2 The growth of state power in the Arab world

The single-party regimes

Introduction

A huge expansion in the power and pervasiveness of the state apparatus is a common feature of the post-independence Middle East. This was largely a result of growth in the size of the bureaucracy, the police and the army, as well as, in many cases, the number of public enterprises. Similar types of expansion took place in many other parts of the Third World at the same time, and for many of the same reasons. These included the need to maintain security after the departure of the colonial power; the drive to establish control over the whole of the new national territory; and the desire to use the state to promote large programmes of economic development and social welfare. Once started, such processes were given further stimulus by foreign aid, by bureaucratic empire-building and by the natural predilection of nationalist politicians for technological rather than political solutions to the problems of rapid modernization.

There were specific Middle Eastern reasons for administrative expansion as well. These included: the implementation of programmes of land reform in a number of Arab countries in the 1950s; the apparent failure of the private sector to meet the challenge of development in the early independence period; and the sudden exodus of many hundreds of thousands of foreign officials, businessmen and agriculturalists that took place in Egypt during the Suez crisis of 1956 and in French North Africa immediately after the end of colonialism. The drive for Arab unity was another locally specific feature, with the Egyptian regime speeding up the process of state expansion in Syria during the three years of union between the two countries, 1958–61, and then encouraging the same process in Iraq in 1963/4, which it demanded as a necessary precondition for any possible union between Cairo and Baghdad. Oil wealth, too, played its part, financing the development plans of populous countries like Algeria and Iraq and forcing the rulers of the smaller desert states like Libya, Saudi Arabia and the Gulf shaikhdoms to begin to create modern systems of administration and to spend part of their new wealth on programmes of welfare for their own citizens.

In this chapter I will deal with the process of administrative expansion and control as it affected those five well-populated Arab countries that came under the control of one-party regimes dedicated to state-led development under the

banner of some form of Arab socialism: Algeria, Egypt, Iraq, Syria and Tunisia. All shared many features, notably the increase in state power and the particular type of politics that this produced. Some of the same processes were also at work in Sudan, with its Arab Socialist Union created in the early 1970s, and in the two Yemens both before and after their union in 1990. Chapter 3 will then examine the same topic in the context of a number of the less populated countries ruled by monarchs and royal families, like Jordan and the desert oil producers, as well as of the somewhat anomalous case of Libya.

As for the period under examination in this chapter, most of what is said about Egypt, Syria and Tunisia will concentrate on the years of 'socialist' management up to 1969/70, after which all three experienced what was variously described as a 'correction' or 'rectification' which introduced important new features into their economic and political systems. However, in Algeria and Iraq where the process started later, and could be sustained for longer as a result of increasing oil revenues, examples will be drawn from the 1970s as well.

Expansion in the size of the state apparatus and of its ability to regulate and control

From a chronological point of view, the first country to experience a process of large-scale bureaucratic expansion was Egypt. This followed closely upon the military coup of 1952 that brought Colonel Gamal Abdel Nasser and his fellow officers to power. Immediate attention was paid to increasing the strength of the police and public security while, as soon as British agreement had been obtained to evacuate its troops from the Suez Canal in 1954, the new rulers began to enlarge the armed forces and to re-equip them with more modern weapons, a process that was further intensified as a result of the Anglo-French and Israeli invasion of 1956, the Egyptian intervention in Yemen in the early 1960s and the disastrous Middle East war of 1967. The new regime also took immediate steps to institute measures of economic development based on ideas that had been elaborated by some of the more radical civilian politicians in the last years of King Farouk's monarchy. These included the land reform of 1952, the decision to build the Aswan High Dam and the inauguration of the Helwan Iron and Steel Complex in 1954. The nationalizations of foreign property during the Suez invasion then produced a further stimulus to state-led development, culminating in the first five-year plan, 1960–5, and the nationalizations of Egyptian private banks, factories and other enterprises in 1960/1.

The effect of this on the size and the role of the state apparatus can best be demonstrated by looking at a variety of key indices. As far as the numbers employed in the bureaucracy and the public enterprises were concerned, these rose from some 350,000 persons in 1951/2 to over 1,000,000 in 1965/6, an expansion far in excess of the growth of general employment, production or the population as a whole. Meanwhile, the number of government ministries had nearly doubled, from 15 to 29, during the same period.[1] Hence, by the time of the 1960 census, the government employed about a third of Egypt's non-agricultural

labour force.[2] As for the armed forces, the total number of soldiers, sailors and airmen increased from 80,000 in 1955/6 to some 180,000 in 1966 plus about 90,000 paramilitary police.[3] A final index is that of government expenditure as a proportion of Egypt's gross national product which grew from 18.3 per cent in 1954/5 to 55.7 per cent in 1970 (including defence).[4]

In Syria the main period of expansion took place in the 1960s as the result, first, of the export of Egyptian systems of economic and political management during the brief period of the United Arab Republic, then of the statist policies of the Ba'th Party onwards. As a result, the number of state employees rose from 34,000 in 1960 to some 170,000 civil servants in 1975, with another 81,000 in the public sector.[5] If we add that there were also 180,000 men in the armed forces in this latter year, it means that about a quarter of those in urban employment were then on the state payroll.[6]

Much the same process took place in Iraq after the revolution of 1958; in Tunisia, where the number of local Muslim employees jumped from 12,000 to 80,000 between 1956 and 1960; and in Algeria after independence in 1962.[7] Figures in Table 2.1 provide an illustration of this expansion in terms of huge increases in the proportion of government expenditure to gross domestic product during the 1960s. The only significant difference between the countries concerned spending on defence, where the Tunisian regime of Habib Bourguiba made a determined effort to limit the size of the army as a way of preventing possible coups. No such option existed for the Algerians, with their serious border dispute with Morocco, nor for the Iraqi military regimes of the 1960s, which were forced to confront the revival of Kurdish militancy in the north after the return of the exiled leader, Mustafa Barzani, in 1958. The result was a growth in the size of Algeria's armed forces from 40,000 in 1962 to 65,000 in 1965, and of Iraq's from 40,000 in 1955 to some 80,000 at the end of the 1960s.[8]

An important component in state expansion was the increased spending on education and welfare. Both are very labour-intensive in terms of the numbers of doctors, teachers and health workers who have to be employed to provide comprehensive national programmes. And, in the case of education, it was the

Table 2.1 The increase in the expenditure of central government and public enterprise as a proportion of GDP in certain Arab countries during the 1960s

	1960 (%)	*1970 (%)*
Algeria	25.0 (1963)	42.8 (1969)
Egypt	29.7	55.7
Iraq	28.4	44.2
Syria	23.5	37.9
Tunisia	20.7	40.7

Source: C. H. Moore, 'The consolidation and dissipation of power in unincorporated societies, Egypt and Tunisia', mimeo

huge increase in the size of the school population that first provided staff for the growing civil service and then encouraged the creation of more and more posts to accommodate unemployed school leavers. As far as Egypt was concerned, the number of young people in all types of education rose from 1,900,000 in 1953/4 to 4,500,000 in 1965/6 and 5,900,000 in 1972/3. Of these, 54,000 were in universities at the beginning of the period and 195,000 at the end.[9] Figures in the World Bank's annual World Development Report show the same process at work in Syria, where the proportion of school-age children enrolled in secondary education rose from 16 to 48 per cent between 1960 and 1975, and in Iraq from 19 to 35 per cent. Progress was initially slower in North Africa but then accelerated dramatically. To look only at Algeria, the numbers of children in secondary schools there jumped from 164,000 in 1966/7 to 742,000 a decade later.[10]

The process of expanding administrative control can also be seen at work in policies towards agriculture and industry. As far as agriculture was concerned, the regimes in all five Arab countries took quite considerable amounts of rural land into public ownership, usually as part of a programme of expropriating the larger estates for redistribution to small proprietors and landless peasants. In the Egyptian reforms of 1952 and 1961 a seventh of the total cultivated land was expropriated in this way; in Syria in 1958, and then from 1963 onwards, about a fifth; and in Iraq after 1958 almost half.[11] As it turned out, only in Egypt did the bulk of this land pass directly into peasant hands. However, even where only a part of it was redistributed, as in Syria and Iraq, the rest remained under state control and provided the occasion for the central government to extend its power throughout the rural areas, reducing the role of the old landed class and replacing it with a system of direct administration by the police, the ministries and the party.

Events followed a slightly different course in Tunisia and Algeria, where the first extension of state ownership was mainly as a result of the seizure of lands left by the departing French *colons*. However, in Algeria this was then followed in the early 1970s by the expropriation of 1,300,000 hectares owned by absentee landlords, some 16 per cent of the total cultivated area.[12] As elsewhere, this allowed the state to play a much closer role in rural affairs, usually through the establishment of various types of supervised cooperatives.

Programmes of nationalization and of large-scale industrialization provided the state with further opportunities for expansion and control. As everywhere else, the creation of an industrial base was seen as the essential component of economic modernity. And as elsewhere, a process of import substitution, beginning with relatively simple consumer durables and ending up, it was hoped, with the production of iron and steel and then machines, seemed to offer an easy way forward. The result was what Albert Hirschman has referred to in the Latin American context as the 'exuberant phase' of industrialization, when Arab politicians and planners were too easily satisfied by the way in which local demand for many products was so quickly met by an increase in local production.[13] Only later, in Egypt and Tunisia in the late 1960s, and in Iraq and Algeria in the late 1970s, did the problems inherent in such a strategy – the drain

on scarce currency reserves to buy foreign machinery and raw materials, the lack of attention to agriculture and exports, the problems of managing huge industrial plant – begin to demand serious attention (see Chapter 7). Meanwhile, there was a large increase in the numbers of new factories and in the size of the industrial labour force, providing new jobs and new opportunities for profit and placing the state right at the centre of the drive for economic advance.

A last point of note is that the whole process of expanding state involvement in the economy was justified by the need for rapid development and for a more equitable distribution of a rising national income. This provided an important source of legitimation for the regimes, as well as allowing them to bolster their authority and to reduce the possibility of challenge by asserting the expertise of their official scientists and planners. Such notions could be expressed in fine-sounding technological language or in the more idealistic discourse of Arab socialism. Speeches by the leaders of all five countries leaned heavily on both vocabularies, although they were always careful to make it quite clear that, in a Middle Eastern context, socialism had nothing to do with the dangerous notion of social division and class struggle. Only very rarely was it suggested that any local class or group was no longer to be considered as part of the national community. And even then, as in the occasional references to feudalists or parasitic capitalists, the impression was usually given that such persons were either foreigners or else so closely allied with the forces of reactionary imperialism as to have lost the right to be called citizens. In this way, the emphasis on socialist planning provided an essential ingredient for the public ideology of regimes heavily embarked on statist, integrative programmes of national development and control.

Management of so large an apparatus with such extensive commitments gave the small numbers of individuals at the apex of each regime enormous power. The result was a type of system best classified as authoritarian.[14] This is one in which power is highly centralized, pluralism is suspect and where the regime seeks to exercise a monopoly over all legitimate political activity. Something of its logic in an Egyptian context can be seen from the vehemence with which President Nasser and his supporters denounced the emergence of what they termed 'an alternative centre of power' around Field Marshall Abd al-Hakim Amer, the Chief of the General Staff, in the years just before the 1967 war. As their speeches at that time suggest, it was enough simply to draw attention to the enormity of such a development without ever needing to explain why a multiplication of such centres was actually so wrong.

Authoritarian systems are different from totalitarian ones, however, as they lack the powerful institutions that would be needed to control or to transform society by means of bureaucratic methods alone. As a result, people have to be mobilized, different groups integrated, opposition contained, by a variety of methods which range from terror and brute force (the stick) to economic inducement (the carrot), and from the use of personal, ethnic or group affiliations to the compulsory membership of carefully constructed unions and professional associations designed to keep all those at work in the modern sector strictly in

their place. In these circumstances it is only possible to describe some of the major strategies employed in these five Arab states.

When it comes to organized groups within the society, the ideal strategy for an authoritarian regime is to destroy those that it cannot control, and to remake and reorder those that it can. This in fact was the policy first employed in Egypt and Tunisia, whose societies were relatively homogeneous and where bureaucratic structures were already well developed by the time the Nasser and Bourguiba regimes came to power. Independent political parties were soon suppressed or forced to disband while existing unions and associations were either banned or driven to reorganize themselves according to new sets of rules and regulations. The result was a monopoly of political activity for the regime's single party or national rally: the Neo-Destour in Tunisia; the Liberation Rally, followed by the National Union and then the Arab Socialist Union in Egypt. At the same time, a tightly controlled trade union structure was created under the Union Générale des Travailleurs Tunisiens (UGTT) and the Confederation of Egyptian Workers. This was paralleled by the establishment of a number of associations for students, women, peasants and others, while the existing professional associations for doctors, lawyers, journalists and the like were brought under state control, with new leaders installed and, in Egypt, membership in one or other of them made compulsory for all university graduates.

Once in place, such a structure was used not only to ensure the controlled collaboration of the groups in question but also to define the way in which they were able to present their demands and to be represented politically at the national level. In the case of trade unions, for instance, industrial disputes or negotiations about pay and conditions could not be pursued by strike action and were subject to rigid processes of arbitration. More generally, the division of so much of the population into unions and associations allowed the regime to define the role their members were expected to play in the general process of modernization and national integration. Where women were concerned, for example, it would usually stress the need for them to go out to work, an appeal tempered, as the occasion demanded, by reference to their other role as wives and mothers.

Outside the large cities, state control was initially represented by such centrally appointed persons as the village policeman and the village schoolteacher. Later, however, all the regimes used the mechanism of the land reform and the cooperative to create new institutions at a local level. These could include a village council, a branch of the party and, in Iraq and Syria, a branch of the Peasants' Union as well. In addition, the government was usually represented directly by officials of the ministry of agriculture or agrarian reform who were responsible for providing instructions about the type of crops to be grown, the methods to be employed and the way they should be marketed. In such circumstances, the balance between local initiative and central guidance varied greatly according to the degree of village-level input that was either tolerated or actively encouraged. To speak very generally, whereas the Syrian Ba'thi regime seems to have made the most strenuous efforts to encourage the recruitment of active party cadres, perhaps because of its own strong rural

base, this strategy was only employed briefly in Egypt in the 1960s and hardly at all in Iraq, where the party approached the agricultural sector in a very much more heavy-handed way based on fixed ideas about how it ought properly to be managed.[15] The Algerian case was different again. There the production and service cooperatives created to assist the beneficiaries of the 1971 land reform were granted a great deal of autonomy in theory but then found themselves heavily circumscribed by the fact that their peasant members were required to cultivate their land according to the country's national plan, as well as by their need to rely on certain state monopolies to supply agricultural inputs and to market certain of their crops.[16]

A second type of strategy was used to extend state control supervision over both the educational and legal systems and the religious establishment. In all three cases, the main incentive was to combine control over the political space that the school and university, the court and the mosque might offer to the regime's opponents, with an attempt to appropriate their ideas and practices to serve regime purposes. In the case of the educational system, this was effected quite simply by establishing a national curriculum and then by either forbidding student political activity entirely or steering it into the safer channels provided by the party and by government-controlled youth organizations. As for the law, the courts were brought under control by a dual process of coercing or replacing the existing judges and by drastically restricting the scope of the system by delegating responsibility for much of the adjudication and enforcement to a host of extra-legal authorities, for example the military, the internal security forces, the managers of state enterprises or the village councils. The shrinkage of the legal system was pushed still further in certain countries by the development of the notion that there existed a higher socialist, or revolutionary, legality, which, whenever applied, superseded the ordinary laws of the land.

Religion seemed to prove no more of an obstacle to state control, at least during the process of bureaucratic consolidation. No regime felt able to abandon Islam entirely for this would have been to cut the most important single ideological and cultural link between it and the bulk of its population. Nevertheless, all of them explicitly or implicitly asserted the primacy of the political over the religious. And all relied heavily on two important legacies from the Middle East's nineteenth-century past. One was the Ottoman practice of bringing the religious establishment under state control by paying the *ulama* (the clergy) official salaries, by creating a government ministry to manage its property, and by building up a secular educational and legal system to challenge its previous monopoly over these two important areas. The other was the use of the dominant modernist strand in Sunni Islam to obtain official legitimation for state policy. Algeria's establishment of a ministry of traditional education and religious affairs would be an example of the first type of policy; President Nasser's ability to obtain a *fatwa* (religious opinion) justifying many of his major policy decisions is a good example of the second. This structure of control was further reinforced by rules making membership in independent religious parties and associations, like

Egypt's Muslim Brothers, illegal. Such policies seemed to work smoothly for a while but came under increasing attack in the new political atmosphere of the 1970s (see Chapter 9).

Control over the educational system and the religious establishment, as well as over the press, radio and television, gave the regimes one further advantage, and that was the capacity to establish an ideological hegemony in terms of a statist universalistic discourse based on notions of nationalism, socialism and populism, which was then used either to drive out or to subdue alternative political vocabularies. This gave them the power to set the terms of any debate, to direct discussion and, in general, to make it absolutely clear what could and could not be said. It is only necessary to read the accounts of the meeting of any national assembly or any party congress to see what a powerful weapon this could be.

The bottom line as far as state control was concerned was the presence of the army and the police, backed up by the many intelligence services, the secret courts, the torture chambers and the prisons.[17] This is not to say, however, that some of the regimes were not popular to begin with, even if they themselves then proceeded to destroy all the methods that would have made it possible to test such an opinion. President Nasser, President Bourguiba and the National Liberation Front (FLN) in Algeria won real battles in their struggles against the old colonial powers. Furthermore, the enforced retreat of the foreign business communities offered great advantages to local entrepreneurs, while the land reforms and the expansion of the educational systems provided obvious opportunities for a better life for millions of people. Nevertheless, no regime was prepared to share power with more than a limited number of chosen collaborators; organized opposition was ferociously crushed; and all rulers were careful to cultivate an atmosphere of arbitrariness and fear. As in the political system described by the Hungarian novelist Georg Konrad, the system itself required political prisoners.[18] And whereas some, like the Egyptians, the Tunisians and the Algerians, were able, in Konrad's words, to 'create great order with little terror', others, like the Ba'thi regime that came to power in Iraq in 1968, used violence and fear of violence as a basic instrument for maintaining its control.[19]

Given the existence of these types of large powerful durable authoritarian structures, it was inevitable that the ordinary citizen encountered the state at every turn, whether in the Mugamma, the huge building in central Cairo where it was necessary to go for passports, identity cards, export visas and the like, or out in the villages, where the local cooperative had replaced the old landlords as a provider of seeds, fertilizer and credit. Meanwhile, regime policies were shaping people's lives by opening up new possibilities, providing new resources, forcing them into new organizations and creating new relationships between employers and employees, owners and tenants, parents and children, and even men and women. A few chose to confront the state; others tried to ignore it or to imagine that it could be made to go away. Nevertheless, for the vast majority, there was no alternative but to try to use, manipulate or exploit it where possible.

For the population at large, access to the channels of influence that led to a job or a loan or a licence was all.

Politics in an authoritarian state

Authoritarian states pose particular problems for political analysis. One of the ways in which the regimes that control them try to give an impression of coherence and of concentrated power and might is to cloak themselves in secrecy. Decisions are generally taken behind closed doors. Divisions are hidden away in the interests of presenting a united front. Everything seems to be locked up inside a vast opaque bureaucratic apparatus. Meanwhile, on the outside, there are few spaces for independent political activity, and it is only on rare occasions that a university, factory or mosque escapes from state control long enough to create its own leadership and its own rival political platform. Any other type of organized opposition is forced into an underground existence. There are no polls, and the various controlled elections or referenda provide only fragmentary evidence about what a public might be thinking.

The search for a way of locating the politics within this particular type of system has generally taken one of two forms. Perhaps the most influential has been to focus on the activities of rival factions among the political elite.[20] A second is to concentrate on the way in which the struggle for access to state resources is structured in terms of groups based on ties of region or sect rather than of class.[21] Both approaches are said to be justified on the basis that the authoritarian systems to be found in the Middle East possess four major, and related, characteristics. One, they cannot tolerate organized groups within their own structures. Two, they tend to deal with the people not as individuals but as members of some larger regional, ethnic or religious collectivity. Three, they systematically inhibit the development of an active class consciousness, for example by preventing the development of free trade unions. Four, they subordinate economic policies to measures of political control.

Nevertheless, it is easy to quarrel both with the restricted nature of such approaches and with the premises on which they are based. The criticism that has been levelled against studies that focus simply on a narrow political elite is well known: they allow the political leaders too much freedom to make decisions without constraint; they reduce politics to a battle for power; they neglect the economic interests of those involved. Moreover, factions are not a single type of unit, they do not remain the same over time and, most important of all, they cannot be said to constitute a self-contained system of political activity, being embedded in a structure of institutions, classes and interests that is very much larger than themselves.[22] Focus on the role of groups is open to many of the same challenges. They certainly existed but in such a bewildering variety of forms – tribes, regional affiliations, sects and so on – that they resist simple classification, while their role in the political life of the Middle East is equally various and very much more obvious in some countries than others. Moreover, there were many more ways of access to state power and resources than simply by

being a member of some collectivity, for example through institutions like the party or the army, or through formal economic or professional associations like chambers of commerce.[23]

Lastly, the characterization of Middle Eastern political systems upon which such theories are based is equally oversimplified, and leaves out much too much. Classes did exist as political actors, whether in an active manner, where a sense of common consciousness is present, or in a more passive way, as when a whole elite chose policies based clearly and obviously on the notion of private, rather than public, property. It follows that the point about the primacy of political over economic considerations also requires further elaboration. Viewed simply from the angle of the immediate decision, it obviously existed, just as it does everywhere else in the world. But there is another sense in which policies involving rapid industrialization or the attempt to earn scarce foreign currency through the development of tourism had their own logic and a dynamic that often affected huge areas of economic life, regardless of political attempts at control.

In these circumstances it is better to start afresh by focusing on two general questions: What is politics? And where does the process of political activity take place? This has the major virtue of encouraging us to take a large view of the subject and then forcing us to have to specify the different types of actors and different types of arenas involved, as well as their different orders of importance. In the case of the former, this will involve consideration of individuals, of unofficial as well as of organized groups, of classes, and so on. In the latter it necessitates a discussion of the various locations – bureaucratic, institutional, provincial, local – in which political activity used to, and still does, take place. Viewed from this perspective, there cannot be any one answer to the initial set of questions, and analysis will have to take account of many different levels, arenas and types of situation. I will begin by looking at the state apparatus itself.

Given the concentration of power in an authoritarian one-party state, the most important political actor was clearly the president. As a rule he was, and sometimes still is, not only head of state but also commander-in-chief of the armed forces and party chairman as well. Typically he made most key decisions on his own in the light of his own version of the public interest. He did not have to seek advice, and took good care to ensure that no one else within the system could accumulate sufficient power to challenge his authority. Further power came from his ability to stand above the various institutions of state and the various factions they contained, and to adjudicate between them. Once the five Arab regimes had managed to consolidate themselves, only two presidents, Ben Bella and Chadli Benjedid of Algeria, were ousted by their colleagues, and only two others, Ahmed Hassan al-Bakr of Iraq and Habib Bourguiba of Tunisia, were eased out towards the end of their lives by ambitious younger men. On the evidence so far, death is the only certain way in which, in an authoritarian system, a president's rule can be brought to an end.

Nevertheless, presidents could not do exactly what they wanted, and their power was subject to significant constraints. On the whole, they had the least freedom in certain areas of domestic policy given the fact that none of them had

a strong enough political or social base simply to impose his ideas on the rest of the country, and all had to make concessions to important groups of supporters like the Alawi notables in Syria or the landowners from the Sahel region in Tunisia who were so close to President Bourguiba. It was also necessary to delegate enough power to certain individuals and groups simply to get things done. Presidents might prefer cabinets full of technocrats with no power base of their own, or a system of institutional balances in which one ministry or one agency was set up to check another, but, when faced with a major crisis, all of them seemed to realize that this was a recipe for impotence and immobilism.

The president presided over a state apparatus that consisted, in the first instance, of its major component institutions: the military, the party, the security services, the bureaucracy and the economic enterprises. All had their own organizational reasons for obtaining resources, influencing policy and preserving as much as possible of their autonomy. Examples abound of major institutional rivalries in which, for example, a party might try to seek to extend its influence into an army and be strongly resisted. More examples will be given in later chapters. In addition, certain ministries tended to represent particular economic and social interests that they sought to protect and expand, for instance the link between the ministry of labour and the unions or the ministry of agriculture and the various groups of landowning peasants.

The state itself then provided the major arena for political activity. It contained all the major institutional actors involved in national issues and the distribution of national resources. Here too were the major individual actors; the men (and a few women) who controlled these large institutions or who represented significant interests inside and outside the state apparatus. As a rule the most important came from the group of colleagues who established the regime in the first place, the Free Officers in Egypt or the so-called Oujda group of close military associates of President Boumedienne of Algeria. It is they who were given control over the key posts like the ministry of defence and the ministry of the interior. However, over time, their numbers tended to dwindle and they were replaced by others who had worked their way into senior positions in the party, the army and intelligence. On the whole, the politicians who were invited to run the domestic side of the economy were much less powerful, controlled less important ministries and were subject to a very much higher rate of turnover. A last source of power was identification with, and possible support from, some major outside actor, perhaps the embassy of a super-power, like the USSR before 1990 or the United States, or perhaps a powerful Saudi prince with enough influence to direct large sums of money towards the regime.

The more durable of the major regime politicians inevitably became patrons of quite large networks of clients. As a rule these consisted simply of people who had attached themselves to them for reasons of ambition or in order to use them to protect or extend some particular interest. But it might be that the network was also held together by some kind of shared political or ideological position. Important patrons would then try to ensure that their clients obtained high-level posts, perhaps as ministers or chairmen of economic enterprises, in exchange for

their cooperation in helping them with policies or schemes of their own. This is a reminder that patronage can be a two-way process, that patron and client both need each other, and that it is also something that has to be worked at, attended to, over time. There are scarcely any analyses of network-building in the Arab world written from this particular perspective. One of the few scholars to have examined the process in detail in its Algerian context, Bruno Etienne, suggests that a possible dynamic is one that leads a patron whose position in national politics depends initially on the support of a particularly important interest group to try to reduce this dependence over time.[24] Another of Etienne's important insights concerns the way in which different networks may coalesce for a while to form factions when their major interests coincide.[25]

The political role of classes and other social groups in homogeneous and divided societies

An analysis of the role of classes and other social groups within authoritarian systems presents particular problems. Some of these arise from the usual difficulty in locating and defining each particular class, especially in a situation in which the rapid increase in educational opportunity and state employment was bound to make for considerable mobility and general fluidity. In addition, the authoritarian state itself often played an active role in shaping or denying expressions of class interest. In some cases, particular classes were either destroyed or very much reduced in economic and social power (for example, the large landowners in Egypt, Iraq and Syria). In others, parties, associations and unions that might otherwise act as vehicles for class politics were either banned or reorganized as part of the apparatus of state control. As Ahmed Ben Saleh, the Tunisian labour leader, noted after his dismissal from government office in 1969, 'My behaviour is to be explained by my dual membership in party and trade union', a divided loyalty which inhibited him from being able to represent working-class interests when they clashed with those of the regime.[26] For all these reasons, class conflict, the main motor force for developing class consciousness, was permitted only muted expression.

Nevertheless, the expression of class interests cannot be made to disappear entirely. As far as the private sector is concerned, whether in industry, trade or agriculture, an essential component of the ownership of property, and of the employment of workers, is an implicit conflict between capital and labour. It also follows that both sides are likely to organize themselves, if they can, either for the purposes of direct confrontation or, more usually, in order to obtain the intervention of the state on their own side.

Working-class activity in the state sector has sometimes been more difficult to discern. However, in Egypt, as elsewhere, groups of workers were often able to obtain sufficient independence from official control to organize strikes and sit-ins or to develop a local leadership which was independent of the official union structure. Workers' representatives were also able to use their presence at the numerous official economic conferences called by the government or party to

defend their interests in job security, a minimum wage and participation on the board of state enterprises against management efforts to curtail their privileges. On other occasions they found champions among senior regime politicians, aware of their strategic position within the economy and the vital role they had been given in government development programmes. Lastly, there were a few instances of overt opposition at the national level, some of which will be described in Chapter 11.

An identification of the political role of the middle class is equally complicated, and depends largely on being able to establish a link between the continued existence of private property and the political practices of senior officers, high-level bureaucrats and others aspiring to a bourgeois lifestyle within the regime.[27] Such a link is seen most clearly in the case of rural land, where ownership of quite substantial holdings, often held in defiance of the government's reforms, constituted a common bond between important figures within many regimes, both affecting their policy towards the agricultural sector and, more broadly, making them keen defenders of their country's rural elite.

More generally, writers like Roberts and Leca have argued for the existence of a fundamental link between state officials and private property based on the desire of significant numbers of the former to augment their own, and their family's, resources, as an insurance against the possible loss of a job that gives them regular access to state resources.[28] This encouraged them to establish links with the private sector, a task made easier, according to Roberts, by the fact that the boundary between public and private was so fluid as to allow all kinds of profitable arrangements between bureaucrats, managers of public enterprises and private companies and individuals.[29] Rules governing such transactions were usually not well enforced, and the major risk that their practitioners ran was the malevolence of their political enemies or the occasional official campaign against an ill-defined notion of 'corruption'. It was the existence of such links, based on shared interest and aspirations to a common lifestyle, that played an important role in skewing public policy in directions favourable to private accumulation, whether in the area of income tax (kept low), support for local companies against foreign competition, or access to scarce foreign exchange.

Another aspect of state policy that has received considerable attention is the way in which regimes inhibited the development of class solidarities by structuring their system of access to political power, and of distributing resources in such a way that people benefited, 'not on the bases of class affiliation but as individuals, families, particular communities, villages or regions'.[30] In the case of the five states in question, this would seem to have been truer of Syria, Iraq and, to some extent, Algeria than of Egypt and Tunisia. One obvious difference is that the former are much less homogeneous societies with regimes that were based very obviously on support from particular regions and, in the case of Syria after 1966, from one particular sect, the Alawis. This can easily be demonstrated by looking at the social composition of the leading political institutions of such states. In Iraq just after the Ba'th seizure of power in 1968, for example, all the members of both the Revolutionary Command Council and the Regional

Command of the party were from the small, predominantly Sunni, region between Baghdad and Takrit.[31] And, although efforts were later made to widen the circle of leadership to include Shi'is and Kurds, as well as persons from the rural areas, the fact that so many of the top personnel continued to come from the same small region gave some of its inhabitants great privileges, as can be seen from the fact that in the 1980s so many of the country's leading public works contractors also came from Takrit.[32] By the same token, major acts of resistance have been launched by groups from regions or sects that have felt themselves systematically disadvantaged by the new regimes, for example, the Sunni inhabitants of Hama in Syria who provided major support for the Muslim Brothers' revolt in 1982, or the Berber leaders of the strikes and demonstrations that broke out in the Kabyle region of Algeria in 1980.[33]

It is probably also significant that the development of different classes had proceeded much further in Egypt and Tunisia before the creation of the authoritarian state than it had in Algeria, Syria and Iraq. As Joel Beinin notes of the Egyptian case, there was an underlying continuity in the workers' movement before and after 1952, even though it has often been concealed in the literature by books which treat labour history as simply the institutional history of the official trade unions.[34] The same is true of the Tunisian working class, whose power and organization continued to assert itself well after independence and in spite of all Bourguiba's efforts to bring it under control. Industry and commerce were less well developed in Syria and Iraq, with few large concerns to take into public ownership and a much smaller number of well-organized workers. In the case of Iraq the political consequences of its situation were masked for a while by the ability of the local Communist Party to mobilize large numbers of followers in street demonstrations in the 1950s. However, its lack of a solid class base in Iraqi society was soon revealed when it quickly succumbed to the assaults of its enemies from 1959 onwards. And if it was invited to join the Ba'th-dominated National Progressive Front for a few years in the mid-1970s, this was mainly because it was still better able to command the allegiance of certain rural communities than its Ba'thi rival. As for Algeria, here local industrialization was deliberately held up by the French so that regionalism, rather than class identity, remained the major basis of solidarity.

Against the reification of the state

For many writers, the huge size of the bureaucracy in most Middle East and Third World countries has been taken as a sign of a very strong state. And this, in turn, has led them to pose the question of how anything so formidable could have achieved so little success when it came to pushing through much-heralded programmes of economic development and social transformation.[35] However, this is to ask the wrong question, and then to look for answers in the wrong place.

Arguments that seek to explain the apparent paradox of a strong state with weak powers rest on two misleading assumptions. One is that the state is a

coherent entity with a single intent. The other is that this same entity inevitably tries to penetrate and transform a second entity called 'society'. However, as already argued in the introduction to Part I, the state's apparent coherence is more a matter of presentation than of reality. This is how most regimes wished things to be. They based much of their legitimacy on their role as the masters of a well-defined path towards modernization, a claim that not only reinforced their appearance of single-mindedness but also justified whatever interferences and interventions in existing social structures and relations they might choose to make.

However, when it comes to an analysis of how policies were actually made and executed, what is revealed is a whole range of often contradictory aims and conflicting interests which intersected with those of the wider society in such a way as to blur boundaries and to call into question the whole notion of one distinct entity acting upon another. One good example among many is that of the Egyptian land reform programme. This is usually presented as a major instrument of rural social transformation but in reality it proved to be something much more various and complex.[36] To begin with, the first reform law was passed only six weeks after the Free Officers came to power in 1952, and cannot be regarded as a well-thought-out piece of social legislation. Further negative evidence comes from the fact that very little effort was made to see whether the reform had improved agrarian productivity. It is also noteworthy that, for most of the 1950s, the main focus of administrative attention was directed towards solving the problems of Egyptian over-population and landlessness, not by redistribution but by bringing large quantities of new land into cultivation, for example in the so-called 'Liberation' Province between Cairo and Alexandria, to be provided with water by the construction of the High Dam at Aswan.

Looked at from this perspective, even the more thoroughgoing Egyptian agrarian reform law of 1961 is best seen not as a major piece of socio-economic engineering but as just another rather limited attack on landlord power, passed hurriedly as a response to the alleged role of Syrian feudalists and capitalists in the break-up of the union of the two countries in the United Arab Republic. Hence, when the Nasser regime took up the matter of the persistence of 'feudalism' in Egypt itself, as revealed by the investigations following the killing of a peasant activist at the village of Kamshish in 1966, it experienced the greatest difficulty in reaching a consensus about what, if anything, had gone wrong and so what ought to be done.[37] It did not help matters that in such a case the boundaries between what were defined as state and private interests were clearly very indistinct, and that allegations of corruption and other wrongdoing could be backed up not only by appeals to a bewildering variety of different notions of legality and of interpretations of public policy but also by sheer political expediency.

In all this, the idea of the supposed coherence of the state as a single actor with a systematic programme of social transformation is impossible to sustain. What we have instead are the various bits and pieces of the Egyptian version of Hobbes' great Leviathan, acting and reacting in ways that can only be understood

through a process of disaggregation which challenges the conventional dichotomies of state versus society, legal versus illegal, or scientific planning versus private self-interest. It is not a question of testing the strength of a supposed single entity – the state – or of its ability to mould another – society. Rather, it is a question of how to interpret the meaning of what was revealed at such moments, when the veil of omnipotence created around itself by an authoritarian regime fell away to expose the bundle of competing, and often contradictory, interests that had always lain just behind.

3 The growth of state power in the Arab world under family rule, and the Libyan alternative

Introduction

The growth in the size and pervasiveness of the central government apparatus was not confined to those states with single-party regimes but took place under a variety of other systems as well, most notably those subject to monarchical or family rule in Morocco, Jordan and throughout most of the Arabian peninsula. The most dramatic example of this is to be found in the tiny Gulf shaikhdoms, where oil was found either just before or just after the Second World War, and which used their new-found wealth to create large bureaucracies and comprehensive welfare facilities for their growing populations. In Kuwait, for instance, the number of government employees increased from 22,073 in 1966 to 113,274 in 1976 and 145,000 in 1980 – nearly a quarter of the total labour force.[1] Growth was just as rapid in Saudi Arabia, where the civil service grew from a few hundreds in the 1950s to about 37,000 in 1962/3, 85,000 in 1970/1 and 245,000 in 1979/80.[2] As elsewhere, the expansion of educational opportunities was an important component of this growth; by 1980 there were 1,280,000 pupils in Saudi primary and secondary schools and 42,000 in the new universities.[3]

Oil revenues were not the only encouragement to bureaucratic expansion, however. In the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, the ruling family had access to large external subsidies, first from the British, then from the richer Arab states, which it used to develop both the army and the central administration. By 1982 there were 59,000 persons in regular government employment, or just under 15 per cent of the labour force, with another 70,000–100,000 in the armed forces.[4]

Bureaucratic expansion of this size placed great power in the hands of each ruling family but also subjected them to great pressure. Both King Hussein of Jordan and King Hassan II of Morocco narrowly avoided military coups on a number of occasions, while many of the regimes of the Arabian peninsula experienced considerable difficulty in coping with intra-family rivalries exacerbated by their new-found wealth and competition for high office. Nevertheless, even where individual rulers were deposed, as in Saudi Arabia in 1964, Abu Dhabi in 1966, or Oman in 1970, the families themselves survived to establish an unusual form of palace politics characterized by a great concentration of highly personalized

power, a marked reluctance to permit the existence of political parties, trade unions or similar organizations (except in Morocco), limited social mobilization and a basic commitment to private economic enterprise.

A discussion of the various types of family rule will form the major theme of the present chapter. In addition, I will look at a particular state which passed from the monarchical type to one in which there was a deliberate attempt to create a new species of political and administrative structure – Libya. The period covered will end with the Gulf War of 1990/1 which produced significant changes in the policies pursued by most of the Arab ruling families. These will be discussed in Chapter 6.

The politics of family rule: some general observations

At the end of the colonial period nineteen Arab states or statelets had as their head of state a king, amir, shaikh, sultan, bey or imam drawn from a family that had either established or been given hereditary right to rule. Five of these were then deposed in the 1950s and 1960s – in Egypt, Tunisia, Iraq, Libya and North Yemen – leaving fourteen to survive until the present day – in Morocco, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Bahrain, Qatar, Oman and the seven members of the United Arab Emirates.[5] At first sight this may seem something of an anachronism. Nevertheless, on closer inspection there are many reasons why these particular families managed to survive, most notably their ability to concentrate power in their own hands, to contain their own internal rivalries and to resist demands to share the process of decision making with more than a tiny elite of loyal politicians. In doing this they have shown that family rule in the Middle East possesses certain functional advantages which were not so apparent to earlier writers, who relied overmuch on Samuel Huntington's notion of what he termed the 'king's dilemma': that is, his observation that 'the centralization of power necessary for promoting social, cultural and economic reform [would make] it difficult or impossible for the traditional monarchy to broaden its base and assimilate new groups produced by modernization'.[6] However, in actual practice this proved much less of a problem than was once thought. On the one hand, power sharing was rarely attempted, on the grounds that it might pose too many possible challenges to family authority. On the other, as Huntington himself pointed out, monarchs had a possible way out of the dilemma, by taking on the role of chief modernizers themselves and then by slowing down the process in such a way as to keep dislocation, as well as demands for participation, to a minimum.[7]

What were these advantages? And how could they be realized? Certainly the first point to make is that in a Middle Eastern context monarchy conferred none of the legitimacy that had once stemmed from the European notion of the divine right of kings. Indeed, only three of the rulers called themselves kings at all, in Jordan, Morocco and Saudi Arabia, and for reasons that had more to do with their determination to obtain the respect of the former great powers like Britain and France than it had to do with impressing their own people.[8] Indeed,

all three of them habitually used other titles, for example 'shaikh', 'amir' or 'imam', which possessed much more resonance in terms of local custom. Meanwhile, in Saudi Arabia at least, the employment of the vocabulary of monarchy continued to provide a residual sense of embarrassment because, for some Sunni Muslims, and many Shi'is, it suggested a language that ought rigorously to have been confined to Allah himself. As King Faisal is reported to have told other members of his family in 1964, 'I beg of you, brothers, to look upon me as both brother and servant. "Majesty" is reserved to God alone and "the throne" is the throne of the Heavens and Earth.'[9] The Ayatollah Khomeini made the same point more forcefully in his polemics against the Saudi monarchy in the 1980s.

In Middle Eastern circumstances the right to rule resided not in the institution of kingship itself but in a combination of individual and family virtues, including noble lineage, honoured deeds, qualities of leadership and, in the case of the kings of Jordan and Morocco, descent from the Prophet Muhammad himself. Indeed, one of the strengths of the system was the fact that legitimacy was based on a bundle of factors, any one of which could be brought into play on the proper occasion and all of which could be used in various permutations to create powerful myths of origin that connected the family, its past achievements and its present strengths to the territory over which it now ruled.[10] It had the further advantage of not tying a ruler to one particular source of legitimation, which might, in certain circumstances, prove embarrassing or act as a major constraint. A good example of this would be the anxiety of certain Saudi rulers, notably King Abd al-Aziz Ibn Saud himself, not to identify themselves too closely with the religious establishment, even though it was this that provided a fundamental pillar of their family's right to rule.

Another type of flexibility stemmed from the interplay between the family as a whole and the individual ruler, a relationship that allowed an aggregation of the traditional virtues represented by the one and the more modern qualities required to be successful as the other. It is probably no accident that the states where family rule survived were those in which the leading families of nomadic tribes had played a prominent role in the recent past. Nevertheless, this did not absolve contemporary monarchs from developing the skills required to master large bureaucracies or to conduct complex international diplomacy. If the right balance could be found, the position of the family was correspondingly strengthened.

It would be wrong to suggest, however, that the maintenance of family rule was not without its problems. One of the most obvious and the most difficult has been the need to keep the family itself united. This involved finding ways of dealing with the question of succession, as well as with other potential sources of rivalry such as access to power, position and wealth. In large families where the founder, or founders, had many sons by many different wives, there was the additional problem of defining who was, and who was not, to be considered royal, and then who among them was to be considered as a candidate for high office. In Saudi Arabia, where there may be anything up to 4,000 males with a claim to

be called 'prince', the question was first tackled by King Abd al-Aziz himself in 1932 when he decreed that only his own offspring and those of his brothers and of families related to his by common history and marriage were to be considered 'royal' and given a stipend. Later the list was twice pruned by King Faisal after 1958 and a number of names removed.[11] As for the Gulf states, by the 1980s several of them had written constitutions which defined who was a member and so who was a possible candidate for the succession.

Succession itself can be by primogeniture or by some version of the formula of the ruler's eldest 'capable' male relative. Both methods possess advantages and disadvantages. Primogeniture is easy to apply and centralizes power and decision-making in one single family line. However, it can also produce a monarch who is still a minor or otherwise deemed unfit to rule. In addition, it automatically cuts out all the other lines, something that may well increase tensions, particularly in large families. The alternative, that of the eldest capable relative, is more or less bound to produce rulers who are old enough to have had considerable administrative experience. It also encourages family solidarity by allowing more lines to participate in rulership – or, at least, in the realistic anticipation of rulership. The downside is that it generally leads to short reigns and, as in the case of Saudi Arabia, where there were still thirty-one sons of King Abd al-Aziz alive in the mid-1970s, a long list of brothers and half-brothers to go through before it is possible to move on to the next generation.[12] A final point concerns the question of assessing the competence of any potential ruler. Not only is this a highly subjective matter but it is also something that is bound to change over time, depending on the degree of economic development and on the problems that the country faces.

In actual practice, different ruling families have applied different rules, as well as, on occasions, switching from one method to another. Among those that had institutionalized primogeniture by the 1980s were Morocco, Bahrain, Qatar, Abu Dhabi and Dubai.[13] Elsewhere different versions of the formula of the eldest competent male relative were in place, almost always supplemented by the nomination of a crown prince so as to reduce the possibility of a family quarrel breaking out immediately after the existing ruler's death. And in Saudi Arabia a mechanism had also been developed for indicating who was to be considered next in line after the crown prince, the person in question being appointed as second deputy chairman of the Council of Ministers. Nevertheless, all such systems can be subject to change and to family bargaining. Jordan had no fewer than three crown princes during the reign of King Hussein – two of his (younger) brothers and one of his sons, none of whom actually succeeded him – while in Sharjah in the United Arab Emirates the 1987 dispute between the ruler and his brother was settled by changing the order of succession to make the latter the heir apparent.

If intra-family disputes could be kept to a minimum, a ruler possessed a pool of loyal personnel for use as advisers and in manning the higher offices of state. Where families were large, as in Saudi Arabia and the Gulf, it remained usual for the ruler or his designated successor to be the prime minister and for the major

positions in his cabinet to be held by other close relatives. Even where families were smaller, as in Jordan and Morocco, the king's uncles and cousins held important posts like commander-in-chief of the army or were delegated important areas of policy-making like planning and development. Indeed, one of the advantages of family rule is that such appointments do not carry the stigma of nepotism as they must do in a republic. Against this, it is often difficult to remove or transfer a close relative from a position of power, so that senior family members tend to remain in the same post for long periods of time.

A second problem that faced the Arab monarch or family ruler in the past was how to obtain sufficient resources to avoid overmuch dependence on important social groups and to build up support for himself by the distribution of largesse. This was especially the case in the poorer Arabian states before the oil era, and in those like Jordan and Morocco where the monarch was kept on a tight financial leash by the colonial power, with only a small civil list and limited opportunities for accumulating land or other valuable assets. Independence, or oil revenues, or both, provided almost all rulers with a way out. Those with oil now had an expanding income, part of which they could distribute to their own family in various ways, part of which they used to develop the infrastructure and the social services for the benefit of their own citizens. Meanwhile, growing economic activity gave them the option either of permitting their own relatives to go into business or, as in Kuwait, of striking a deal with the powerful merchant community, by which the latter was persuaded to limit its demands for political participation in exchange for a free hand to make money. As for those without oil, independence freed them from dependence on colonial subsidies, while allowing them to find alternative sources of financial support from outside (for example, aid from other Arab states) or, like Hassan II of Morocco, to go into business on his own account.[14] In either case, the tacit association of family rule with private enterprise allowed the rulers to build up a significant business clientele.

A third problem faced by family rulers was their relationship with the army. With the exception of the Bey of Tunis, who was eased out by President Bourguiba just after independence, the other four Arab monarchs who lost their thrones in the 1950s and 1960s were all deposed by military coups. And the same fate could well have overtaken the kings of Jordan, Morocco and Saudi Arabia if they had not been lucky or skilful enough to survive plots organized among their own armed forces. When confronting this problem, family rulers had two possible options. The first, open for several decades to those in the Arabian peninsula, was to have only a very small army, often with a high proportion of foreign mercenaries, and placed under the direct supervision of loyal relatives. The other, forced upon those like the Moroccans and Jordanians who needed a large army for their own defence, was for the king to play an active role as commander-in-chief, often wearing military uniform and constantly attending parades and manoeuvres. This strategy is particularly apparent in Jordan, where King Hussein showed great skill in obtaining the loyalty of his army after he had dismissed its British commander, General Glubb, early in 1956 and where, a

decade later, he was said to address individual soldiers by their first name 'as if he knows them all'.[15] More generally, it can well be argued that the institution of monarchy provides a better mechanism for maintaining the allegiance of an army than a republic, on the grounds that it makes more sense for a soldier to pledge himself to a person than to something abstract like a flag or a state.

A last problem, specific to ruling families that obtain part of their legitimacy from their close identification with religion, was how to benefit from this connection without being too constrained by it. By and large this involved many of the same techniques as those used in the Arab republics: government control over religious appointments and funds; the close monitoring of the Friday sermon; and so on. Another option was what might be called the 'management of tradition': for example, the introduction of certain practices that carried with them the aura of the past, such as the enforcement of what was considered proper Islamic conduct by the specially created Saudi religious police, the *mutawa*.

The existence of the ruling families and their courts produced a type of politics that differed in a number of significant aspects from that in other types of system. For one thing, it involved the relationship between the family members themselves, a process of interaction in which questions of personality, ambition, state policy and the control of state institutions were inevitably mixed together. What made matters still more complicated was the fact that, in many cases, the senior princes or amirs were also in charge of the most important government ministries, which they could exploit as their own particular fiefs or power bases in support of their own particular interests. In these circumstances, the maintenance of family harmony was bound to be more important than a willingness to take difficult decisions. Nevertheless, the situation may not have been quite as unsatisfactory as many commentators have argued. Ruling families were able to cover serious disputes with a discreet veil of secrecy and were rarely required to explain what their policies were or how decisions had been reached. Furthermore, the existence of rival points of view is not necessarily evidence of a struggle for power. Indeed, rather than being a weakness, it is probably better seen as a source of strength as long as it is kept within reasonable bounds. Certainly a situation in which all the members of a ruling family habitually shared the same approach towards major issues of policy would have ensured that issues were not properly aired and, in general, would have been a recipe for disaster.

Another special feature of family rule is the existence of the royal court, with its own particular atmosphere and its own particular dynamic. Some of its features seem timeless and are just as easily illustrated in the works of Machiavelli or Shakespeare as they are in the books of contemporary political scientists. There is the advice offered to the medieval courtier, to find out what a ruler wanted and then to go to him with suggestions as to how it might be carried out. There is King Lear's understanding of the importance of gossip, when he says that he desires to 'talk of court news … who loses and who wins; who's in, who's out'. All this in its modern Moroccan context is well described by Waterbury, with his observation that access to the king became the be-all

and end-all of political manoeuvring, that palace-watching and second guessing becomes an elite obsession, that evidence of royal favour is sought in the length of a meeting or the sight of a smile.[16] Nevertheless, court life is not just the stuff of a rarefied political drama; its pattern is structured by the dictates of a system in which rulers need political servants to advise them and to carry out their orders, and find it easier to draw them from a small, loyal, continuously circulating elite.

For the public at large, courts or open councils also provide a stage for a continuous performance of what might be called the theatre of legitimacy, in which every event provides an occasion for some highly charged ritual designed to remind the people of their ruler's power and justice as well as of his noble lineage, his generosity and his devotion to his religion. 'To be invisible is to be forgotten' as Bagehot wrote of the nineteenth-century British royal family.[17] Once again Waterbury provides a good example of this aspect of royal behaviour, with an extract from a speech given by King Hassan II of Morocco on the occasion of the release of some prisoners.

> This clemency is proof of the innate nature of our family characterized by its profound wisdom, its great nobility and the solid communion which unites us ultimately with our people. Moreover, if we have adopted this attitude impregnated with wisdom and clemency, it is because we have answered to the humanitarian mission handed to us by the saviour of our nation and the liberator of our citizens, our late Father, Muhammad V, may God bless his memory.[18]

A final feature of note is the natural alliance between ruling families and the more conservative elements within a society, both of whom see themselves as beneficiaries of a system under threat from certain movements and ideologies associated with modernity and rapid economic development. Both tend to admire tribal and rural values. Both tend to be suspicious of political parties and trade unions. One result is that royal courts still contain a disproportionate number of members of the older, notable families. Another is that royal policies have a tendency to favour private property and private enterprise, as against nationalization, land reform or other collectivist solutions to economic problems. I will give illustrations of all these features of family rule in the next two sections of this chapter.

The politics of royal family rule in Jordan and Morocco

The political histories of Jordan and Morocco since independence have much in common. Both countries experienced a short period when their kings attempted to rule as constitutional monarchs before engineering a showdown with the nationalist parties and concentrating power in their own hands. Both had moments of serious military unrest. Both possessed monarchs who deliberately

set themselves up as leaders of their respective national movements and as managers of their country's modernization. Nevertheless, the contexts in which these developments took place were very different. The modern history of Jordan has been dominated by its involvement with Palestine, its relations with its own large Palestinian population, and by its close proximity to Israel; while King Hassan II of Morocco has focused nationalist attention on the incorporation of the former Spanish Sahara into his domain and made loyalty to this policy a touchstone for participation in the political process. Again, Morocco has always been a much more economically diversified country than resource-poor Jordan. Perhaps because of this, it has always contained a greater diversity of political and trade union organizations, which the king has been able to use but has never been quite able to bring under control.

The turning point in King Hussein of Jordan's centralization of power came in April 1957, with his dismissal of Sulaiman Nabulsi's cabinet dominated by members of parties opposed to many basic features of Hashemite rule. This was immediately followed by the establishment of his authority over the army after averting the threat of a military coup a few days later, and then by the arrival of the first American aid and the financial subsidies sent by a number of Arab states as a replacement for the money previously provided by the British. From that point on political parties were outlawed, and the lower house of the Jordanian parliament was rarely in session (it met only once between 1974 and 1984), giving space for the king to perfect a system that allowed him to make all the major decisions affecting foreign affairs and external security while leaving the execution of policy in other areas to a small group of loyal politicians who circulated between his own royal Hashemite diwan (or royal cabinet) and the regular cabinet in charge of day-to-day administration.[19]

As laid down in the constitution, the King of Jordan is head of state and supreme commander of the armed forces. He also appoints the prime minister and, in consultation with him, the cabinet. Historically, both prime ministers and their cabinets were rotated rapidly, lasting an average of only seven months between 1947 and 1974 and for two years from then to the mid-1980s.[20] On appointment, each cabinet received a public letter from the king setting out the main guidelines it would be expected to follow. Its role was essentially executive. Key decisions were taken in consultation with a small group of advisers; notably the chief and the minister of the royal diwan, the commander-in-chief of the army, and the prime minister, whose main allegiance was to the king rather than his own cabinet. And particular prime ministers were often chosen just to carry out specific short-term political tasks, one, for example, being known for his ability to establish good relations with the Syrians, another for his willingness to take a tough stand against the Palestinians.

Members of the political elite who staffed the two cabinets came from a small group of several hundred families.[21] Before independence this elite was composed largely of persons who had been brought into Trans-Jordan (as it then was) by the British or who had moved there from Palestine. It then expanded after the annexation of the West Bank to include representatives of the major

Palestinian families that were not tainted by their connection with King Abdullah's arch rival, the Mufti of Jerusalem. Later it was enlarged still further to include the heads of important Jordanian families: tribal leaders, merchants and members of the two most significant minorities, the Circassians and the Christians. In this way appointment to one of the two cabinets came to serve a representative function, bringing the king in touch with various regional and social groups in a manner that might otherwise have required the existence of small political parties. It was also a way of organizing and maintaining support. Such was the importance attached to having good relations with the palace that members of this elite were almost always content to be dismissed from office without protest, knowing that if they avoided public display they would be recalled to favour on some future occasion.

Jordanians outside this small elite had little or no opportunity to influence policy at the national level. General elections were only rarely held before 1989, and all political organizations were banned. In these circumstances, those wanting to make their opinions known had either to do so by means of personal contact with a member of the elite or to engage in some form of illegal activity. Even so, strikes and demonstrations were very infrequent and the only occasion on which the king had to face anything like a concerted opposition from local Jordanian groups was during the months leading up to the armed confrontation with the Palestinian resistance movement, which began in September 1970.

During the 1970s efforts were made to introduce a system of limited decentralization. Municipal elections were held regularly from 1976, while some power was devolved to local governors, mayors and the heads of village councils. However, as such elections were closely monitored and most of the persons concerned were either civil servants or retired soldiers with close ties to the government, this only opened up a tiny space for the type of competitive politics that could reflect either national or local issues. What it did allow in some municipalities, however, was a challenge to the existing alliance of government officials and local notables by the election of a few educated technocrats and some men either identified with one of the banned political parties or close to the Muslim Brothers, the single mass organization tolerated by the royal regime. But, once again, they were forced to operate within very strict limits, as can be seen by the strenuous attempts to prevent the re-election of certain members of the Irbid Council alleged to have been involved in the student demonstrations at Yarmuk University in May 1986.

Opposition to the rule of the kings of Morocco was very much more consistent and difficult to contain. Nevertheless, King Muhammad V and his son, King Hassan II, were able to develop a system of government that allowed them to concentrate great power in their own person and to act as arbiter between the country's other political forces. In Zartman's schema, the history of this process can be divided into three periods.[22] In the first, from independence in 1956 to 1965, the two kings attempted to create a strongly centralized constitutional monarchy, only for Hassan to abandon the project when he was unable to secure the cooperation of the major parties like the Istiqlal and its more radical

offshoot, the Union National des Forces Populaires (UNFP), and was then faced with a major outbreak of popular opposition leading to widespread rioting and demonstrations in Casablanca and elsewhere. Parliament was dissolved during this second period and the king ruled through cabinets of technocrats until the attempted military coups of 1971 and 1972 persuaded him of the danger of establishing his rule on too narrow a base of patron–client relations and senior army officers alone.

Finally, in the third period, which began effectively in 1974, Hassan II was successful in creating a new system of highly controlled democracy in which a number of parties were persuaded to take part in regular elections and to participate in government on his terms. As it developed, his new formula involved a combination of a number of elements. Loyal politicians were encouraged to form pro-monarchical political groupings like the RNI (National Independents' Rally) and the Constitutionalists' Union (CU). Meanwhile, other parties were allowed to contest the elections in 1977 and in 1984, provided they actively supported his highly nationalistic campaign to incorporate the former Spanish colony of the Western Sahara into Morocco. Finally, the elections themselves were subject to considerable manipulation by the state including tight control over what could and could not be discussed during the campaign. Surrounding the king was a small elite of politicians and notables, and the leaders of various labour unions and other economic interest groups who, according to Entelis, numbered no more than a thousand.[23] As in Jordan, Hassan II was personally acquainted with most of them and very much aware of their personal idiosyncrasies and rivalries.[24] Like Hussein he was adept at keeping them all in play. It was they who provided his advisers, the executors of his policy and his eyes and ears for observing the rest of Moroccan society. A key part of this system was his ability to grant favoured courtiers and politicians access to the business opportunities that he could offer in his double role of manager of a large public sector and the country's leading private sector entrepreneur.[25]

Given the presence of such a relatively small elite surrounding the royal court, it has been easy for analysts to limit their study of Moroccan politics to an examination of the leading personalities involved and their varied types of patronage networks. But, as in the case of the single-party authoritarian regimes, this is to ignore the interventions of major institutions like the army, as well as the existence of the mechanisms necessary to solve substantive disputes over major policy issues concerning both domestic and foreign policy. In the Moroccan context it also tends to overlook the role of the parties and trade unions in developing distinctive followings among different sections of Moroccan society which look to them to represent some of their particular interests.[26]

The practice of family rule: Saudi Arabia and the Gulf states

The practice of family rule that developed in Saudi Arabia had many of the same features as in Jordan and Morocco, with the important proviso that the

Saudi royal family was very much larger and thus able to dominate all the senior civil and military posts itself. Otherwise there was a similar division between the cabinet (or in this case the council of ministers) and the royal court, and a similar tendency for the king and his close advisers (the senior princes) to pay special attention to matters of foreign affairs, defence and internal security (as well as the religiously sensitive issues of justice and education), leaving other matters like economic development either to American-educated princes of the third generation or to non-royal technocrats with no power base of their own.

Such a system permitted only a small group of major political actors drawn from some of the sons of Abd al-Aziz, members of related families like the Jilwis and the al-Shaikhs, and a few tribal leaders and senior clergy. Membership of this group depended largely on the family of origin, seniority, prestige and an active desire to take part in public life. In addition, the significance attached to such membership could rise or fall according to political necessity, while the importance of tribal leaders suffered a decline over time as their followers settled on the land and became more directly subject to the central administration. However, unlike Jordan and Morocco, the family was large enough to keep members of the new educated elites resolutely out of policy-making, with the exception of certain rare individuals like Zaki Yamani, the minister of oil for most of the 1970s and 1980s. There was also no serious attempt to create representative institutions of any kind, while incorporation as a subsidiary member of the ruling elite was based almost exclusively on loyalty to the family and a shared perception of the values of Saudi culture and pride in its own special achievements.

The development of the main features of monarchical rule can be best understood by a rapid survey of recent Saudi political and administrative history.[27] At the time of the death of Abd al-Aziz Ibn Saud in 1953 the country was still ruled much as it had been in the 1930s, with only a minimal bureaucracy of a few hundred officials and advisers, supported on occasion by the considerable resources of the oil company, ARAMCO, from its enclave in the eastern province. However, before he died, the king made two important preparations for the future. One was his attempt to regulate the succession and to provide leadership for the future by ensuring that his eldest son, Saud, became king but worked in close cooperation with his second son, Faisal, who had important diplomatic and administrative skills that Saud lacked. The second was the creation of a council of ministers to direct the work of the inevitable expansion of the bureaucracy as oil royalties began to mount. Given their different talents, the new king, Saud, worked to consolidate his hold over the royal court while Faisal built up the council as a major institution of state, using it to provide senior princes with administrative experience and to supervise the activities of the various ministries.

Competition between Saud and Faisal came to a head in the period between 1958 and 1964, when Saud's mishandling of a series of diplomatic and financial crises threatened the whole basis of family rule. These included near bankruptcy through the wasteful use of oil revenues, and a failure to find ways to meet the

challenge posed by the increasing power of President Nasser of Egypt, made more threatening in 1962 by the dispatch of an Egyptian military force to assist the officers who had overthrown the neighbouring imam of North Yemen. Nevertheless, in spite of these great dangers, the transfer of power from Saud to Faisal was a lengthy process as it took time for the majority of the senior members of the family to accept the need for taking such a serious step. In all this a key role was played by three princes whom Faisal himself had introduced into the council of ministers: Khalid, who was appointed deputy prime minister in 1962; Fahd, who became minister of education in 1953; and Abdullah, who was made commander of the national guard in 1963. In the process of consolidation that took place after Saud had been deposed and Faisal made king (and prime minister) in 1964, Khalid became crown prince (while continuing as deputy prime minister) with Fahd next in line, a position signalled by his appointment to the newly created post of second deputy prime minister in 1967. All this required complex intra-family negotiations, particularly with respect to Abd al-Aziz's next son, Prince Muhammad, who was older than the other three and who took some time to agree to surrender his place in the succession to his full brother Khalid.

Once firmly in power and sure of full family support, Faisal proceeded to provide himself with new instruments of rule, notably the creation of a higher committee of senior princes, which advised him on all major decisions, leaving the council of ministers to deal with more routine matters of administration including the planned development of the economy that began in earnest in the late 1960s. He also took advantage of the death of the grand mufti of Saudi Arabia in 1970 to create a new ministry of justice which brought the important sphere of Islamic jurisprudence within the framework of cabinet control. Finally, he pursued a deliberate policy of introducing western-educated, third-generation princes into government posts, having taken the lead in sending his own son, Saud al-Faisal, to school and then university in the United States in the 1950s. This was important in preventing the family from having to rely too heavily on the advice and skills of Saudi technocrats in the future. But it also had the effect of accelerating a process that Samore has called the development of 'power fiefdoms' among the senior princes, some of whom remained in control of the same ministry, or the same institution, for many years, if not decades.[28] This placed limits on the king's own power, made joint decisions more difficult to reach, and increased the possibility that institutional interests and intra-family rivalries would become dangerously intermixed. A good example of this occurred after the discovery of an ill-planned coup attempt among air force officers in 1969, when family decision-making processes seemed paralysed for months and the king was subject to fiercely conflicting advice about whether to push forward with more reforms or to permit the religious establishment greater control over morals and values. In the end he decided to do both at once.

Faisal's assassination by one of his nephews in 1975 led to a period of more collective family rule, first under King Khalid (1975–82) and then under King Fahd (1982–). Once again this sometimes made consensus difficult, particu-

larly when facing an acute crisis like the seizure of the Grand Mosque in Mecca in 1979 by a group of Muslim religious extremists in the misguided hope that this would act as a spur to popular revolt against the monarchy. Nevertheless, such was the grip that the family and its allies had established on all the major centres of power that its rule was never seriously threatened, even when it was challenged by the powerful forces of the Islamic revolution in neighbouring Iran.

As Samore notes, the continuous accumulation of wealth and expansion of the state structure greatly facilitated the resolution of structural tensions within the family, as well as between the family and the rest of Saudi society.[29] Meanwhile, the non-royal Saudis who were required as technical experts could easily be absorbed as individuals into the various family patronage networks without the need to admit them into the inner circles of power or to provide them with the support of even the most rudimentary representative institutions. When they felt threatened, as after the mosque attack in 1979, the king and the senior princes might attempt to build up popular support for themselves by a promise to explore the possibility of creating a popular consultative council. But once it became clear that the majority of family members were against any such arrangement for sharing power, the matter was quietly dropped. With all the institutions of government so firmly in the hands of one family, with political parties and trade unions banned, with opposition confined to a few tiny underground groups, the practice of politics at the national level remained an almost exclusively royal monopoly.

Nevertheless, even when so well entrenched at the centre and in the provinces, the Saudi ruling family, like any other, was not able to make policy in a vacuum and was forced to base important parts of its policy on detailed negotiations with powerful interest groups like the religious establishment and the wealthier merchants and businessmen. This could be seen with particular clarity in government efforts to clear up the difficult problems involving bankruptcy and the failure to meet obligations on loans, which came to prominence during the economic contraction that accompanied falling oil prices from 1985 onwards. So complex were the various negotiations regarding such highly contentious issues as the charging of interest that laws and decrees had constantly to be revised in the light of new pressures from the clergy and the business community.

The ruling families in Kuwait, Bahrain, Qatar, Oman and the seven constituent states of the United Arab Emirates (UAE) formed in December 1971 were also able to keep power largely in their own hands during the oil era. This involved a similar process of consolidation and of sorting out problems of succession and of access to high government office. Once this was done it was possible to use family members to dominate the most important posts in the various councils of ministers. In the mid-1980s, the office of prime minister in Kuwait, Bahrain, Qatar and the UAE was held by either the ruler or the crown prince, while the ministries of foreign affairs, the interior and defence (where they existed) were also controlled by senior relatives, the one exception being the ministry of foreign affairs in the UAE, which was in the charge of a commoner.

Family dominance was equally apparent in Oman, even though its small size entailed a somewhat different system of administration.[30]

The families in question were able to achieve this type of dominance as a result of two main factors. One was the protection they enjoyed, first from the British presence in the Gulf before its withdrawal at the end of 1971, then from Saudi Arabia and the United States backed up by the system of mutual support they developed for themselves through the creation of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) in 1981. The second was access to profits from oil which largely freed them from financial dependence on the local population for tax revenues or on the local merchants for loans. It also allowed them to distribute great largesse, beginning with their own extended family and then extending throughout the rest of their small populations. This took various forms: cash handouts; state purchase of privately owned lands for public development at inflated prices; and, in an institutionalized form, by the development of a wide variety of welfare services such as free education and health care and the provision of highly subsidized electricity, water and housing.

The expansion of the bureaucracy and the economy allowed further opportunities for obtaining popular support by providing jobs, loans and the possibility of participating in a whole range of profitable enterprises. A key feature in all this was the creation of particular monopolies that were available only to people defined by the very restrictive nationality laws as local citizens. In most of the Gulf states these monopolies included the sole right to own property and to open a business. The result was a situation in which a privileged group of local nationals was well placed to take advantage of all the openings for making money that stemmed from oil, as well as from the presence of the many millions of non-nationals drawn to the Gulf in search of work.[31]

Given their large independent financial resources and their protection from external attack, the Gulf ruling families were free to establish links with all sections of their own societies – the merchants, the clergy, the Shi'ite minorities, the settled tribal elements – but on their own terms. In some cases, as in Kuwait, this might include a tacit bargain by which, for example, the merchants agreed to keep out of politics while the royal family kept out of business.[32] In others, it needed to be no more than an extension of a particular set of privileges to a particular group, such as the regular employment of tribesmen in the army and the police. As a rule such arrangements worked with relatively little friction. However, there were always strains during periods of economic slowdown, when oil royalties declined. At such times the families had to undertake the difficult task of managing not the distribution of money and jobs but decisions concerning the allocation of financial contractions and relative hardships. This was particularly apparent in Kuwait after the collapse of the unofficial stock-market known as the Suq al-Manakh in 1982, when investors, some of whom included prominent members of the royal family, were faced with huge debts running into many billions of dollars. The government took several years to produce an agreed policy, and even then there were inevitable accusations of favouritism as some individuals and companies received very much more in offi-

cial compensation than others. The situation was only finally resolved after the Gulf War in the early 1990s.[33]

As a rule, relations between Gulf rulers, governments and people were conducted along informal personal lines, with only minimal reference to institutions. The only two states to attempt to create formal representative assemblies were Kuwait and Bahrain, just after independence in 1962 and 1973 respectively. However, even there parties were banned, the electorates were confined to only a small proportion of the male population with full citizenship, and the elections themselves were usually subject to considerable government interference. Furthermore, both national assemblies ran into predictable problems stemming from the fact that they contained important members of the ruling family, either ex officio as cabinet ministers or as elected representatives. Tensions between the family and the opposition led to the Bahrain assembly being dissolved in 1975 after two short sessions. The one in Kuwait lasted somewhat longer, with periods of cooperation being interspersed with ones of great friction between some parliamentarians and a government dominated by members of the ruling house of al-Sabah. It was first dissolved in 1976, reopened again in 1981, and then dismissed for a second time in 1986 following the forced resignation of the minister of justice, on the grounds that he had misused his office for personal gain, and fierce criticisms of two other ministers including the minister for oil who happened to be the half-brother of the ruler.

Libya: from monarchy to a new type of state, the *jamahiriyyah*

Libya gained its independence in 1951 as a federal state consisting of the three very different provinces (Tripolitania, Cyrenaica and the Fezzan) and as a constitutional monarchy under King Idris al-Sanusi. In some respects its political history echoed that of Jordan and Morocco, with an early showdown with the main nationalist political party, the Tripolitanian National Congress, in 1952, after which the king took all power into his own hands and ruled through a series of loyal politicians, while keeping parliament firmly under control. There was also a similar system of rule, with a royal cabinet containing a mixture of men from the tribal nobility and from the major families in the towns, and a ministerial cabinet in which the portfolios of finance, defence and the interior were kept firmly under the king's control.[34] Furthermore, the federal system, with its four administrations, provided large numbers of posts for loyal supporters before it was replaced by a centralized system of government in 1963, while the discovery of oil in the late 1950s provided the monarchy with a source of considerable financial largesse.

There were obvious differences as well, some of them significant enough to account for the overthrow of the monarchy by the military coup of 1969 led by Captain Muammar Ghadhafi. The first involved the size and cohesion of the ruling family. As a result of a confrontation with dissident relatives in 1954, one of whom had killed his senior adviser, King Idris confined the succession to his

brothers and members of his own line, depriving all the remainder of their royal titles and of the right to hold public office. This at once removed a large pool of loyal family talent. To make matters worse, he had no son of his own to succeed him, so that succession had to pass through his brothers to the very lacklustre nephew he named as crown prince. Second, the king showed none of the energy of a Hussein or a Hassan in constantly reinforcing his legitimacy and in reminding his subjects of his authority by endless public performance, preferring instead to hide himself away in a distant palace and to manipulate the political system from afar.

A third difference was the king's failure to maintain personal control over the regular army or to impose an acceptable standard of behaviour on either his close relatives or his main advisers when it came to nepotism and corruption. Lastly, King Idris showed little skill in distancing himself from the British and the Americans, both of whom had military bases in the country. Hence by the time he had begun to try to improve his Arab nationalist credentials in the aftermath of the 1967 Middle East war – by his use of oil royalties to support the defeated Egyptians and Jordanians – his support had crumbled away beyond repair. In an important sense he could be said to have delegitimized both himself and the whole system of monarchical rule, and it was only a matter of timing and good fortune as to which of a number of groups of military conspirators would be able to launch their coup first.

The leaders of the Libyan Free Unionist Officers' Movement that came to power in September 1969 promptly constituted themselves as an Egyptian-style Revolutionary Command Council under the chairmanship of Ghadhafi, who was immediately promoted to colonel and commander-in-chief of the army. For the first four years they attempted to reorganize the government along the lines laid out in Egypt by Colonel Nasser and his colleagues, centralizing power in their own hands, creating new administrative structures to limit the influence of the country's rural elites and then a mass rally, the Arab Socialist Union, to mobilize popular support. By April 1973, however, they were beginning to look for a new organizational formula, which they discovered in the notion of the people's committees to be elected in all villages, schools, popular organizations and foreign companies. To begin with, these committees were allowed to play a significant role only in local and provincial government, where they assumed some administrative and legislative functions. But in yet another initiative announced in September 1975 their activities found expression at a national level with the creation of a General People's Congress (GPC), with Ghadhafi as its secretary general and representatives from the district people's committees, supported by the Arab Socialist Union and the new work-based unions to which all Libyans were now supposed to belong.[35]

It was this structure that formed the basis for the final mutation of the Libyan system triggered by the publication of the first volume of Ghadhafi's 'Green Book', *The Solution of the Problem of Democracy* (1976), and his March 1977 announcement that henceforward the country was to become a *jamahiriyyah*, a 'state of the masses'. What this actually meant in practice presents considerable

problems of analysis. For one thing, it was subject to considerable experimentation itself, including the creation of a new set of revolutionary committees in 1979 which were established first in schools and universities, and then in parts of the bureaucracy, turning many of the existing ministries into so-called people's bureaux. These existed side by side with the older people's committees and reported directly to Ghadhafi himself, who in 1979 had resigned from his post as secretary general of the GPC to assume the new post of 'leader of the revolution'. For another, the late 1970s also saw the start of a concerted attack on economic privilege, leading to the nationalization of large numbers of private firms. However, it seems clear that, throughout all these changes, power remained firmly in the hands of Ghadhafi and a few close aides who controlled the essential levers of the state.

As a result, by the early 1980s the structure of the Libyan state showed considerable differences from that to be found anywhere else in the Middle East. It is true that it had at its centre a large bureaucratic apparatus backed by an army which had increased to some 55,000–65,000 in 1981 and a sizeable force of policemen, militia and other persons concerned with domestic security.[36] However, this organization, although ultimately answerable to Colonel Ghadhafi and his colleagues, was supervised in a novel way by a combination of the permanent secretariat of the General People's Congress, various revolutionary committees and, in some places, the remains of previous administrative hierarchies to be found in the military and some of the ministries, now renamed people's bureaux. This, in turn, had important consequences for Libyan politics. Whereas all the major Arab regimes had tried to create mechanisms for bringing their populations under their administrative control, not one of them had gone anything like so far as to combine this with the encouragement to popular participation provided by the committees. The result was a multitude of new types of political practice, few of which have been open to inspection by outsiders.[37]

How all this had come about also poses problems in terms of historical explanation. Clearly the presence of large sums of money from oil exports had something to do with it, at least in terms of providing the funds to support such a comprehensive and continuous process of economic, social and administrative engineering. The fact that Libya had only a small population of some two to three millions and had experienced such a short history of centralized bureaucratic structures is also significant. Nevertheless, the personalities and expectations of the small group of middle-ranking army officers who made the coup cannot be ignored. As John Davis, one of the shrewdest observers of the Libyan scene, has noted, the 'Green Book' seems to have been written by a man who felt deceived and frustrated by the day-to-day experience of government.[38] Born in a tent pitched in the open desert, and with only minimal contact with any type of bureaucracy before he joined the army in 1964, Colonel Ghadhafi shared none of the commitment to regular administrative procedures shown by a Nasser or an Asad. He also lacked their patience and their attention to detail. The result was a freedom – perhaps even a compulsion – to experiment, something which remained an essential feature of Libyan political and organizational practice.