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# Simon Says: Stay!

A Study of the Regional Diffusion of Political Stability

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# Abstract

This thesis suggests that neither the cue nor the result of a diffusion process need be manifested in a policy-change, but can indeed be simply the maintaining of the status quo, or rather, the hindrance of transformation. Also, it attempts to use this theory of regional diffusion of stability to explain the robustness of the authoritarian regimes in the Middle East and Northern Africa. This thesis does not wish to contend with previous explanations, such as the region's abundance of natural resources or patrimonial rule. The aim is instead to complement them in focusing on the regional diffusion of authoritarian norms and behaviours, or the motivation behind the authoritarian rule, rather than the source of the means for making stable authoritarianism possible.

*Key words:* Diffusion, IGOs, interdependence, authoritarianism, stability, democratization.

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# 1 Introduction

The theory of diffusion as applied to the field of international politics should be familiar to most readers as the domino effect. Put simply, it is the spread of a policy from state A to state B, following a change of policy within state A. This was the basis of much of USA's foreign policy during the Cold War, then concerned with the toppling of pro-West regimes and their replacement with pro-Soviet communist ones. The world held its breath for forty-odd years and watched, while nothing toppled. It is quite ironic, as Starr points out, that when a domino-effect finally did occur, it was in the opposite direction; following the collapse of the Soviet Union a wave of democratization swept across the world in the early 1990s (Starr, 1991, p. 356p, 2003, p. 490p).

It is perhaps because of this history of nonfulfilment that most studies of diffusion today tend to turn away from the topic of autocratic spreading, and focus instead on the newer and more tangible phenomenon of "democratic dominoes".<sup>1</sup> Leading the academic world by the nose for four decades only to deliver the opposite of what was expected has not gained the theory of authoritarian dominoes a base of dedicated spokespersons, willing to defend it in the face of adversity. Also, it is much more pleasing to report that the dominoes are falling the right way up, so to speak, than being a glum doomsday-prophet.

The world is changing under our feet, however; the wave of democratization has long since peaked. The future of the world does not seem as rosy as it once did. It is perhaps time to let bygones be bygones, dust off the theory of authoritarian diffusion, and appraise it in a more neutral light. The aim of this thesis is to suggest that the elusive domino-effect of authoritarianism does indeed exist in a camouflaged form, and that it is shaping the world unnoticed: it is not necessarily a change of regime type that triggers diffusion across borders, there is a continuous diffusion through *stability*, breeding stability as it spreads.

## 1.1 Problem/purpose

The central question that this thesis aims to answer is the following:

- (i) Could one speak of a diffusion of stability, as opposed to diffusion triggered by change?

In order to attempt to answer this question I will firstly argue on a theoretical level that there can indeed be a diffusion of stability, democratic or authoritarian. I will then pose another more empirical question:

- (ii) If the diffusion of stability is theoretically sound, could it partly account for the exceptional stability of the regimes in the Middle East and Northern Africa?

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<sup>1</sup> This phrase is taken from the title of Starr's initial study of the phenomenon in 1991, "Democratic Dominoes: Diffusion Approaches to the Spread of Democracy in the International System".

## 1.2 Disposition

This thesis is divided into two parts. The first aims to theoretically establish whether or not there could be any diffusion of stability. The second part applies this theoretical framework to the specific case of the Middle East and Northern Africa, in order to investigate whether the theory holds some validity outside of the theoretical sphere.

## 1.3 Methodology

The first part of this thesis is by necessity theoretical and argumentative. The study in the second part of this thesis is quantitative. All data used are included in the attached appendix, or can be found in its original form in the datasets found in the reference list. The methods used for the quantitative part of the study are quite basic, and does not need any further presentation, save that the standard deviations are calculated with the 'n' method, using the formula below, where  $\bar{x}$  = sample mean Average and  $n$  = sample size.

$$\sqrt{\frac{\sum (x - \bar{x})^2}{n}}$$

## 1.4 Definition of terms and concepts

The definition of concepts will be handled on a progressive basis; an explanation or definition will be given in conjunction with the introduction of a new term or concept.

## 2 Diffusion theory

As stated in the introduction, diffusion, put simply, deals with the spread of a policy from state A to state B. Obviously, this is an extremely simplistic summary of a quite complicated theory. The following chapter will outline the main arguments of the theory in greater detail.

Starr speaks of the spread of “institutions, practices, behaviours and norms” (Welsh quoted in Starr, p. 359) between different actors.<sup>2</sup> Uhlin speaks of an “object” of diffusion as a label for what is spread, which I also adopt for the sake of coherence and simplicity (Uhlin 1995, p. 38). These objects, then, are spread from one actor to another. But how, and why?

Rosenau speaks of “linkage” as “any recurrent sequence of behaviour that originates in one system and is reacted in another” (Rosenau quoted in Uhlin, 1995, p. 34). Although this is perhaps not identical to the idea of diffusion, it is a helpful starting point from which to present the theory. Rosenau draws up three categories of linkage; a penetrative process, a reactive process and an emulative process (Uhlin, p. 34-35). *A penetrative process* occurs when the political process in one political system is directly affected by the participation of members of another system such as military occupation or the activities of foreign aid workers or transnational corporations. *A reactive process* “is characterized by recurrent and similar boundary-crossing reactions” (Uhlin, 1995, p. 34), such as the influence of the election in one country affecting the election in another. Finally, and for this study, most importantly, we come to *the emulative process*. This is a “special case of a reactive process. The actors not only react to an external event, but they also try to emulate the event. This can be called a *demonstration effect*” (Uhlin, 1995, p. 35, my italics). Starr points out that diffusion is not necessarily limited to the influence that movements toward democracy in one state will have on another. There can be a “negative diffusion” as well, where movements away from democracy serve as cues (Starr, 1991, p. 361). He also states that that “the source of cues/prototypes/models might arise from a regional context” (Starr, 1991, p. 361).

Starr also states that “[t]he diffusion of democracy is concerned with [...] the transition of regime type involving governmental structure and process. This means we are concerned with the diffusion of changes or transitions” (Starr, 2003, p. 495). Brinks and Coppedge second this opinion, and state that “[w]hen two countries are equally democratic or nondemocratic, there is no pressure; emulation is a nonissue, as between the United States and Canada or Syria and Iraq” (Brinks & Coppedge, 2006, p. 467). They continue with stating that the “size of changes [in system] tends to be proportional to the size of the gap in [democratic] scores” (Brinks & Coppedge, 2006, p. 472). This would mean that when there is *no* difference in the democratic score on the (for instance) Polity or Freedom House scales,<sup>3</sup> there would be *no* change, at least not any which would be attributed to diffusion.

Furthermore, Brinks and Coppedge urge caution when studying the political aspects of geographical regions. They point out that

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<sup>2</sup> Throughout this paper the term *actors* refers to states, unless otherwise stated

<sup>3</sup> Both are measurements of the levels of democracy in the world, state by state. Polity scores range from -10 to 10, 10 being most democratic. Freedom House scores are divided into two categories, Political Rights and Civil Liberties, each ranging from 1-7, 1 being most democratic.

[a]ny variable that favors countries being, becoming, or remaining democratic would, if regionally concentrated, lead to a region that appears to be more likely than average to be, become, or remain democratic; and this regional tendency could appear to be the product of democratic diffusion in the region (Brinks & Coppedge, 2006, p. 473).

This thesis agrees with the first point raised by Starr, that there can be a diffusion of non-democratic norms, and that much of this diffusion is intra-regional. However, this thesis strongly contends the second point. I do not agree that it is only the transition toward or away from democracy that can function as a source in a diffusion-process. I do not believe that it is only the changes in its surroundings that will affect a state. Instead, I would suggest that *stability* can also be diffused from state to state. The continued and consolidated democratic (or as I will argue in this thesis, authoritarian) rule in one state will affect its neighbours in a similar fashion as would regime-change, and I will attempt to show that there can be a great deal of pressure involved in the relationships between states of similar levels of democracy. With regards to the last point made, of reading too much into the regional similarity of democracy, I will say this: although one should not automatically assume that there is a diffusion of ideas behind every region-specific phenomenon, one should at least be willing to consider the possibility. The notion that states lead happy lives in splendid isolation and are supreme masters of their own agenda is becoming increasingly outdated in the modern world, and it is certainly worth investigating the political influences of states on each other when trying to account for a regional phenomenon.

## 2.1 Diffusion: how?

Central to the theory of diffusion are four concepts that together make up the framework within which the diffusion takes place. These are: a source, a receiver, an object of diffusion, and a channel of diffusion through which this object is spread (Uhlin, 1995, p. 41).<sup>4</sup>

### 2.1.1 Actors:

“Concrete actors in the diffusion process are often called agents of diffusion, i.e. individuals or groups that have an interest in diffusing a certain object, and actively promote the adoption of the object” (Uhlin, 1995, p. 41). The role of actors within the states is not the focus of this paper, however. The focus here is on the regional diffusion of ideals between independent states, and so I will treat the states themselves as actors. I do not see this as a controversial approach, and although perhaps lacking in nuance it will hopefully provide a wider scope and range which would be lost in a case study of individual actors.

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<sup>4</sup> Another definition of these concepts is “[1] an *innovation* is [2] *communicated* through *channels* [3] over *time* among the members of [4] a *social system*” (Brinks & Coppedge, 2006, p. 468, italics in original), but throughout this thesis I have consequently used the terms source, receiver, object and channel.



### Source:

Of particular interest for this study with regards to source, is the concept of “reference states”. These states “serve as a point of comparison for political actors in another state” because of “geographic proximity, cultural similarity, shared history, or some combination of the three” (Uhlin, 1995, p. 41).

### Receiver:

The receiver is quite simply any state or actor which adopts a policy for reasons not based on independent opinions of its intrinsic values. Instead the adoption of a policy is founded either in observations of other actors’ behaviour and the estimation of the results of this as favourable in the own circumstances, or to accommodate to pressure for its adoption.

### 2.1.2 Object:

Defining what it is that is actually spread in the process of diffusion is not as simple as it may seem. For the purpose of this paper, the material goods which are spread are not relevant in and of themselves; it is instead *ideas* that are of interest.

Uhlin outlines two categories of objects which are spread in the case of *democratic* diffusion, namely encouragement and democratic ideas (Uhlin, 1995, p. 38). Encouragement quite simply translates into monkey see, monkey do. Observers in one state will mimic the behaviour of (successful) actors in another state, and shy away from behaviour that proved less successful. Implicit to this argument is that the actors believe that their own actions would yield similar results, i.e. that their government would behave similarly to the government of the source state (Uhlin, 1995, p. 38).

The actual ideas that are spread through diffusion can be divided into three subcategories: world views, principled beliefs and causal beliefs. Uhlin defines these as follows:

First, *world views* have deep cultural roots and a fundamental impact on modes of thought and discourse. Second, *principled beliefs* consist of “normative ideas that specify criteria for distinguishing right from wrong and just from unjust [...] Third, *causal beliefs* include strategies for attaining goals of *principled beliefs* (Uhlin, 1995, p. 39, italics in original).

### 2.1.3 Channel:

Uhlin speaks of two channels between a source and a receiver: mass-media (one-way communication) and interpersonal contacts (two-way communication) (Uhlin, 1995, p. 42).

The evolution of television and more recently the internet has been accredited an important role in the global diffusion of ideas. It is not difficult to imagine how the mass of information would affect policy-makers across the world, as they now have more or less immediate access to a relatively nuanced picture of the costs and benefits of adopting a certain

policy. The role of the media as a channel of diffusion would be much the same, whether or not one chooses to see the actors as individuals or as states.<sup>5</sup>

But what form of interpersonal contacts could be said to exist between states? Pevehouse suggests that regional intergovernmental organizations (IGOs) may fill this function.<sup>6</sup> This happens for two reasons. Firstly, these organizations “provide a forum to air complaints against member states” which in essence means that they provide a “low-cost voice opportunity for states of all sizes” (Pevehouse, 2005, p. 18-19). Secondly, democracies will favour IGOs as a means of putting pressure on other states because it “minimizes the perception on the part of actors within the target state of direct violations of sovereignty” (Pevehouse, 2005, p. 19). (Important to note here is that although Pevehouse speaks of “regional international organizations (IOs)” (Pevehouse, 2005, p. 3), it is quite clear from the selection of organizations included in his study that this term is used interchangeably with the term IGO (Pevehouse, 2005, p. 68-69) Throughout this thesis the term IGO is used, except when citing Pevehouse.)

Pevehouse points out that this pressure “can come in a variety of forms, ranging from overt delegitimization of the regime by members of the organization via political isolation to direct economic sanctions against the regime, even expulsion from the organization” (Pevehouse, 2005, p. 17).<sup>7</sup> This pressure is likely to first come in the form of “open and direct verbal condemnation” followed by (if there is enough support within the organization) “threats of sanctions or other punishments” (Pevehouse, 2005, p. 19).

Pevehouse also states that membership in certain regional IGOs may soften the military and make them less hostile to a move toward democracy:

Regional security organizations can assure the military of continued support either through the domestic regime or alliance partners. In order to maintain a credible military force as a part of an alliance, a state must provide adequate resources to the military and is often required by its allies to do so. These requirements of the alliance help to assure the military officers of their “piece of the pie” (Pevehouse, 2005, p. 23).

However, these requirements also mean that there is a strong military in place. And it is not the goal of every IGO to pressure its members toward democracy. Pevehouse states that “the more democratic a regional organization (in terms of its member states), the more likely it will be to supply the political will for supporting and protecting democracy *and* the more likely the regional IO will be used by domestic groups to encourage and cement democracy” (Pevehouse, 2005, p. 4). Pevehouse measures the “density” of democracy of an IGO simply by “the percentage of permanent members in the organization that are democratic” (Pevehouse, 2005, p. 46). He points out in a footnote that

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<sup>5</sup> At least on the receiver-side. The state-as-source would have much more effective means of using the media to its advantage than would individuals or groups of individuals.

<sup>6</sup> Although Pevehouse investigates the role of regional IGOs in the spreading of democracy, I see no reason why similar mechanisms for furthering their goals should not be utilized by authoritarian states as well. Although authoritarian regimes may be less concerned with their image abroad, I would argue that they, too, would seek to utilize the safest and most low-cost alternative for exerting pressure on another state. Should this pressure fail to yield results, they may certainly become more forceful, but this does not negate the validity of the argument that IGOs may function as channels of authoritarian pressure.

<sup>7</sup> It would seem reasonable to assume that this pressure would be felt more strongly should the IGO previously have shown itself willing to ‘go the distance’, so to speak, and not shirk away when it comes down to enforcing punishment for non-compliance. The expulsion of Egypt as a member state by the Arab League would then suggest that other states now perceive that IGO as a greater pressure than they had previously done.

this measure does not refer to the level of democracy within the organizational structure or procedures. From this point forward, any reference to “democratic” IOs should be understood as the aggregate level of democracy among the members rather than a trait of the organizational structure (Pevehouse, 2005, p. 46, footnote 1).

Pevehouse also addresses the role of IGOs in mollifying elites in its member states. In the case of an autocracy-turned-democracy, these elites will be (or at least perceive themselves to be) the losers, economically speaking. Since accession to an IGO is often conditional, membership functions as a signal of commitment to that organization’s policies. Pevehouse suggests that:

IOs bind distributional losers [i.e. elites] through the same commitment mechanism since a reversal of democracy at the hands of *any* domestic actor will incur punishment from the organization. Losers must calculate whether the costs imposed by reneging on IO membership will undermine attempts to consolidate their power after a coup. If these costs, which can include a loss of trade, economic aid, military assistance, international status, or military protection, are significant, losers are more likely to remain loyal to existing democratic rulers and institutions. Finally, IOs can “bribe” losers into complying with democratic institutions. Bribes can occur through a direct transfer of resources (economic assistance) or an expansion of the range of resources that can be utilized as side-payments to opponents (Pevehouse, 2005, p. 37).

In an autocratic setting, where the elites are already the distributional winners, the impact of the pressure to remain in the good graces of the organization would be felt even more keenly. The elite’s personal losses would be far greater should the state not only lose the benefits of membership, but simultaneously make the shift to democracy and redistribute the wealth among its citizens.

It is clear that the elites would seek to maintain the status quo. But what about the rest of the population? Surely they would be clamouring for a transition to democracy? (Although clamouring is perhaps the wrong word, since clamourers tend to be dealt with quite abruptly in an autocracy.) Pevehouse states that “[r]eneging on international agreements can [...] bring heavy reputational and domestic audience costs on the regime. [...] Losing this membership thus risks a backlash from both elite and mass publics who would no doubt *blame regime leaders for ruining their chances at international acceptance*” (Pevehouse, 2005, p. 40, my emphasis). An autocratic state making a transition toward democracy could risk losing its IGO-membership privileges, but could perhaps justify this with the privileges to be gained from its new democratic status; expanded trade with the West, higher status in the United Nations, possible membership in democratic IGOs, and so on.

Would these gains be worth the risk of alienating the neighbouring states? Perhaps, but the problem is not so much what will actually happen as a result of a transition toward democracy, but what is *perceived* by a state to be the result of such a transition. If the potential gains seem uncertain, the risks would loom larger in the minds of those affected. Referring to similar cases would give presumptive democracies a clue to what could be reasonable to expect from the world community. Looking at previous attempts to approach the West and the democratic world it would not seem that the benefits of a democratic

struggle are reaped so easily.<sup>8</sup> Thus many regimes may be hesitant to initiate a transition toward democracy and risking the disfavour of its peers for the dubious gain of pariah-status. It seems probable to assume that these doubts would not be hidden from the population; rather, it seems likely that the regime would justify its continued existence by pointing to the harsh reality of the international scene. Even if one might assume that the mass public in an autocracy would greatly benefit from a transition to democracy, there would be no revolution unless the population believed this themselves. As Brinks and Coppedge phrase it, “[...] the nature of the reward for having similar regimes is less important than that there be a reward of some kind or more accurately, that key actors *believe* that such rewards exist” (Brinks & Coppedge, 2006, p. 466, italics in original).

## 2.2 Diffusion: why?

Concerning relations between source and receiver, several propositions can be identified that might explain the diffusion process. A (rather obvious) proposition has to do with the interaction between source and receiver. The more intensive the interaction between a potential source and receiver the greater the probability for diffusion. This proposition is valid on all levels, i.e. interaction between countries, between organisations and between individuals (Uhlin, 1995, p. 48).

Uhlin speaks of five separate reasons or explanations for the process of diffusion. Firstly, the neighbourhood effect simply suggests that geographical proximity increases the likelihood of successful diffusion. Secondly, structural similarity between the source and receiver increases the probability that the diffusion will occur in the first place. Thirdly, institutional equivalence also increases the likelihood of diffusion taking place. It is more probable that diffusion occurs between similar organizations. Similarly, on the individual level, subjective identification between receiver and source may explain why diffusion takes place. Finally, Uhlin turns to the idea of applicability, which simply means that the more applicable an idea is to the local setting, the greater the likelihood that it will be adopted (Uhlin, 1995, p. 49).

Brinks and Coppedge focus on one aspect of the diffusion theory, namely neighbour emulation. This model addresses something that is of crucial importance to understanding *why* diffusion takes place in the first place;

The core assumption of this model is that countries are rewarded when their regimes are similar to those of their neighbours. The rewards could be of many different kinds: peace, mutual security, trade, investment, ease of communication, and so forth (Brinks & Coppedge, 2006, p 466).

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<sup>8</sup> For instance, Morocco’s little-known application to join the EC in 1987 was greeted with “an absolute no. The application was not even forwarded to the European Commission for an opinion as is the regular procedure” (Rumelili, 2004, p. 42).

As noted above, if the “key actors” do not *believe* there to be any benefit to be had from making a regime-shift, or simply *believe* that the risks outweigh the potential benefits, there will be no call for change. On the contrary, there would most likely be a question of the opposite. The “key actors” normally associated with driving a change as a result of a diffusion-process would instead try to maintain the present order.

This model of neighbour-emulation would explain the behaviour of individual (or groups of) actors within a receiving state. But is the process of diffusion so easily explained as a simple process of emulation? I would argue that it is not, and that there are more factors to take into consideration when trying to explain the behaviour of a state. Pevehouse addresses the pressure put on one state by another, to sway the target (or receiving) state into adopting a desired policy. He poses the question “Why would states pressure other states to become democratic?” In response, he states “[...] as a way to boost its own international status, a young democracy may pressure former authoritarian partners to make similar moves to liberalize” (Pevehouse, 2005, p. 17).

A point which deserves being made is that IGO-membership is not necessarily limited to a stick-and-carrot type of diffusion. An IGO is also an arena for representatives of the member states to meet and discuss policies, and it seems reasonable to assume that there is some form of exchange of ideas between these representatives, especially those already of a like mind. This would more often be the case with representatives from countries of similar democratic levels, since the ideas of one would be seen as more applicable to the domestic scene of the other. Uhlin speaks of subjective identification between receiver and source as something which may explain why diffusion occurs. As stated above, he also points to applicability as central to diffusion: “the more applicable and idea is to the local setting, the more likely it will be adopted” (Uhlin, 1995, p. 49). So, when the representatives of various member-states come together and exchange ideas, it would seem only natural that some would return to their bases with the intention of spreading the ideas they encountered which seemed applicable to their local setting. This would most likely have an even greater impact in authoritarian systems, where the political representatives of state are usually very well-connected with the ruling elite (perhaps even from the same family, or even filling multiple ministerial roles themselves), and carry a great deal of political weight on the domestic scene.

## 2.2.1 Trade and interdependence

A key element in the application of diffusion approaches and in the study of internal-external linkages is that of interdependence. One set of hypotheses about which states are more or less ready to be penetrated by diffusion effects, or which will relation their position as “barriers”, must be based on the levels and types of interdependence any state has with its external environment (Starr, 1991, p. 378).

Naturally, two states engaged in extensive trade would be more reliant upon one another than two states which have limited or no trade connections. Russett and Oneal state that trade relationships are both a reason for, and a result of, peaceful inter-state relations (Russett & Oneal, 2001, p. 126pp), and offer a twofold explanation:

- 1) A rational-liberal perspective stating that trade between states is always (to a certain extent) mutually beneficial. If trade is important to the growth and welfare of the state, the leaders will listen to those advocating trade over war (Ibid., p. 128). The more extensive the

trade, the greater the cost of war would be (which would inevitably end the trade, at least temporarily).

2) A constructivist perspective stating that trade across borders exposes the citizens to ideas from other states. The economic interdependence will then create a security community within which the idea of resorting to military force to resolve differences is unthinkable (Ibid., p. 130).

The welfare of an authoritarian state may not necessarily benefit from trade in the same way the welfare of a democracy would. Instead, the trade revenue could be essential to the maintenance of the repressive apparatus, and the regime's survival. The security community and the shared norms following from trade would be as likely to appear in a network of authoritarian states as in a network of democratic ones, although these norms would be repressive rather than democratic.

One slight reservation should be made here, however, with regards to the statement that members of the security community would find it unthinkable to wage war upon one another. This is less certain in a network of autocracies, as an authoritarian state is not always predictable and rational in its actions. Subjected to the whims of an isolated ruling elite, or even an individual, it may behave quite unexpectedly. Nonetheless, a declaration of war against a major trading partner *would* be more costly than on a state with which there is little or no trade, even if it is not unthinkable that an autocracy may ignore this cost to further some other end.

## 2.3 Motivation

The theory of diffusion has something important to offer with regards to explaining the upholding of authoritarian rule: it provides a *motivation* for the power-holding elites to maintain the repressive state apparatus, other than striving to fill their own pockets. It *may* be that these elites are concerned with the wellbeing of the state, and see these best furthered by continued authoritarian rule, as the risks of a shift toward democracy may be calculated as too great. This is not to suggest that these elites are altogether free of corruption or personal ambition, merely that this is perhaps not the only motivation for the upholding of the repressive status quo.

# 3 The robustness of the authoritarian systems in the Middle East and Northern Africa

The singularity of the Middle East and Northern Africa region (MENA) is renowned in studies of democratization. According to Gleditsch and Ward, “the Middle East (including Arab North Africa) is the only region that remains dominated by autocracies” (Gleditsch & Ward, 2006, p. 915). Many attempts have been made to explain the lack of democratic rule, and many different theories have been put forward. Some have focused on the absence of certain properties deemed in the various researches as essential to promoting democracy, whereas others have emphasised elements present in the region which are seen as impediments to democratic evolution.

I will first briefly outline some of the theories attempting to explain the lack of democracy in the region, and explain why I do not consider these to provide satisfactory answers.<sup>9</sup> I will then apply the theory of diffusion as a regional stabilizer to the MENA.

## 3.1 Present theories

In the various attempts to explain the lack of democratic progress in the MENA, a number are built on the notion that Islam, in and of itself, is an impediment to the development of democratic values. In other words, “Democracy is alien to the mind-set of Islam”, as Kedourie chooses to phrase it (Kedourie quoted in Anderson, 2001, p. 54). Other explanations have focused on the uniqueness of the region, and see the Arabic culture and democracy as mutually exclusive. Yet others focus on economic and social prerequisites for democracy, and their absence in the region. Below I will briefly address these theories and explain why I consider them to be insufficient. I do not in any way claim to cover *all* theories, but have focused on the most prevalent theories I have come across in the literature specifically dealing with the MENA.

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<sup>9</sup> Barring one. The theory of neopatrimonialism as a system upholding authoritarianism is quite persuasive, and will be addressed in detail.

### 3.1.1 The Islam gap

Many have argued that there is something fundamentally ingrained in the Islamic religion which thwarts democratic progress, and that this explains the lack of democratic rule in the Middle East. Firstly, I would like to point out that, as Uhlin states, “the relative absence of successful combinations of Islam and democracy in the history of the nation state does not mean that Islam cannot support democracy at the level of ideas” (Uhlin, 1995, p. 15). On the contrary, there are certain aspects of Islam which suggest quite the opposite. According to principle of *ijma'*, or consensus, “if the Islamic community (or its *representative* scholars) agrees on a particular point of law, this becomes legally binding to all Muslims” (Al-'Aqqad quoted in Goddard, 2002, p. 7, emphasis added). Also, the concept of *bay'a* demands that “each new *khalifa* (caliph, or successor to Muhammed as leader of the Sunni Muslim community) needed to secure the allegiance of his subjects via an oath” (ibid.). Its striking similarity to the democratic idea of a social contract has been noted as “a precedent for democracy, since [it] could [...] validate the electoral process” (ibid.). The idea that there is no room for democracy within the confines of Islam seems to be in need of revision.

Despite these ‘democratic values’ there are some who reject the idea that Islam and democracy could coexist. According to this view, “popular sovereignty cannot stand above God’s sovereignty. *Sharia* is a complete legal and moral system so no further legislation is possible. Furthermore, there cannot be equality between believers and nonbelievers, husband and wife, etc.” (Uhlin, 1995, p. 16). There are certain problems with this view, however. Christianity, with its history of legitimization of the monarchical system as ordained by God would not seem to be fertile ground for democratic ideas. Certainly, throughout much of Christian history, nonbelievers have not enjoyed the same status as believers. And I need hardly point out that Christianity has a dubious score-sheet with regards to the equality of genders, to say the least. Yet democracy is today firmly established in much of the Christian world. I see no reason to believe that Islam should be any different.

### 3.1.2 The Arab gap

The notion that we should look to the singularities of the Arabic culture to explain the lack of democracy in the Middle East is something I find quite worrying. I feel one should approach theories concerning the common properties of members of a certain culture with a great deal of apprehension. The notion of the *volksgenosse*, whatever name it may be given, is a frighteningly effective tool when drawing a dividing-line between *us* and *them*, as we have seen throughout history, culminating in the race-biology of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>10</sup>

I am aware that the argument of nomad tribal societies is sometimes held as incompatible with democracy, and that one could argue that this is a feature of Arab society preventing democracy’s advances. Since this is not unique to the region, however, I will not delve deeper into this issue than to remark in passing that it seems probable that it is not the

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<sup>10</sup> By and large, I feel one should treat generalizations of entire populations with a healthy degree of skepticism. Findings that the citizens all have 2.4 children, a dog and a banjo tell us precious little of any of the individuals the median is actually based on.



democratic values *per se* that present a problem to a nomad tribal society, but rather the centralization of the state apparatus and the institutionalization of the decision-making process.

### 3.1.3 The absence of democratic prerequisites

According to Bellin, the usual suspects pointed out as the causal mechanisms of failure to establish democratic rule in the MENA are: a weak civil society, state-controlled economy, high poverty and inequality and low levels of education, and the region's remoteness to the "epicentre of democratization" (Bellin, 2004, p. 139-142). And, of course, Islam, but there is no need to repeat the arguments made above. Although it is true that these conditions are indeed present to a great extent in the MENA, Bellin points out that this is not in any way unique to the region. She further argues that:

The puzzle posed by the Middle East and North Africa is not why democracy has failed to consolidate in this region (failure would be expected) but rather why the vast majority of Middle Eastern and North African states have failed to initiate transition at all. Herein lies the exceptionalism of the region. To explain it, it is necessary to look beyond the failure to achieve the prerequisites of democracy, since failure is not exceptional to the region (Bellin, 2004, p. 142).

Instead, Bellin asserts that the answer lies "less in absent prerequisites of democratization and more in present conditions that foster robust authoritarianism" and especially the "robust coercive apparatus in these states" (Bellin, 2004, p. 143). In order to sustain this coercive apparatus a large and steady flow of state income is necessary. The less of this that comes in the form of direct international support of the regime, the better for the stability of the regime, as "the security establishment is most likely to lose its will and capacity to hold on to power when it loses crucial international support", which triggers "both an existential and financial crisis" (Bellin, 2004, p. 144). It would seem, then, that the oppressive state apparatus is dependent on a hefty state budget and legitimacy through international recognition.

### 3.1.4 A barrelful of oppression?

The most obvious source for the type of income needed to maintain a sturdy repressive apparatus would be an abundance of natural resources such as fuels or minerals. This is not uncommon among the states of the MENA, making it an obvious conclusion to draw that the reason for the region's authoritarianism can be found here.

The claim that there is a causal connection between oil and autocracy should be a familiar to the reader. This is addressed by Ross, who shows that there is indeed a connection, and points to the rentier state, the repression effect and the modernization effect. The rentier state is defined as "a state that receives substantial rents from foreign individuals, concerns or governments [...] where the rents are paid by foreign actors, where they accrue directly to the state and where only a few are engaged in the generation of this rent (wealth), the majority being only involved in the distribution or utilization of it" (Ross, 2001, p. 329). This revenue in turn makes repression and modernization possible, which represses and pacifies the opposition, respectively.

Ross finds that the argument oil  $\neq$  democracy does indeed seem to be robust. However, this is “not limited to the Arabian Peninsula [or to the] to the Middle East” (Ross, 2001, p. 346). So, if the region’s abundance of oil is not the answer to the question of its singularly robust authoritarianism, then what is?

### 3.1.5 Patrimonialism

The patrimonialist explanation for the robustness of the authoritarian regimes of the MENA-region differs from the theories outlined above. Focus on the patrimonial<sup>11</sup> nature of these states adds an explanatory level to the argument. It seeks to explain not only *how* a regime is able to maintain its coercive apparatus, but also offers an explanation as to *why* the states would choose to do so. As Bellin phrases it, “The will and capacity of the state’s coercive apparatus to suppress democratic initiative [...] are two independent qualities that do not covary and ought not be collapsed into one” (Bellin, 2004, p. 143).

The definition of a patrimonial regime is simply one where “the leader treats the state as his private fiefdom and gives only rhetorical attention to formal political institutions” (Brownlee, 2002, p. 37). In such a system, key members of the coercive apparatus, mainly the military, will be chosen for their role based on political reliability rather than merit (Bellin, 2004, p. 149). “Staffing decisions are ruled by cronyism; the distinction between public and private mission is blurred, leading to widespread corruption and abuse of power; and discipline is[often] maintained [...] relying on balanced rivalry between different ethnic/sectarian groups” (Bellin, 2004, p. 145).

Brownlee suggests that “extensive patrimonialism [...] can *enable* regimes to withstand challenges that would otherwise lead to transitions” (Brownlee, 2002, p. 36, emphasis in original). Firstly, it demobilizes the opposition and builds “a loyal base through selective favouritism and discretionary patronage” (Bellin, 2004, p. 145). Secondly, it may make the regimes resistant to democratic reform. Thirdly, the coercive apparatus, when set up along patrimonial lines, will be less receptive to political opening than it would be were it institutionalized. Finally, the potentially enormous costs of violently repressing the regime’s opponents “will not deter an elite that believes it will be ruined by reform” (Bellin, 2004, p. 146). Elites in patrimonial states would have more to fear from a reform, since they would have focused mainly on furthering their own “personal aggrandizement and enrichment alone” (Bellin, 2004, p. 146). In contrast, in a state where the coercive apparatus is institutionalized it is “distinguished by a commitment to some broader national mission that serves the public good, such as national defense and economic development” (Bellin, 2004, p. 145-146).

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<sup>11</sup> Brownlee uses the term *neopatrimonial*, but this thesis adopts Bellin’s simpler term of *patrimonial*.

## 4 Applying the theory of diffusion to the MENA:

In order to study whether or not one could speak of a diffusion of authoritarian stability in the MENA, a twofold study is conducted.

Firstly, the trade of the region is studied with a focus on the trade relationships within the various IGOs. The aim of this is to show that the trade relationships within the region are sufficient to be considered a source of diffusion in and of themselves. Also, extensive trade partnerships would make the theory of Russett and Oneal of economic interdependence applicable. This would in turn mean that intra-regional trade generates double diffusion, in part through the simple interaction generated by trade and in part by the diffusion created by the development of a regional 'security community'.

Secondly, the effects of IGO-membership on the democratic scores of the states are studied, with the aim of showing that joint membership of an IGO leads to greater similarity in these scores. This will be measured by comparing a combination of Freedom House and Polity IV democracy ratings.

### A note on case-selection:

This thesis uses the World Bank's definition of the MENA-region, with a few minor changes. Israel is deliberately excluded from the study, as the theory of the diffusion of autocratic stability does not apply here. However, this should not affect the outcome of the study in any way. Furthermore, Djibouti is excluded as it is only affected by the theory through membership in the Arab League, and would most likely be more exposed to extra-regional sources of pressure. The statistical data involving Djibouti are negligible in the context, and its exclusion should not compromise the results. The extra-regional members of the Arab League; Comoros, Mauretania and Somalia, are excluded, as is Palestine.

North Yemen is excluded from the study of trade, as this focuses only on the time span 1990-2000. Iran is also excluded, since it does not belong to any of the IGOs included in the study (but is included in the study of trade).

The Arab League is not included in the survey, as its member-list includes nearly the entire region. The region as a whole is studied and presented separately in *Table 2*. The sole difference between the list of all the states of the and the Arab League member list is that the latter does not include Iran. This makes it nearly impossible to tell which properties of its member states that have regional causes and which ones could be ascribed to membership of the IGO, and it is for this reason that it has been excluded.

One necessary limitation of this study is that it does not investigate the role of the media as a potential channel of diffusion. Although lamentable, the author simply does not possess the language skills necessary to undertake any meaningful study of this subject.

The states included in the study are: Algeria, Bahrain, Egypt, Iran (trade study only), Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Tunisia, United Arab Emirates and Yemen (North Yemen also).

## Trade data

The main source of the trade data used is the dataset on expanded trade and GDP produced by Gleditsch. Specifically, it uses the information on trade between dyad sets of states (trade\_udd). Here each dyad is listed only once, and the trade between the two states is divided into four categories; exports from state A to state B (expab), imports to state A from state B (impab), exports from B to A (expba) and imports to B from A (impba). Logically, the imports to A from B should be the same as exports from B to A. The data does not correspond to this reality, however. For any number of reasons, the data of expab and impba rarely agree. To mitigate this the formula  $(\text{expab} + \text{impba})/2 + (\text{expba} + \text{impab})/2$  is used as an indicator of the total flow of trade between the two states of any given dyad. There is also some use of data from the World Trade Organization, which is indicated in each case.

### 4.1 Who belongs where?

Below, the countries of the region are listed alongside the major regional IGOs to which they belong.<sup>12</sup> This thesis is concerned only with regional organizations, and also excludes organizations of a strictly financial nature. The inclusion of OAPEC could be questioned in this light, but it is included in the study because of its prominent status. The Arab Inter-Parliamentary Union is not included, as its member list reads almost exactly as the list of regional members of the Arab League.

The countries included in the study appear in the list in an approximate order of geographical proximity, from west to east.

Morocco:	The Union of the Arab Maghreb, the League of Arab States <sup>13</sup>
Algeria:	The Maghreb Union, the Arab League
Tunisia:	The Maghreb Union, the Arab League, OAPEC (Organization of Arab Petroleum Exporting Countries), (member only until 1986)
Libya:	The Maghreb Union, the Arab League
Egypt:	Arab Cooperation Council (ACC), OAPEC, the Arab League
Jordan:	ACC, the Arab League
Lebanon:	The Arab League
Syria:	OAPEC, the Arab League
Saudi Arabia:	Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), OAPEC, the Arab League
Yemen:	The Arab League
North Yemen:	ACC, the Arab League
Oman:	GCC, the Arab League
Kuwait:	GCC, OAPEC, the Arab League
Bahrain:	GCC, OAPEC, the Arab League
Qatar:	GCC, OAPEC, the Arab League
United Arab Emirates:	GCC, OAPEC, the Arab League
Iraq:	ACC, OAPEC, the Arab League

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<sup>12</sup> IGO membership is based on information from Pevehouse's database.

<sup>13</sup> Henceforth referred to as the Maghreb Union and the Arab League.

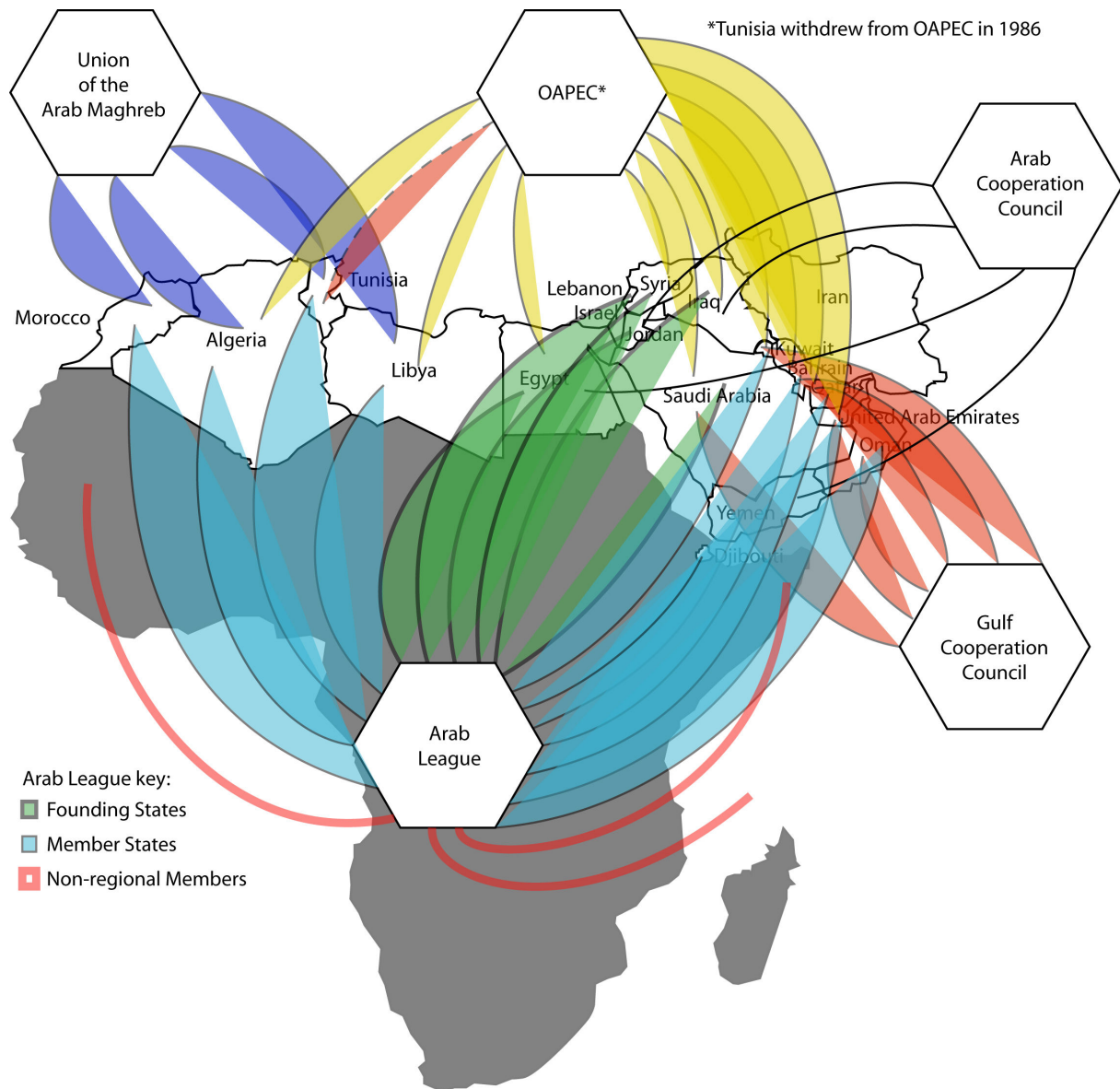


Fig. 1: Map of the Middle East and North Africa, illustrating membership of regional IGOs.

## 4.2 Trade and interdependence

The World Trade Organization estimates the exports of the Middle East<sup>14</sup> for 2005 to 538 billion dollars. The lion part of this trade is made up of export 'Fuels and mining products' which generated 381.6 billion dollars. By far the largest export destination for the region's oil, which is included in the 'Fuels and mining products', is Asia. The export of fuels alone to Asia accounted for 244.6 billion USD in 2005.<sup>15</sup> Japan is the single largest importer

<sup>14</sup> The WTO statistics on trade included in this study refer to the Middle East only.

<sup>15</sup> The statistics from the WTO all refer to 2005, unless otherwise stated.

of fuels from the region ( its import accounted for 76 billion USD in 2005). This would lead to the reasonable assumption that there would be some diffusion of democracy in this trade. There does not seem to be any sign of this, however, which will be commented upon below.

In 2005, 65.7% (353.2 billion USD) of all external trade income ended up in three states; Saudi Arabia (33.7%), United Arab Emirates (21.5%) and Iran (10.5%). Looking only at the figures, the oil trade dwarfs all other trade of the region The trade within the region the same year only constituted a modest 10.1 % (54.2 billion dollars) of the grand total (WTO International Trade Statistics 2006, Table III.60, Table III.61, Table III.63).

With regards to the applicability of the theory of interdependence and its effects on the region, these figures are extremely interesting.. The theory that trade functions as a channel of diffusion would logically lead to the conclusion that the region is subjected to a diffusion of democracy to a far greater extent than to a diffusion of autocracy. It is not quite as straightforward as this, however. Firstly, only a limited number of states are involved in the oil trade, and would experience this diffusion. Secondly, this trade income is relatively free of strings attached. The oil trade is crucial enough to the purchasers to make them willing to overlook the suppliers’ poor democratic record, and do not set conditions of democratization for continued trade.<sup>16</sup> I would argue that dollar for dollar, the intra-regional trade has more strings attached, more pressure, and more impact on the policies of the region.

Trade summary (values in million current-year USD)							
OAPEC trade				GCC trade			
intra-IGO		IGO-MENA		intra-IGO		IGO-MENA	
1990	7142	1990	3698.9	1990	5583	1990	4311.5
2000	10941	2000	7138.2	2000	8690.5	2000	7673
ACC trade				Maghreb Union			
intra-IGO		IGO-MENA		intra-IGO		IGO-MENA	
1990	687.9	1990	2580.3	1990	847.8	1990	1707.3
2000	1090.5	2000	3453.1	2000	1097	2000	2084.1

Table 1: Summary of trade within the Middle East and Northern Africa showing trade flows within and from the region’s IGOs. Based on data from Gleditsch.

Table 1 shows the trade within the IGOs of the MENA region (intra-IGO). It also shows the extent to which the members of any given IGO conduct trade with the region’s non-members (IGO-MENA).

Dividing the intra-regional trade by IGO membership shows that far more trade is being conducted within the organizations than across their ‘borders’. This is perhaps not surprising, as one of the reasons for creating these organizations is to further trade. This suggests that if the theory of diffusion through trade is valid the greater the trade within an IGO, the greater

<sup>16</sup> This revenue the states are free to spend on whatever they choose, including strengthening the internal repressive apparatus. It has already been pointed out, however, that this income does not explain fully the region’s high authoritarian levels.

uniformity of policy one would expect to find among its members. So, one should expect the OAPEC to display greater homogeneity of policy among its member states than any of the other IGOs, as its internal trade makes up over 60% of its total regional trade. This should be followed by the GCC (internal trade  $\approx$  53%), the Maghreb Union (internal trade  $\approx$  35%) and lastly the ACC (internal trade  $\approx$  24%).

If this theory is correct, what could we expect from the region as a whole? Here the data available only allows rough speculation, as there is a discrepancy between the states involved in the WTO selection and the selection of data for this study from Gleditsch’s database. However, a rough estimate may still be illuminating.

Table 2 shows the trade of the region as a whole. The intra-regional trade of the MENA in 2000 generated 21.4 billion USD. According to the WTO, the annual growth of intra-regional trade of the Middle East was 15% for the years 2000-20005 (WTO International Trade Statistics 2006, Table III.60). Applying this growth to the entire MENA would give an intra-regional trade of 24.7 billion USD in 2001. This is only approximately 10% of the trade generated by the Middle East alone, even after the revenue of mining products has been deducted.

According to these figures, one would not expect to find a great deal of intra-regional homogeneity. Yet the MENA is one of the most homogenous regions of the world. Is trade then not a source of diffusion, after all? Here I return to my previous argument, that intra-regional trade far outweighs extra-regional trade in its importance as a source of political pressure. This is partly because extra-regional trade is scattered among a wide variety of trading-partners across the world. The possible diffusion arising from these scattered trade ties would be ‘watered down’. Extra-regional trade partners would have little interest in a state’s policies, as they are not affected by them to any great extent, whereas the regional trading-partners’ interests would be quite strong. Furthermore, regional trade ties also create a common sense of unity and in the long run even a potential security community, if Russett and Oneal are correct. Within this community one could expect to find a greater deal of diffusion than the trade statistics alone would suggest.<sup>17</sup>

Trade summary (values in million current-year USD)			
Trade within MENA		Total trade Middle East 2001*	Total trade 2001 Middle East*
1990	13209.6		excl. Mining products
2000	21440.3	417000	242000

Table 2 Total region trade. Also excluding mining products revenue. Based on data from Gleditsch except \*based on WTO Trade Statistics 2002.

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<sup>17</sup> One should note that two of the major external-income-states, Iran and Israel, are not part of the region’s IGO-networks

### 4.3 IGOs and Diffusion

In short, the more democratic a regional organization (in terms of its member states), the more likely it will be to supply the political will for supporting and protecting democracy *and* the more likely the regional IO will be used by domestic groups to encourage and cement democracy (Pevehouse, 2005, p. 4).

Central to the theory of this thesis is that the diffusion mechanisms usually associated with the spread of democracy can also be used to study the diffusion of autocracy. Adopting the above definition of an IGO's level of democracy, one can conclude that all of the regional IGOs of the Middle East and Northern Africa are autocratic. These organizations should then function as promoters and stabilizers of autocracy rather than democracy.

Following this reasoning one should expect the members of an autocratic IGO to display similar levels of democracy. Granted, in order for the IGO to be classed as autocratic, there needs to be a majority of autocratic members. Were we to pose a less tautological assumption, one could expect the levels of democracy among the members to approach the mean of the organization over time (i.e. the standard deviation from the mean would become lower). This could best be studied in two ways: by studying the development of new members of an organization, or by studying the development of all members before and after creation of the IGO (in the cases where there have been no new memberships since the foundation).

The first of these two studies is unfortunately not applicable to the MENA for two reasons. Firstly, the only IGO included in this study with any significant increase of member states since its creation is the Arab League. Secondly, the documentation of policy-scores of the region is nearly nonexistent before 1972, making it almost impossible to study the development of the newcomers before and after accession.<sup>18</sup>

This unfortunately means that this study will be limited to studying the development of all members of the IGOs before and after its creation, as far as this is possible. The problem of limited available data means that this is only possible in the case of three of the five IGOs included: the Gulf Cooperation Council, (founded 1981), the Arab Cooperation Council (founded 1989) and the Maghreb Union (also founded 1989).

All data regarding the democratic scores of the states are taken from the Quality of Governance dataset (Teorell, Holmberg & Rothstein, 2006). From 1972 and onwards the figures are a combination of the Freedom House and Polity IV scoring-systems (fh\_polity2 in the QoG dataset). This scale ranges from 0-10, 10 being most democratic.

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<sup>18</sup> I have included the Polity IV scores for the various states as far back as they are available for the sake of interest, but one should treat the pre-1972-figures in this study with a great deal of caution. These statistics are included in the appendix spreadsheet "MENA democracy scores by IGO" under the tab "Polity only".



### 4.3.1 The IGOs of the MENA

In order to test whether joint IGO-membership leads to similar levels of democracy a simple test of standard deviation and comparison with means has been performed. The states have been sorted in accordance to IGO membership, along with their scores on the FH/Polity scale. For each year since 1972, a mean value for all members has been calculated, as well as the standard deviation from this mean.

An initial glance at the region as a whole shows a peculiarity which needs commenting before proceeding to the presentation of the values of each IGO separately. *Chart 1* shows the calculated means of the each of the five IGOs of the region. Of particular interest here is that from about 1984, the IGOs display less and less homogeneity with regards to democratic score, peaking in 1990. What is important to note here is that the chart in *Fig. 2* tells a false tale, to a certain extent. The only two of these IGOs in existence in 1972 were the Arab League, created in 1945, and OAPEC, created in 1968. The Gulf Cooperation Council was not created until 1981 and both the Maghreb Union and the Arab Cooperation Council were created in 1989. The chart does perhaps to some extent explain the reason for the creation of some of these IGOs. For instance, the development among the future members of the Maghreb Union toward democracy may have created a sense of unity which manifested itself in the creation of an IGO, or perhaps this organization sprang up to try and safeguard this development against external pressures.<sup>19</sup>

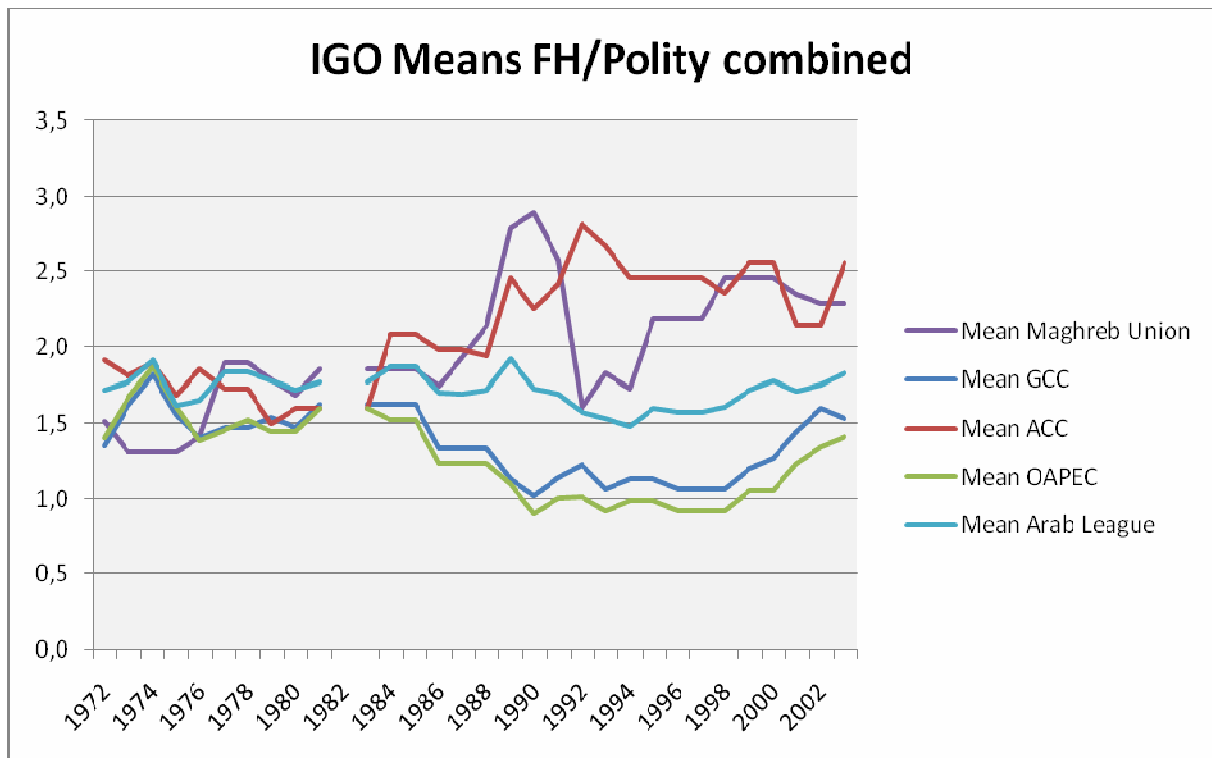


Fig. 2: Mean of democratic scores of the regional IGOs using a combination of the Freedom House and Polity IV scoring systems. Ranges from 0 to 10, 0 being least democratic.

<sup>19</sup> It should be noted that this progress toward democracy only stands out in contrast to the extreme stability of the rest of the region; none of the states involved have ever made it to the halfway mark on the FH/Polity-scale. The only two states of the region to have crossed this line since 1972 are Lebanon and Jordan.

Whatever the reason for the creation of these organizations, one could expect to find this development of increased heterogeneity reflected in a comparison of all the states of the region. *Fig. 3* surprisingly shows that there has been little change in the scope of democratic scores within the region as a whole. The mean is quite steady at around 1.8 points, even for the period 1984-1990.

Bearing this in mind, one must remember that a mean could reflect great diversity as well as great unity. No conclusions about the levels of democracy within the IGOs could be drawn accurately with only the information provided thus far. For this it is necessary to study the deviations from the mean within the organizations.

*Fig 4-7* show the scores of the IGOs member states, along with the means for the IGO as a unit. The Arab League is not presented here. As its member list bears such resemblance to that of the entire region its inclusion would be superfluous.

## Summary of the democracy scores within the region's IGOs and of the region as a whole.

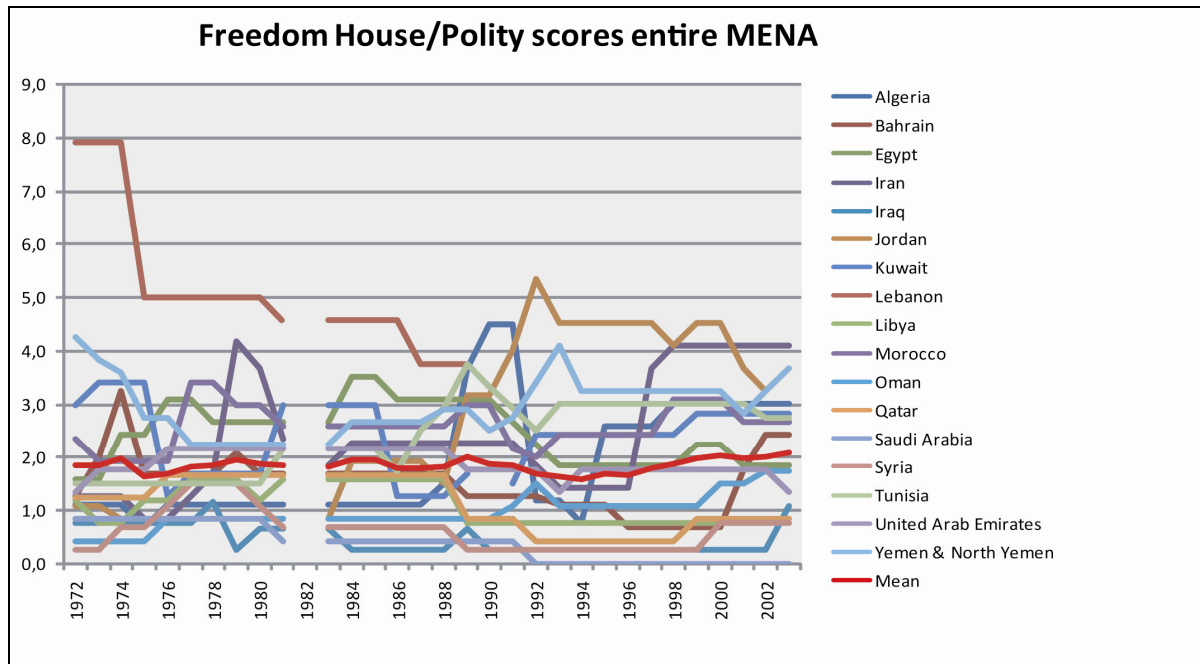


Fig. 3: Overview of the democratic scores of the different states of the MENA.

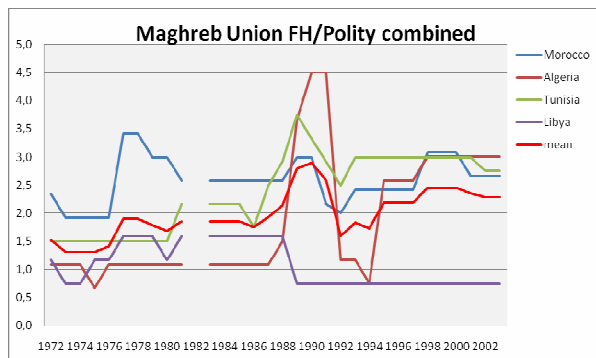


Fig. 4: Maghreb Union democracy scores

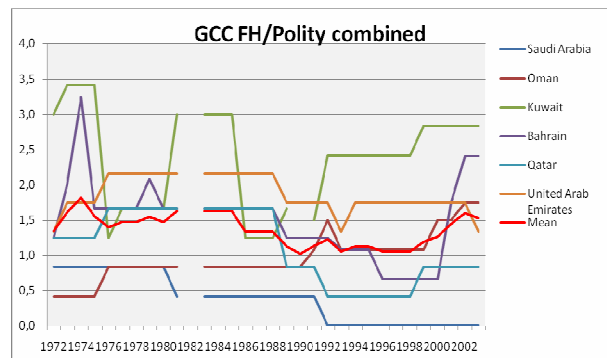


Fig. 5: GCC democracy scores

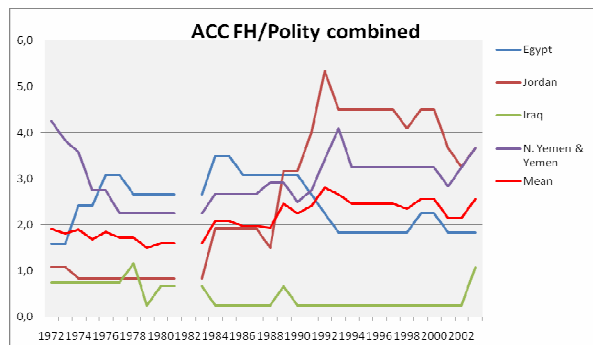


Fig. 6: ACC democracy scores

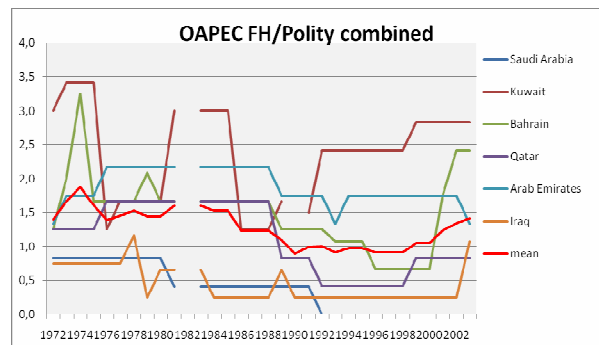


Fig. 7: OAPEC democracy scores

The organization displaying by far the widest spread of democracy scores is the Arab Cooperation Council. This had been predicted by the survey of the intra-organizational trade, but it seems more probable that the low levels of trade simply reflect the fact that the IGO is unique in that its members are quite scattered geographically. The mean score of the ACC is a case of meeting in the middle, not reflecting any of its individual members' scores separately.

The Maghreb Union, GCC and OAPEC seem to display a greater homogeneity, at least after a first glance at the charts presented above. A comparison of standard deviations from the mean is necessary in order to comment on this with more accuracy.

The GCC and OAPEC display nearly identical statistical results. In both cases, the average annual standard deviation from the mean by all member states is 0.8 points. The average of the annual means since the creation of the organization us is also the same: 1.3 points on the FH/Polity scale. This similarity is not surprising, as the members of the two organizations are largely the same states.

Year	Saudi Arabia	Oman	Kuwait	Bahrain	Qatar	UAE	Mean	Std. Deviation	
1972	0.8	0.4	3.0	1.3	1.3	1.3	1.3	0.8	
1973	0.8	0.4	3.4	2.0	1.3	1.8	1.6	1.0	
1974	0.8	0.4	3.4	3.3	1.3	1.8	1.8	1.1	
1975	0.8	0.4	3.4	1.7	1.3	1.8	1.6	1.0	
1976	0.8	0.8	1.3	1.7	1.7	2.2	1.4	0.5	
1977	0.8	0.8	1.7	1.7	1.7	2.2	1.5	0.5	
1978	0.8	0.8	1.7	1.7	1.7	2.2	1.5	0.5	
1979	0.8	0.8	1.7	2.1	1.7	2.2	1.5	0.5	
1980	0.8	0.8	1.7	1.7	1.7	2.2	1.5	0.5	
<b>1981</b>	<b>0.4</b>	<b>0.8</b>	<b>3.0</b>	<b>1.7</b>	<b>1.7</b>	<b>2.2</b>	<b>1.6</b>	<b>0.8</b>	
1982									
1983	0.4	0.8	3.0	1.7	1.7	2.2	1.6	0.8	
1984	0.4	0.8	3.0	1.7	1.7	2.2	1.6	0.8	
1985	0.4	0.8	3.0	1.7	1.7	2.2	1.6	0.8	
1986	0.4	0.8	1.3	1.7	1.7	2.2	1.3	0.6	
1987	0.4	0.8	1.3	1.7	1.7	2.2	1.3	0.6	
1988	0.4	0.8	1.3	1.7	1.7	2.2	1.3	0.6	
1989	0.4	0.8	1.7	1.3	0.8	1.8	1.1	0.5	
1990	0.4	0.8		1.3	0.8	1.8	1.0	0.5	
1991	0.4	1.1	1.5	1.3	0.8	1.8	1.1	0.4	
1992	0.0	1.5	2.4	1.3	0.4	1.8	1.2	0.8	
1993	0.0	1.1	2.4	1.1	0.4	1.3	1.1	0.8	
1994	0.0	1.1	2.4	1.1	0.4	1.8	1.1	0.8	
1995	0.0	1.1	2.4	1.1	0.4	1.8	1.1	0.8	
1996	0.0	1.1	2.4	0.7	0.4	1.8	1.1	0.8	
1997	0.0	1.1	2.4	0.7	0.4	1.8	1.1	0.8	
1998	0.0	1.1	2.4	0.7	0.4	1.8	1.1	0.8	
1999	0.0	1.1	2.8	0.7	0.8	1.8	1.2	0.9	
2000	0.0	1.5	2.8	0.7	0.8	1.8	1.3	0.9	
2001	0.0	1.5	2.8	1.8	0.8	1.8	1.4	0.9	
2002	0.0	1.8	2.8	2.4	0.8	1.8	1.6	0.9	
2003	0.0	1.8	2.8	2.4	0.8	1.3	1.5	0.9	
			Average of means before IGO					1.5	0.7
			Average of means after IGO					1.3	0.8

Table 3: Democracy scores of the member states of the GCC

Table 3 shows that democracy scores of the member states of the Gulf Cooperation Council have become slightly more diverse since the creation of the IGO. The average standard deviation from the mean of the states scores has gone from 0.7 before 1981, and 0.8 for the period 1981-2003. The fact that the average mean has gone down 0.2 from 1.5 to 1.3 while the standard deviation only decreased by 0.1 means that the states have become ever so slightly more autocratic as a whole since the creation of the GCC.

Year	Morocco	Algeria	Tunisia	Libya	mean	Std. Deviation	
1972	2.3	1.1	1.5	1.2	1.5	0.5	
1973	1.9	1.1	1.5	0.8	1.3	0.4	
1974	1.9	1.1	1.5	0.8	1.3	0.4	
1975	1.9	0.7	1.5	1.2	1.3	0.5	
1976	1.9	1.1	1.5	1.2	1.4	0.3	
1977	3.4	1.1	1.5	1.6	1.9	0.9	
1978	3.4	1.1	1.5	1.6	1.9	0.9	
1979	3.0	1.1	1.5	1.6	1.8	0.7	
1980	3.0	1.1	1.5	1.2	1.7	0.8	
1981	2.6	1.1	2.2	1.6	1.9	0.6	
1982							
1983	2.6	1.1	2.2	1.6	1.9	0.6	
1984	2.6	1.1	2.2	1.6	1.9	0.6	
1985	2.6	1.1	2.2	1.6	1.9	0.6	
1986	2.6	1.1	1.8	1.6	1.7	0.5	
1987	2.6	1.1	2.5	1.6	1.9	0.6	
1988	2.6	1.5	2.9	1.6	2.1	0.6	
<b>1989</b>	<b>3.0</b>	<b>3.7</b>	<b>3.8</b>	<b>0.8</b>	<b>2.8</b>	<b>1.2</b>	<b>Maghreb Union created</b>
1990	3.0	4.5	3.3	0.8	2.9	1.4	
1991	2.2	4.5	2.9	0.8	2.6	1.4	
1992	2.0	1.2	2.5	0.8	1.6	0.7	
1993	2.4	1.2	3.0	0.8	1.8	0.9	
1994	2.4	0.8	3.0	0.8	1.7	1.0	
1995	2.4	2.6	3.0	0.8	2.2	0.9	
1996	2.4	2.6	3.0	0.8	2.2	0.9	
1997	2.4	2.6	3.0	0.8	2.2	0.9	
1998	3.1	3.0	3.0	0.8	2.5	1.0	
1999	3.1	3.0	3.0	0.8	2.5	1.0	
2000	3.1	3.0	3.0	0.8	2.5	1.0	
2001	2.7	3.0	3.0	0.8	2.4	0.9	
2002	2.7	3.0	2.8	0.8	2.3	0.9	
2003	2.7	3.0	2.8	0.8	2.3	0.9	
		Average of means before IGO			1.7	0.6	
		Average of means after IGO			2.3	1.0	

Table 4: Democracy scores of the member states of the Maghreb Union

Table 4 shows that the Maghreb Union displays a somewhat lower homogeneity, although this is largely because of Libya’s lower score. The average standard deviation for

this organization’s members is still no more than 1.0 points, however. And although Libya has settled itself securely at the low score of 0.8 on the scale, the Maghreb Union displays a far higher average score than the GCC and OAPEC: at 2.3 points it outstrips the means of these IGOs by a full 1.0.

It seems that Libya’s low score has not affected that of the other states to any significant extent, or vice versa for that matter. The trio Morocco – Tunisia – Algeria seem to be strong enough to withstand the supposed authoritarian influences of Libya. Worth noting is that Libya’s neighbour to the east, Egypt, has not been so fortunate.

Table 5 shows the development of Egypt’s democracy scores. Four years following the plummeting of Libya’s democracy rating, Egypt displays a significant drop as well. Whether or not this is caused by diffusion from its much more authoritarian neighbour is of course not certain, but if this were the case it would suggest that neighbour emulation *can* be a more powerful mode of diffusion than IGO membership. The fact that the members of the other IGOs are to a high extent geographically proximate makes this difficult to ascertain. It is also difficult to draw a line between the process of neighbour emulation and the process of mimicking a reference state. What speaks heavily in favour of this approach to the region is that the states of the MENA fill the criteria of this approach quite accurately. This approach suggests that certain states “serve as a point of comparison for political actors in another state” because of “geographic proximity, cultural similarity, shared history, or some combination of the three” (Uhlin, 1995, p. 41) These sources would not necessarily need to be geographically proximate, making it extremely difficult to pinpoint the source, although it would be unlikely to yield such geographical similarities of policy.

Looking at the predictions from the observations of trade flows as to which IGOs would display more uniformity of scores, the list read:

- 1) OAPEC
- 2) GCC
- 3) Maghreb Union
- 4) ACC

A comparison of average standard deviations from the IGO means confirms this prediction. The list reads as following:

- 1) OAPEC: 0.8 points
- 2) GCC: 0.8 points
- 3) Maghreb Union: 1.0 points
- 4) ACC: 1.4 points

The average of the mean score for the MENA as a whole is 1.8 points, and the average standard deviation is 1.2. This means that the IGOs do tend to promote similarity of policy. The exception is of course the ACC, which actually displays a lower homogeneity than the region as a whole.

From the results presented here the role of IGOs in the diffusion of authoritarian stability is unclear. It is difficult to say whether the similarity of democracy scores within the IGOs is

- a) a prerequisite for its creation,
- b) created by secondary properties of joint IGO-membership, specifically increased trade,
- c) that these IGOs tend to develop regionally and simply reflect neighbour emulation
- d) there is actually an expanded diffusion of policies within these IGOs, or

Year	Egypt
1972	1.6
1973	1.6
1974	2.4
1975	2.4
1976	3.1
1977	3.1
1978	2.7
1979	2.7
1980	2.7
1981	2.7
1982	
1983	2.7
1984	3.5
1985	3.5
1986	3.1
1987	3.1
1988	3.1
1989	3.1
1990	3.1
1991	2.7
1992	2.3
1993	1.8
1994	1.8
1995	1.8
1996	1.8
1997	1.8
1998	1.8
1999	2.3
2000	2.3
2001	1.8
2002	1.8
2003	1.8

Table 5: Egypt Democracy scores

e) a combination of the above.

The study conducted in this thesis does not provide a definite answer as to which is the strongest of the above suggestions. In any case, it does seem clear that at the very least regional IGO membership may be seen as a signal of diffusion, even if the case were that the organization itself did not function as a channel.

## 5 Conclusion

This thesis set out to answer two questions:

- (i) Could one speak of a diffusion of stability, as opposed to diffusion triggered by change?
- (ii) If the diffusion of stability is theoretically sound, could it partly account for the exceptional stability of the regimes in the Middle East and Northern Africa?

With regard to question (i) the theoretical discussion provides a sufficiently strong foundation for this claim. It suggests that the main sources of this diffusion, rather than the sudden change of policy of one state is not seen as a trigger, could instead be found in the continuous interactions with its neighbouring states even when these are quite stable.

Question (ii) is also answered in the affirmative. The study of the Middle East and Northern Africa does suggest that there are processes of diffusion at work, although the channel(s) of this diffusion is/are not definitively identified. The study does suggest, however, that regional IGOs may function as a channel, and even if they do not, membership in such organizations can at the very least be seen as an indicator of diffusion through some other channel. The other channels suggested in the study of the MENA are trade and neighbour emulation, both of which are strongly supported by the data presented. The study does not provide any conclusive evidence to either support or deny the theory of diffusion by mimicking the behaviour of a reference state, mainly because this is difficult to ascertain without studying the behaviour of the actors involved. It does suggest that this is a less likely process of diffusion, however, as it is unlikely that it would yield such regionally concentrated similarities of democracy scores.

This study does not wish to suggest that the suggested channels of diffusion of trade, neighbour emulation, reference-states and IGO-membership are in any way mutually exclusive, merely that they are so intertwined that it becomes difficult to ascertain which process has the greater impact.



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