slaves, women are subject to discrimination, and torture in prisons is rampant. Mutilation as a penalty is still practiced, including the medieval punishments of flogging, stoning or decapitation by sword (Human Rights Watch 2010).

Middle Eastern societies that in most respects are modern and undergoing rapid transformation are ruled by "archaic" political systems that have remained virtually unchanged for the last half century (Roy 1992). Even before the arrival of Islamists on the political scene, these regimes were incapable of co-opting newly emerging political actors and regulating the

Fig. 6 Development of political rights and civil liberties in global macro-regions 1973–2015



NB.: The author's calculation of the arithmetic average of individual macro-regions (unweighted by the population size of particular states). This is a synthetic index. It is the arithmetic average of indices measuring civil liberties and political rights. Turkey is included in Western Europe and Israel in the MENA region. The Freedom House index ranks individual countries from 1 (a democratic, free country) to 7 (not free).
Source: Freedom House

conflicts of interest groups (Lerner 1964). It was the slow pace of change in the political subsystem, which lags behind the rapid changes taking place in other spheres, which became the source of destabilisation and tension in the region. Middle Eastern regimes are *praetorian*: they exclude political actors from the system, exiling them to the street and illegality. The fact that the politically mobilised masses are unable to participate legally in politics leads to a higher incidence of political violence (Huntington 1968).

The Middle East has long been the least free and democratic macro-region in the world. Conversely, Sub-Saharan Africa, Asia, Latin America and post-communist Europe are these days incomparably more democratic (see fig. 6 and table 1). In terms of established politological typologies we can divide Middle Eastern regimes into *secular republics* where the president occupies a privileged position (Syria, Iraq, Yemen, Algeria, Egypt, and Tunisia up until 2011), and *republics combining* secular and religious sources of legitimacy (Libya and Yemen). We can also distinguish between *traditional monarchies*

(Morocco and Jordan) and *conservative monarchies* (Bahrain, Kuwait and the United Arab Emirates) (Kropáček 1999, Ehteshami 1999, Guidére 2012). However, all of these regimes share something in common: they are all authoritarian. From the point of view of their oppressed citizens and opposition groups it is irrelevant whether civil and legal rights are being trampled over by a republic or a monarchy.

The Middle East is also unique in that *democracy's third wave*, which began with the Carnation Revolution in Portugal (1974) and was accelerated by the fall of the Berlin Wall (1898), totally passed it by. In addition, along with the post-Soviet republics of the Caucasus and Central Asia, it is the only world macro-region where repression actually intensified during the 1990s (see fig. 6). Not even the attempt to democratise Iraq, when the American-led invasion anticipated a democratising domino effect spreading across the entire region, had a positive effect (cf. Huntington 2008, Zakaria 2004, Jamal, Tessler 2008, Braizat 2010, 2013).

Over the last four decades the degree of political rights and civil liberties in the Middle East has stagnated and repression remains high: the index varies between 5.3 and 5.6 according to the author's calculations. In contrast, democratisation has been taking place over the long term at various different speeds in all other world macro-regions. For instance, Sub-Saharan Africa has witnessed significant democratisation since the 1990s (from 5.5 to the current 4.3). Democratisation is also taking place in Asia (from 4.2 to 3.5) and Latin America (from 3.7 to 2.8). And this is not to mention the robust democratisation of the former Eastern bloc (from 6.5 to 3.4; cf. fig. 6).

So democracy's third wave bypassed the Middle East. Instead, during the 1990s, faltering regimes oscillated between partial political liberalisation and repeated de-liberalisation (cf. figs. 7 and 8). They also inclined pragmatically toward greater religious legitimisation directed inward, and to legitimisation through democratic rhetoric and the doctrine of the war on terrorism directed outward. Furthermore, they attempted to expand somewhat the social base of power elites to include technocrats and business circles. At the same time they started to emulate Western democratic institutions and their formal procedures, while preserving informal power structures. They co-opted some of the opposition into power elites by offering them political perks and privileges in exchange for loyalty. At the same time they were happy to see them scrap over the favour of the elites and thus become internally divided. The remaining opposition was harshly suppressed. Regimes made a great play of reshuffling things simply in order to maintain their grip on power (Albrecht, Schlumberger 2004, Ottaway 2010). It is too early to evaluate definitively the outcome of the Arab Spring. However, many dictators once again proved to be proficient Machiavellians capable of anything if it meant holding on to their power (cf. Stacher 2012, Noueihed, Warren 2012).

REGIONAL COMPARISON: THE DEMOCRATIC DEFICIT OF MIDDLE EASTERN REGIMES

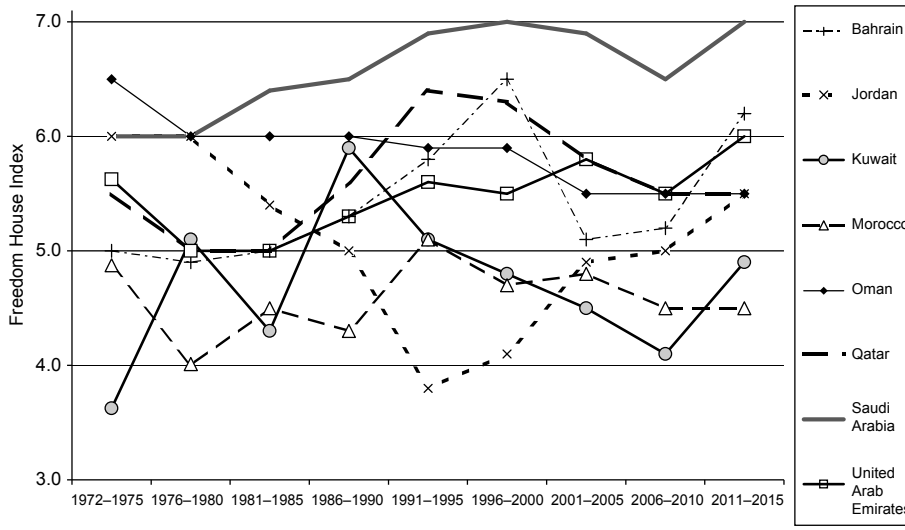
Though the Freedom House index (2010) shows that the level of repression differs slightly between individual countries of the region, none with the exception of Israel and Turkey can be deemed democratic. Regimes that have long been the most repressive in the world can be found here: Libya (7.0), Sudan (7.0), Saudi Arabia (6.5), Syria (6.5), Tunisia (6.0), Egypt (5.5) and Algeria (5.5) (see table 2 and figs. 7 and 8). We can confidently rank these countries alongside the most notorious dictatorships in the world, such as North Korea (7.0), Burma (7.0), Cuba (6.5), China (6.5) and Belarus (6.5). The freest countries in the region are Lebanon (4.0), Kuwait (4.5) and Morocco (4.5).

Table 2 Level of political rights and civil liberties in MENA countries 1973–2014

Country	1973–1979	1980–1989	1990–1999	2000–2010	2011–2014
Algeria	6.1	5.9	5.7	5.5	5.5
Bahrain	5.0	5.0	6.1	5.2	6.1
Egypt	5.1	4.6	5.7	5.7	5.4
Iran	5.6	5.5	6.2	6.0	6.0
Iraq	6.9	6.8	7.0	6.1	5.8
Israel	2.4	2.0	2.0	1.8	1.5
Jordan	6.0	5.5	4.1	5.0	5.5
Kuwait	4.3	4.8	5.2	4.3	4.9
Lebanon	3.1	4.7	5.4	4.8	4.5
Libya	6.5	6.2	7.0	7.0	5.4
Morocco	4.5	4.4	4.9	4.7	4.5
Oman	6.3	6.0	6.0	5.5	5.5
Palestine	---	---	5.5	5.5	5.5
Qatar	5.3	5.1	6.4	5.7	5.5
Saudi Arabia	6.0	6.4	6.9	6.7	7.0
Sudan	5.8	5.2	7.0	7.0	7.0
Syria	6.3	6.4	7.0	6.8	7.0
Tunisia	5.5	5.1	5.4	5.7	3.0
Turkey	2.7	3.7	4.1	3.4	3.0
United Arab Emirates	5.4	5.1	5.6	5.7	6.0
North Yemen	5.0	5.2	---	---	---
South Yemen	6.9	6.6	---	---	---
Yemen	---	---	5.4	5.3	6.0

N.B.: The Freedom House index ranks countries from 1 (a democratic, free country) to 7 (not free). The author's calculation of the arithmetic averages of countries for individual decades.
Source: Freedom House

Fig. 7 Development of political rights and civil liberties in Arab monarchies 1973–2015



N.B.: The Freedom House index ranks countries from 1 (a democratic and free country) to 7 (unfree). The author's calculation of the arithmetic averages of countries for individual five-year periods.
Source: Freedom House

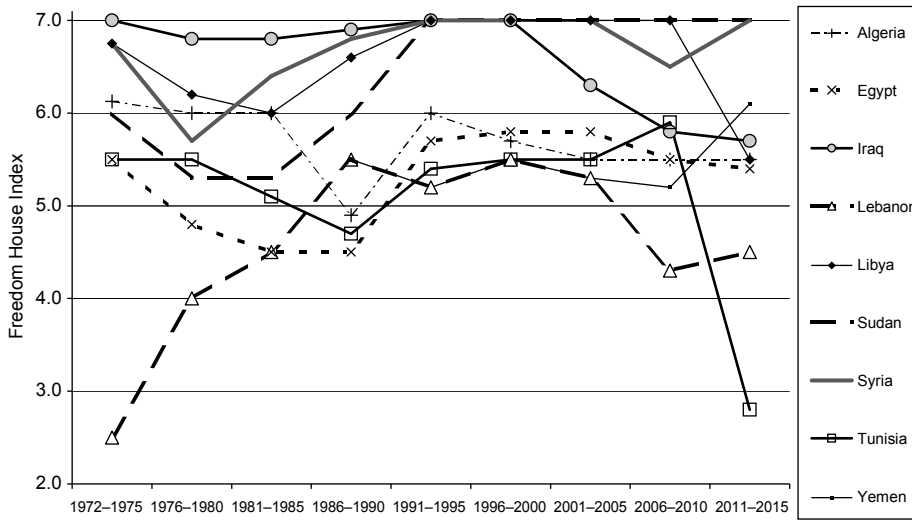
The following graphs (cf. figs. 7 and 8) also show that the level of repression in individual Arab countries changes over time, especially if we look at trends over shorter five-year periods rather than decades, which have a tendency to "smooth out" the fluctuations of individual years. However, long-term oscillations remain within the authoritarian zone and do not involve qualitative transitions from democracy to authoritarianism or vice versa (with the exception of Lebanon and Kuwait). In other words, most countries do not follow a clear, long-term trajectory, but feature a temporary relaxation of repression followed by its consolidation. In addition, we see that this relatively variable degree of repression applies to both monarchies and republics alike. We cannot therefore conclude that, generally speaking, republics are more repressive than monarchies or vice versa. In each type of polity we find highly authoritarian regimes and less authoritarian or hybrid regimes.

Finally, there is no direct relationship between the level of political repression and its evolution over time in a country and whether that country participated in the Arab Spring or not (2011). Among Arab monarchies, revolutionary Bahrain is a moderately repressive regime and over the last decade has if anything relaxed its restrictions on freedom. As far as republics are concerned, while revolutions took place in Syria and Libya, highly repressive

countries, they also took place in the slightly less repressive Egypt, Tunisia and Yemen. And while repression has increased significantly over the long term in Tunisia, in Egypt and Yemen it has stagnated or even decreased slightly over the short term. On the other hand, there have been no revolutions in the highly repressive Saudi Arabia, and this is also true of the relatively liberal monarchies of Jordan, Morocco and Kuwait. The only relatively stable republic was Algeria, with memories still fresh of the bloody civil war (1991–1997) that followed an unsuccessful attempt at democratisation at the start of the 1990s.

At first sight, then, we see that, rather than the level of political rights and civil freedoms, it was more the type of political organisation and legitimacy of a regime – republic versus monarchy – that made the difference between stability and instability during the Arab Spring. At the same time it is clear that revolutions did not take place in the following least repressive regimes: Lebanon, Kuwait, Morocco and Jordan. Although mass protests were held in these more open regimes, the governments did not react with brutal violence against the demonstrators, but with dialogue, compromise, and an offer of political and constitutional reforms.

Fig. 8 Development of political rights and civil liberties in Arab republics 1973–2015



N.B.: The Freedom House index ranks countries from 1 (a democratic, free country) to 7 (unfree). The author's calculation of the arithmetic averages of countries for individual five-year periods.
Source: Freedom House