



# Middle East Democracy





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*“Sixty Years of Western nations excusing and accommodating the lack of freedom in the Middle East did nothing to make us safe – because in the long run, stability cannot be purchased at the expense of liberty...”*

*As long as the Middle East remains a place where freedom does not flourish, it will remain a place of stagnation, resentment, and violence ready for export. And with the spread of weapons that can bring catastrophic harm to our country...it would be reckless to accept the status quo.”*

~ George W. Bush

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## Course Overview

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- Prospects of Political Reform in the Middle East
- The Dynamics of Reform
- Authoritarianism and the “Democracy Deficit”
- Political Islam and the Challenge of Democracy
- Democratization Barriers
- Country Case Studies
- Civil Society, the Press and Human Rights
- Policy Choices: American Engagement, the Iraqi Experience and the Outlook for Reform
- The Consequences of Democratic Reform



# The Many Meanings of “Democracy”

## ❖ Liberal Democracy

- ❑ Representative democracy (popular sovereignty – will of people).
- ❑ Decision-making power of elected representatives (rule of law).
- ❑ Moderated by a constitution emphasizing protection of freedoms.
- ❑ Places constraints on leaders and extent to which will of the majority can be exercised against rights of minorities (civil liberties).
- ❑ Characterized by pluralism and tolerance.

Freedoms protected by the constitutions of liberal democracies include:

- ✓ Rights to Due Process and Equality Before the Law
  - ✓ Freedom of Speech, Assembly and Religion
  - ✓ Privacy
  - ✓ Property Rights
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## ❖ Illiberal Democracy

- ❑ In *The Future of Freedom*, Fareed Zakaria coined the term “illiberal democracy” to refer to “regimes...that mix elections and authoritarianism.”
  - ❑ Zakaria argues that they are the result of countries that try to democratize without having a sturdy economy structured around the free-market and sound political institutions with checks and balances.
  - ❑ As a result, leaders and lawmakers are elected by the people but tend to be corrupt and often do not respect the law. This has the effect of cutting off the people from real power.
  - ❑ Therefore, Zakaria argues whether less democracy and more rule of law would better serve our world.
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## ❖ Liberalized Autocracy

- ❑ Daniel Brumberg coined the phrase “liberalized autocracy” to describe a system that allows its people a degree of political freedom in order to keep the lid on potentially explosive situations.
  - ❑ The “freedom” acts as a safety valve, giving the opposition sufficient opportunity for expression (sense of participation) – but not enough so that it can threaten the regime.
  - ❑ This ensures some semblance of political openness, but persistence of autocracy.
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## Advantages of Democracy

- In *On Democracy*, Robert Dahl summarizes the advantages of democracy as a system of government:
  - ✓ Helps prevent rule by cruel and vicious autocrats
  - ✓ Guarantees citizens a set of fundamental rights
  - ✓ Ensures a broader range of personal freedoms
  - ✓ Helps people protect their own fundamental interests
  - ✓ Maximizes opportunity for self-determination
  - ✓ Maximizes opportunity for exercise of moral responsibility
  - ✓ Encourages human development
  - ✓ Fosters high degree of political equality
  - ✓ Promotes peace and generates prosperity

## Political Liberalization vs. Political Democratization

- **Political Liberalization:** The expansion of public space through the recognition and protection of civil and political liberties.
  - **Political Democratization:** The expansion of political participation that provides citizens with a degree of real and meaningful collective control over public policy.
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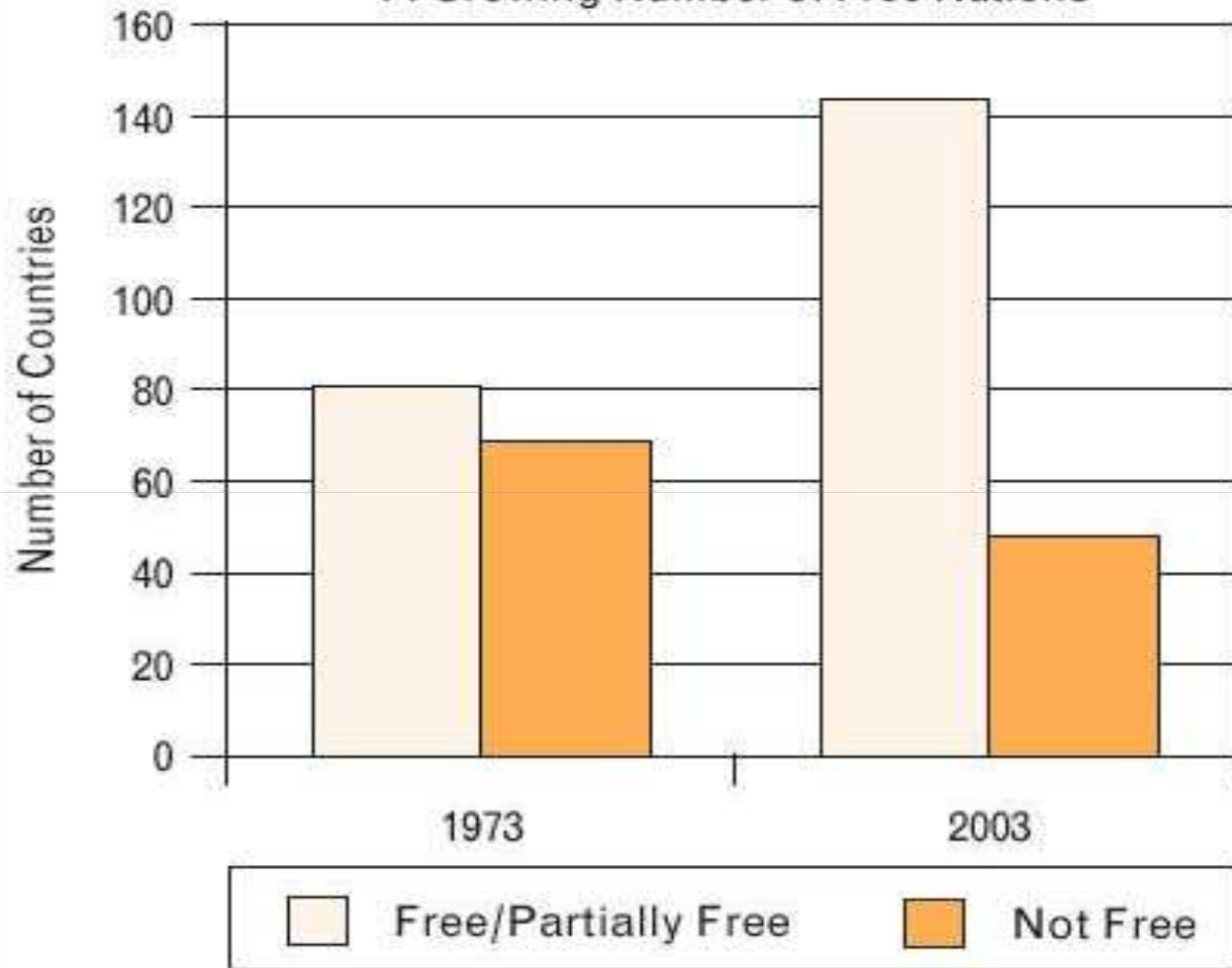


## The Global Trend Towards Democratization

- The “Third Wave of Democratization”, a term coined by Samuel P. Huntington, describes the global trend that has seen more than 60 countries experience democratic transitions since 1974.
- From Eastern Europe to Latin America and parts of Africa, many nations have moved towards democratic forms of government.
- The Middle East and Arab world has remained closed to the wave of democratization that has touched much of the world.

## The Trend Toward Freedom (1973–2003)

A Growing Number of Free Nations



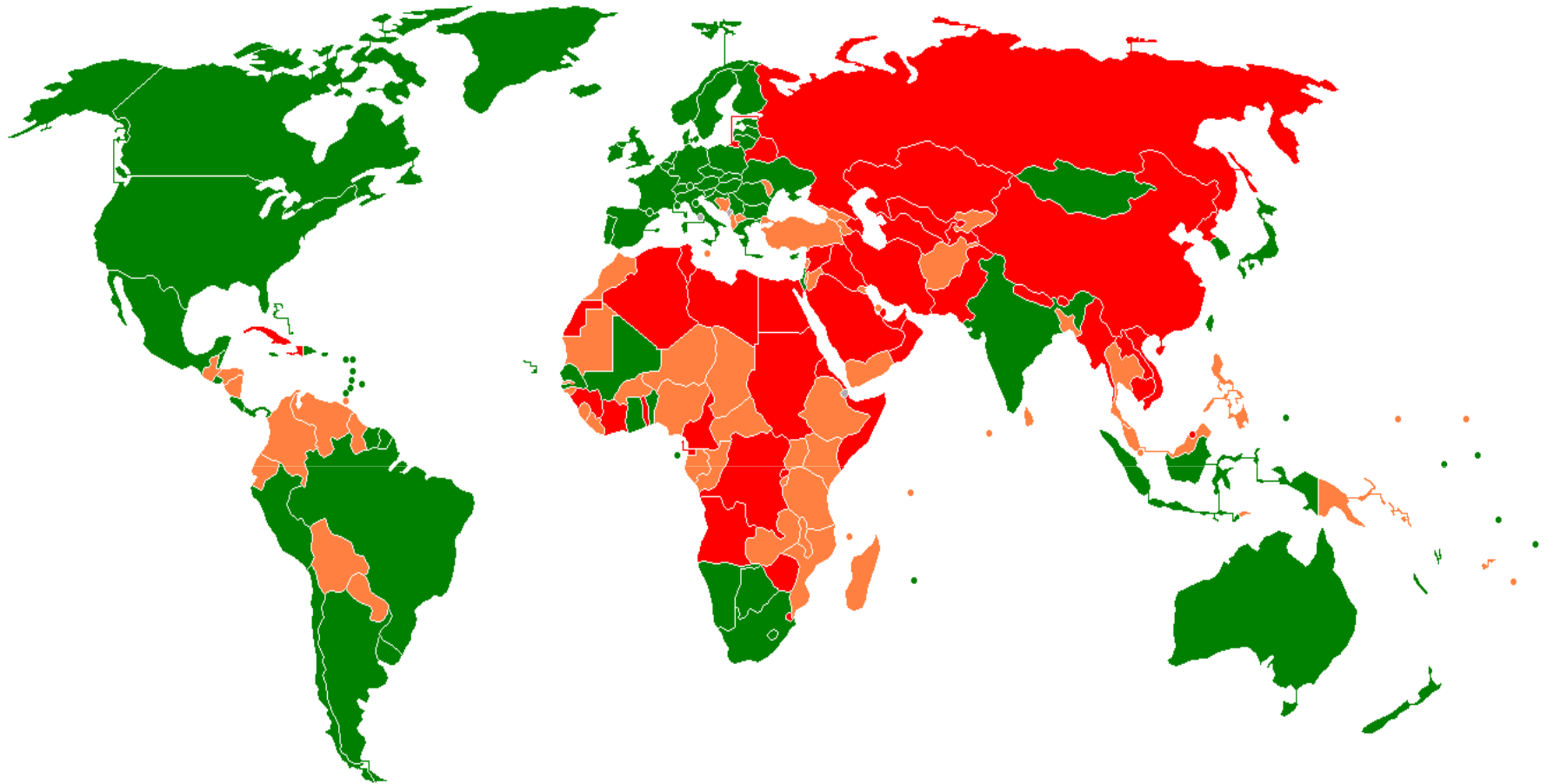
Source: Freedom House 2003:2.

# Freedom in the World



- Freedom House annual country rankings from 1 to 7 along two scales: political rights and civil liberties.
- Scale: 1 being *most free* and 7 *most repressive*.
- Of the 19 states of the Middle East and North Africa, there are only two democracies, Israel and Turkey (some may argue Lebanon and Iran, although excluded from Freedom House as democratic).
- The region has by far the lowest average freedom score (5.5) – compared with Asia (4.4), Africa (4.3), Latin America (2.5)

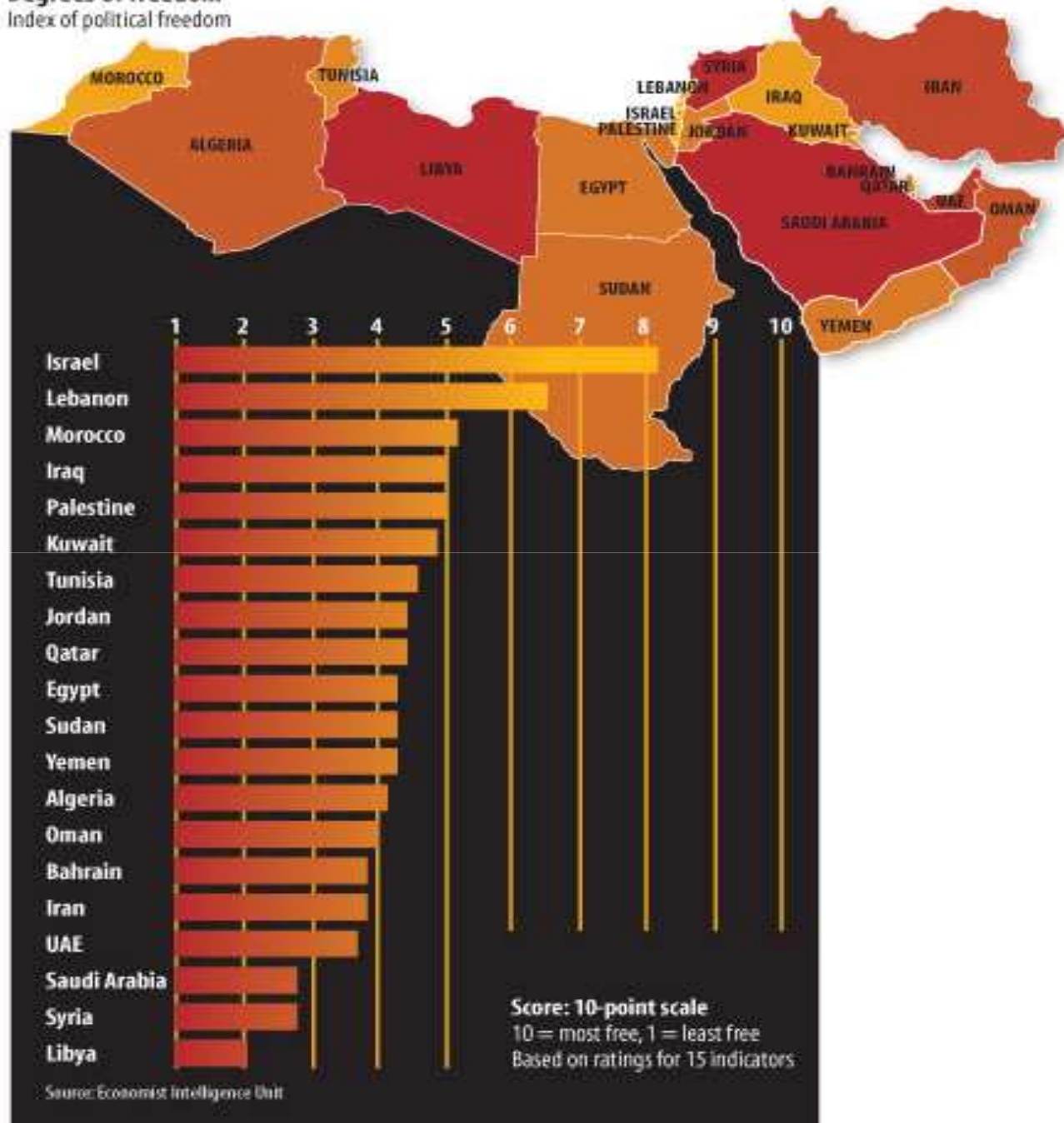
## Freedom in the World (2006)



According to Freedom House's 2006 survey, the Middle East has registered no significant progress towards democracy in the past 30 years.

**FREE ~ PARTLY FREE ~ NOT FREE**

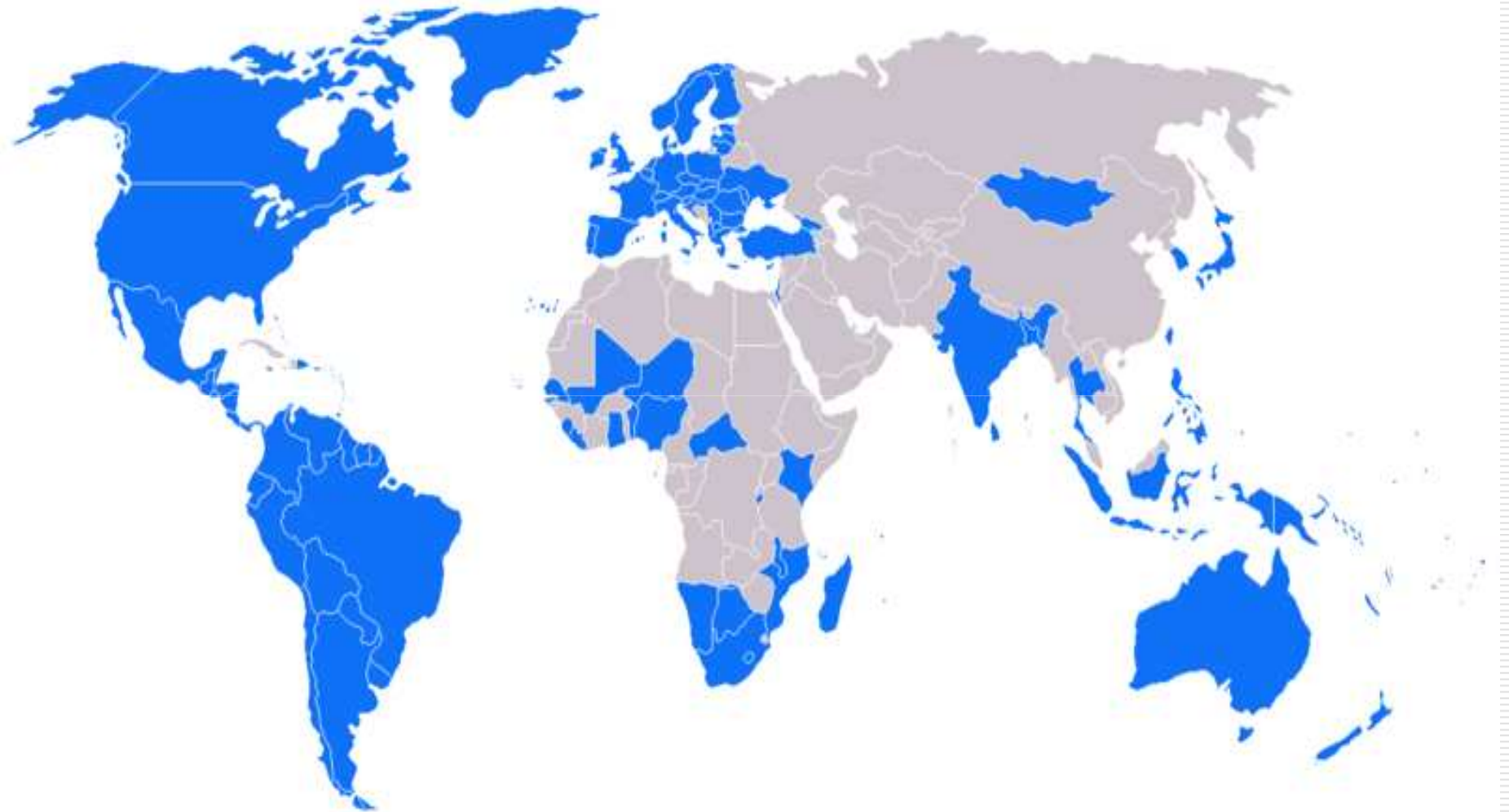
## Degrees of freedom Index of political freedom



## INDEX OF POLITICAL FREEDOM

Israel:	8.20
Lebanon:	6.55
Morocco:	5.20
Iraq:	5.05
Palestine:	5.05
Kuwait:	4.90
Tunisia:	4.60
Jordan:	4.45
Qatar:	4.45
Egypt:	4.30
Sudan:	4.30
Yemen:	4.30
Algeria:	4.15
Oman:	4.00
Bahrain:	3.85
Iran:	3.85
UAE:	3.70
Saudi Arabia:	2.80
Syria:	2.80
Libya:	2.05

## Map of Electoral Democracies (2006)



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Source: Freedom House



# Electoral Democracy Requirements

- A competitive multi-party political system.
  - Universal adult suffrage for all citizens (sanctions/restrictions for criminal offenses may be legitimate).
  - Regularly contested elections conducted in conditions of ballot secrecy, reasonable ballot security, and in the absence of massive voter fraud that yields results unrepresentative of the public will.
  - Significant public access of major political parties to the electorate through the media and through generally open political campaigning.
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- ❖ A country cannot be listed as an electoral democracy if it reflects the ongoing and overwhelming dominance of a single party or movement over numerous elections.
  - ❖ A country cannot be an electoral democracy if significant authority for national decisions resides in the hands of an unelected power (i.e. monarch).

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*“In the Arab world, political liberalization has proven to be no more than a tactic of political survival and one element in a type of regime that combines guided pluralism, controlled elections, and selective repression.”*

~ Larry Diamond

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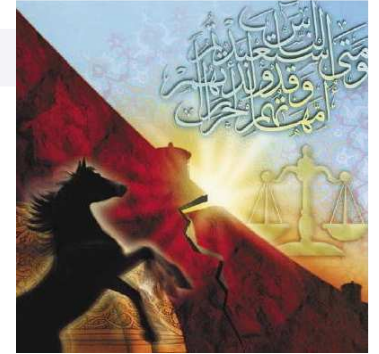
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## Political Reform in the Middle East

- Even if political liberalization does not lead to democracy, political reform is intrinsically important and leads to:
    - ✓ Political parties (more political participation, more freedom)
    - ✓ Accountability and rule of law measures (anti-corruption)
    - ✓ Independent judiciaries (independent rulings, justice)
    - ✓ Freedom in education (universities, classrooms)
    - ✓ Economic reform (weak governance, weak growth)
    - ✓ Human rights work (release of political prisoners)
    - ✓ Civil society freedoms (allowing NGO's to operate)
    - ✓ Press freedoms
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# Arab Reform Initiatives



- The Arab League, individual governments, and NGO's all have issued declarations on the need for reform.
- The U.N. Arab Human Development Report (2002) identifies the Arab world's ills as rooted in "deficits of freedom, women's empowerment, and knowledge."
- The Doha Declaration calls on Arab governments to cease their exploitation of the Iraq and Palestine questions to postpone political reform.
- The Sana'a Declaration emphasizes the need to strengthen partnerships between government and civil society.
- The Alexandria Charter is noted for its broad scope and region-wide representation.

# The Legitimacy Deficit and Authoritarian Impulse

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- Michael Hudson's observation made in *Arab Politics: The Search for Legitimacy* thirty years ago is fully applicable and reflects the current political climate in the Middle East:

“The central problem of government in the Arab world today is political legitimacy. The shortage of this indispensable political resource largely accounts for the volatile nature of Arab politics and the autocratic...character of all present government”

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## Forms of Legitimacy

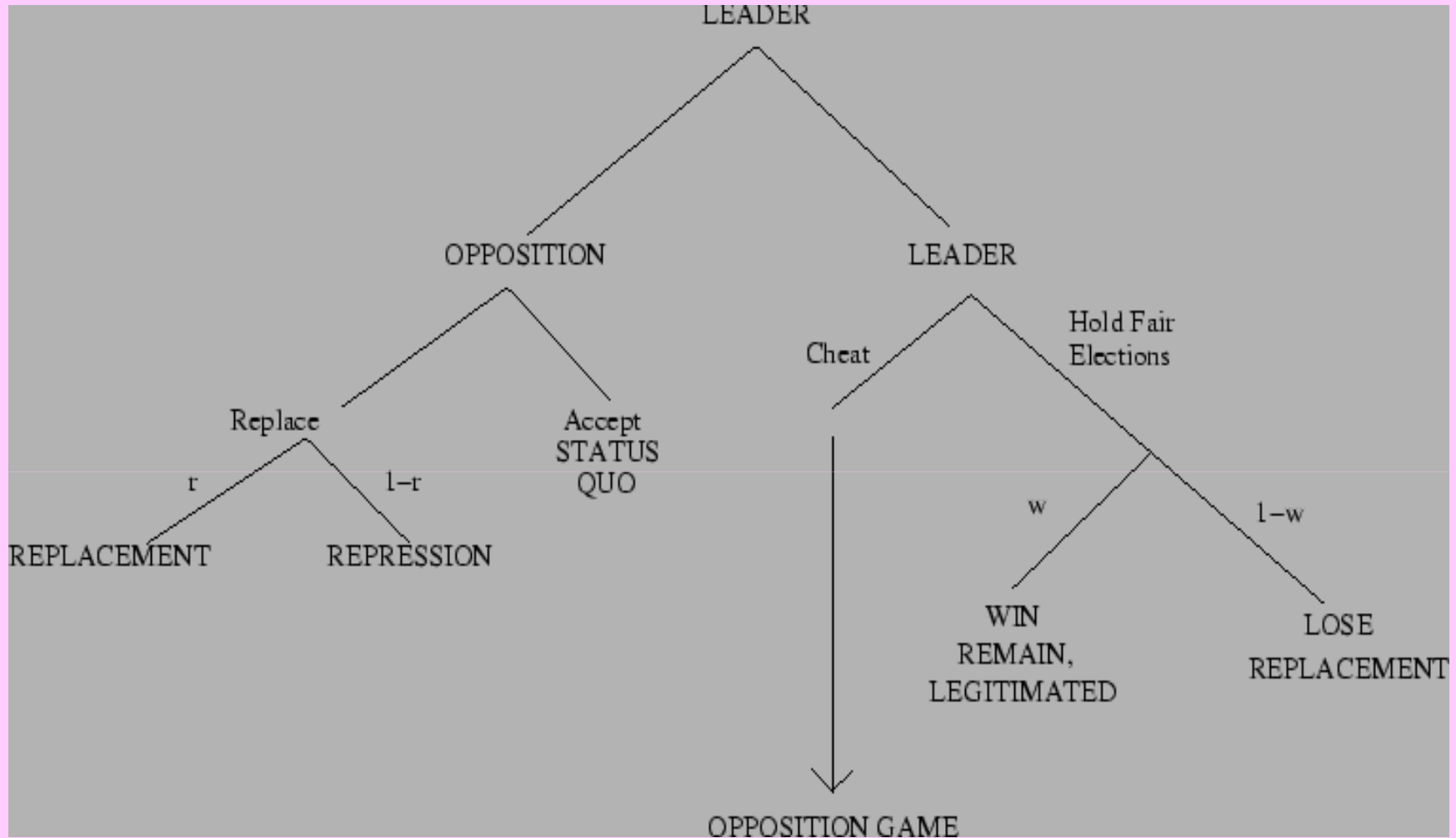
- Legitimacy is a basic condition for rule and refers to a political order's acceptance as a legal entity. Without at least a minimal amount of legitimacy, a government will deadlock or collapse.
  - Max Weber argued that there are three forms of legitimacy that all human societies are based on:
    - ✓ Charismatic Authority (tribal chieftan)
    - ✓ Traditional Authority (a monarchy)
    - ✓ Rational / Legal Authority (representative democracy)
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## Game Theory, Liberalization and Democratic Transitions

- Game theory - players choose different actions attempt to maximize their returns (provides formal modeling approach to social situations)
  
- A liberalization game theory model likely considers the following:
  - Economic and social background factors
  - Focus on psychological attitudes / cultural attributes (civil society)
  - Focus on prevailing social and political structure (conflict vs. reconciliation, authority structures, institutions)
  
- Splits develop between liberalizers and hardliners. Liberalization results from interaction between liberalizers in regime and autonomous elements in civil society. Openings in regime and society feed on each other and lead to either a visible split in regime or popular mobilization.
  
- Liberalization from regime starts as a controlled experiment. However, Liberalized autocracy is inherently unstable – e.g. most Middle Eastern states fall within this category.

# The Liberalization Game



- $r$  is the probability **Liberalizers** attach to successful repression
- STATUS QUO is acceptance of Status Quo Dictatorship

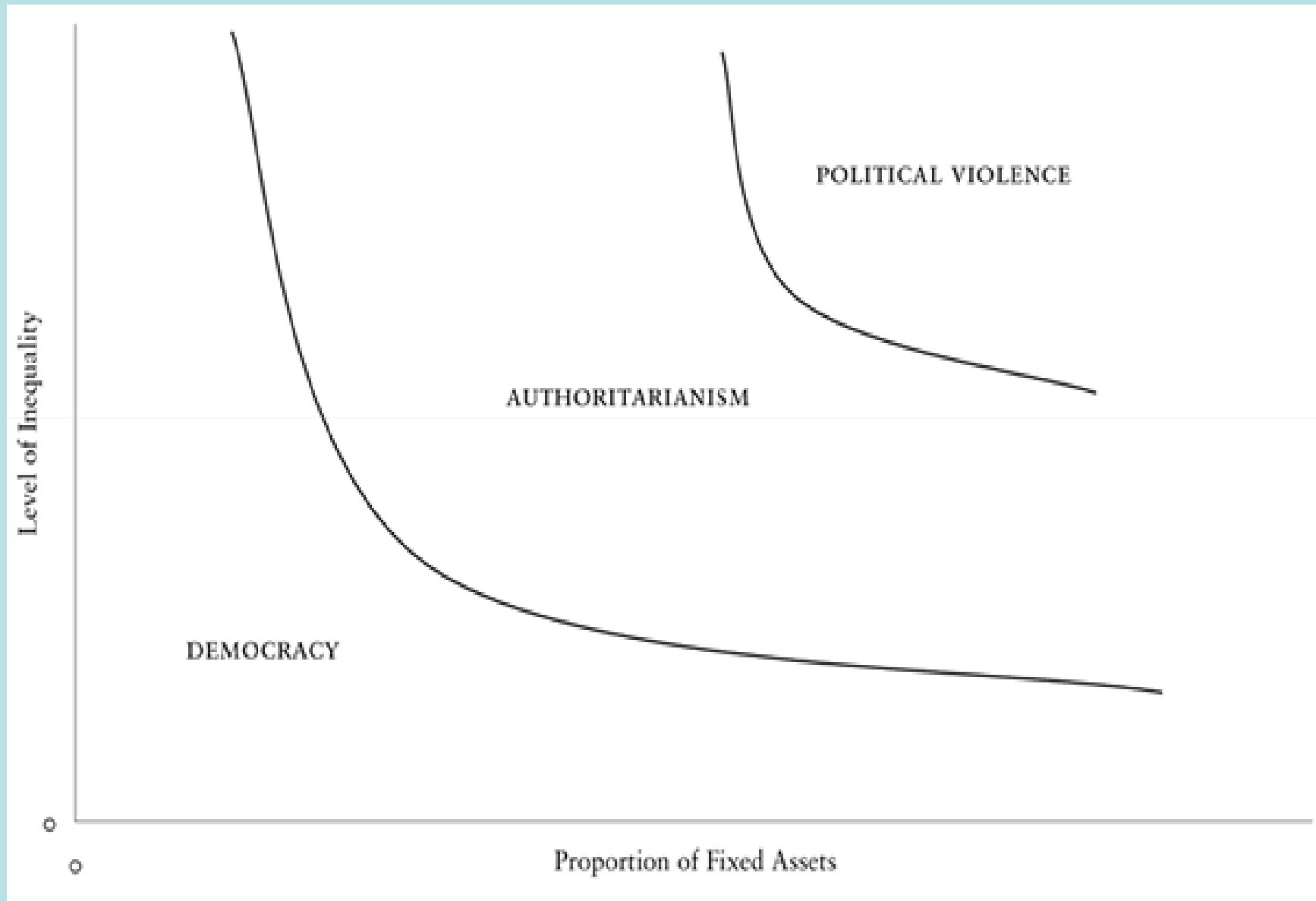


## Resources and State Control

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- The struggle to control the state is especially virulent when resources are scarce, allocations biased, and divergent groups compete for a shrinking pie.
  - The political game becomes zero-sum – and the absence of a culture of tolerance highlights dangers of unrestrained competition.
  - Powerful national security states, dominated by minority groups (Alawites, Tikritis) or royal families, are intent on retaining power. There is no willingness to accept the risks inherent in playing by the rules of the democratic process.
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# Distribution of Wealth and Types of Political Regimes

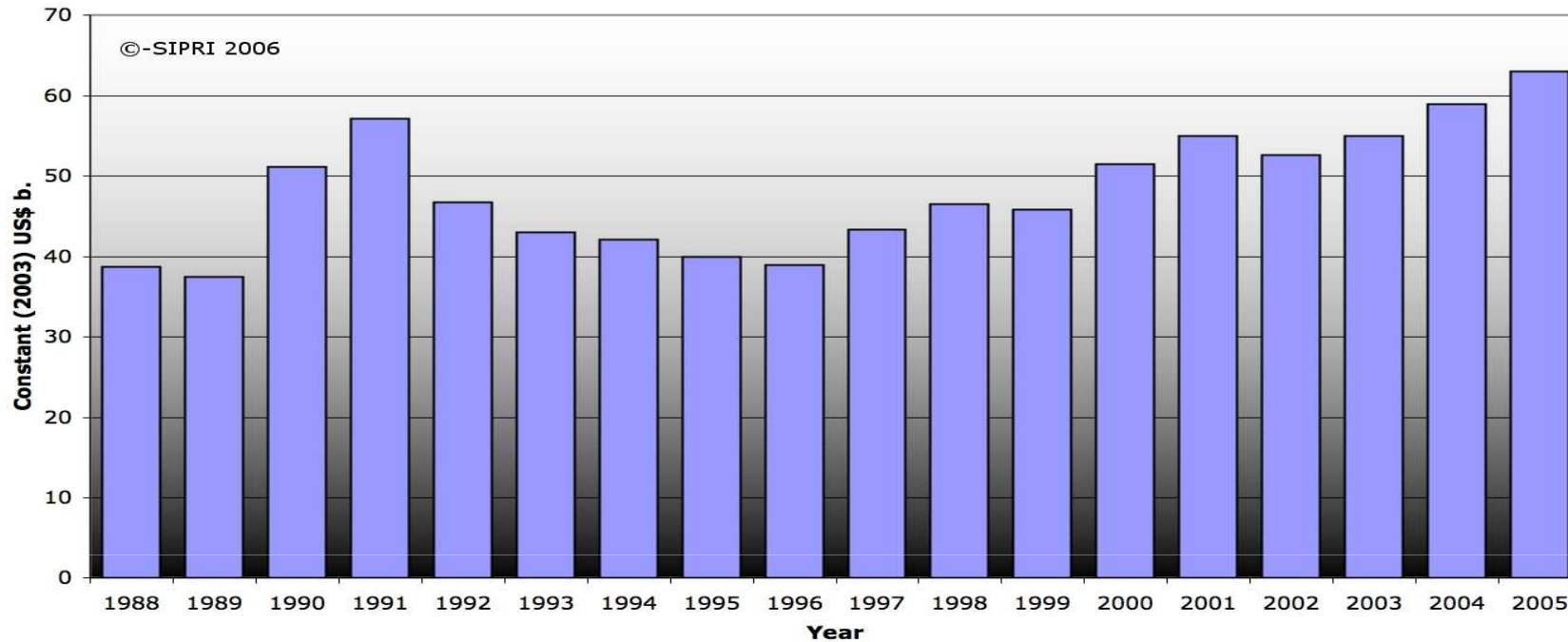




## Reasons for Lack of Democratization

- ❖ Expansion of State Power
- ❖ Lack of the Development of Bourgeois / Private Sector
- ❖ Regional Conflict and Ethnic-Religious Divisions
- ❖ Development of Military Infrastructure
- ❖ Lack of Civil Society Institutions
- ❖ The Influence of External Powers
- ❖ The Demographic Explosion
- ❖ The “Curse of Oil”
- ❖ Political Culture
- ❖ The Role of Islam
- ❖ The Impact of 9-11

## Military expenditure in Middle East, 1988 - 2005



The invasion of Iraq seems to be having “a reverse effect in that some Middle Eastern states may see an increase in arsenals as the only way to prevent a forced regime change.”

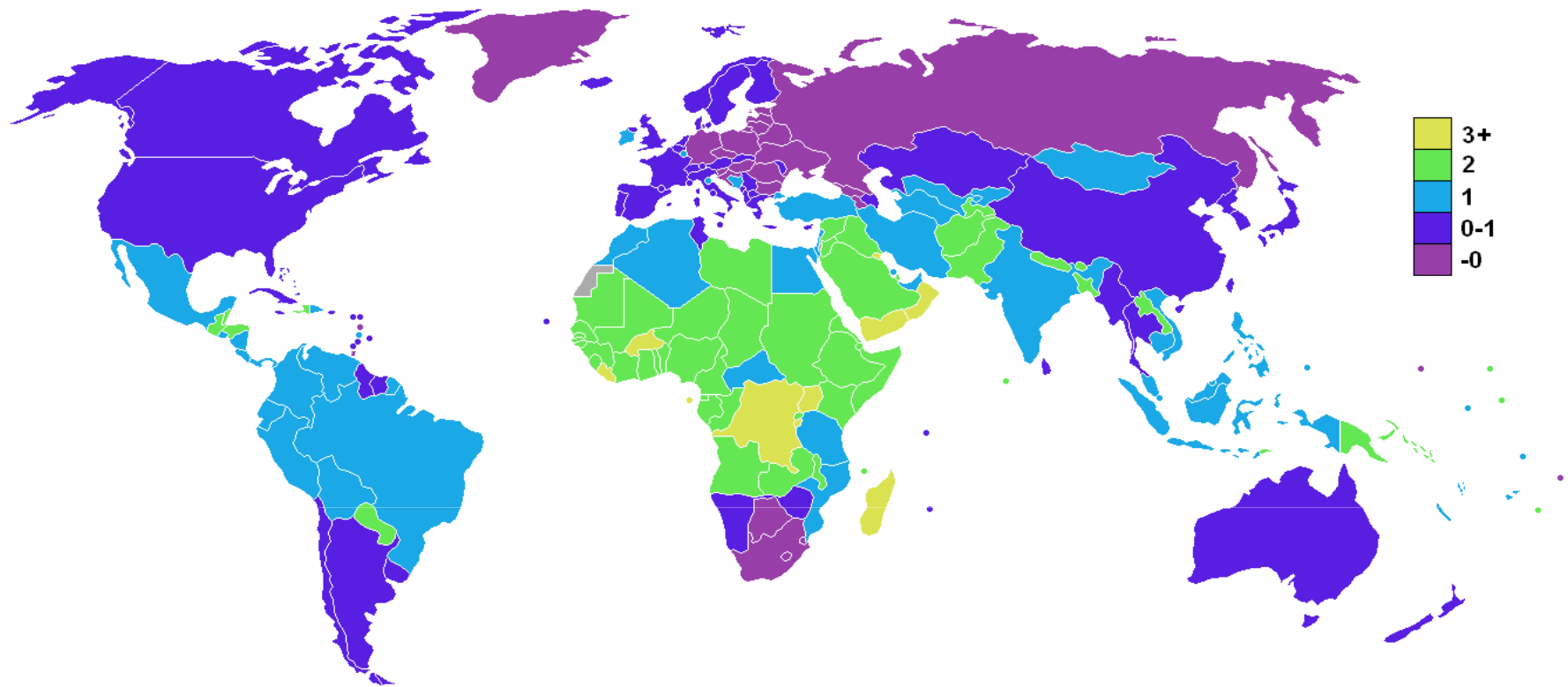
Source: SIPRI (Stockholm International Peace Research Institute).



## ❖ Arms Sales: The Impact

- Middle East Region is the greatest importer of arms in the world (both in total \$ and % of GDP).
  - Middle East employs the greatest % of domestic population in the military.
  - What do arms sales accomplish? Strengthens both the state and its repressive apparatus.
  - Opportunity costs (education, health, economy etc.).
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# The Demographic Explosion in the Middle East



- Despite global decline in human population in most regions, demographics in the Middle East continue to explode and pose a global problem.
- The US Census Bureau estimates that the Middle East is a region where the population will nearly double between now and 2030. The Middle East and North Africa had a population of 112 million in 1950. The population is well over **415 million today** and is projected to be at least **833 million by 2050**.

Source: CIA factbook (2006 estimate).



## ❖ Oil: The Resource Curse

- Regimes use oil to purchase political support. Therefore, the taxation and representation nexus – critical to American democracy – is non-existent in most Middle Eastern states.
  - Rentier states use oil resources to “bribe” citizens with extensive social welfare programs. Therefore, developing civil society / democracy is a challenge.
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## Destabilizing Factors: Resources and Regional Conflict

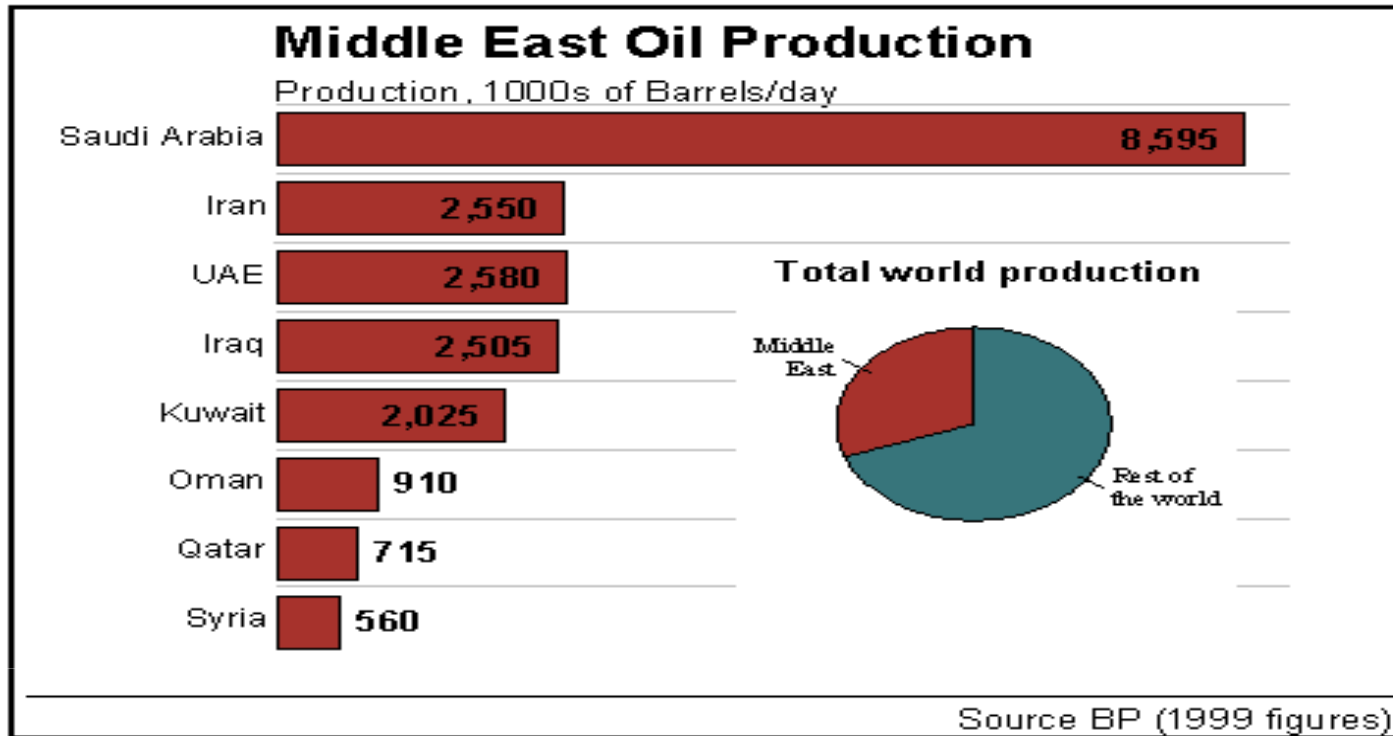


World's Petroleum reserves: 65 percent lie beneath the Middle East and could be exhausted in about 85 years.

Most critical resource is water - contributed to past conflicts, may start others. Key issue - Israel and its Arab neighbors control of the tributaries Jordan River / West Bank aquifers.

“Without Oil, the Middle East cannot live well, without water it cannot live.”

Source: National Geographic, 2002.



### US Oil Consumption, 2005

**Total: 21,930,000 barrels per day**



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# Can Democracy Exist in the Middle East?

- Although the theory of “Arab exceptionalism” states that there is something inherent in the culture and Islam that defies democracy, this view is contested and goes against the values that democracy is universal.
  - There is a strong current of democratic thought in Islam and the Arab world.
  - ✓ Egypt had its first constitution and elected party in 1866.
  - ✓ A liberal age from the mid 19<sup>th</sup> c. to the mid 20<sup>th</sup> c.
  - ✓ Progressive Islamists such as Ibn Khaldoun, al-Ghazali, al-Afghani, and Abduh championed Islamic values of gender equality, human rights, and democracy.
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## ❖ Are Islam and Democracy Compatible?

- Of the 47 Muslim-majority countries in the world, only 9 are democracies (Mali is the only liberal democracy).
- However, Muslim-majority democracies include very large countries such as Indonesia, Turkey and Bangladesh (largest Muslim minority in democratic India).
- Fear that Islamist opposition groups will exploit any genuine political opening to seize power constitutes a key obstacle to moving forward with serious political reform.



## ❖ American Engagement

- Democracy promotion in the Middle East represents a dramatic change in policy.
  - Old paradigm: The U.S. supported authoritarian regimes so long as U.S. interests were protected (oil, anti-communism).
  - New paradigm: Democracy promotion in the Middle East is *now* in America's interests (ME Partnership Initiative)
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## Policy Choices and Consequences

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- The U.S. faces a tremendous credibility problem in asserting itself as a pro-democratic actor in the Middle East (foreign aid conditions?, multi-lateral efforts?).
  - Iraq: everyone in the Middle East carefully watching how events unfold.
  - Law of un-intended consequences: What happens if governments are elected that are hostile to U.S. interests? What about more political instability?
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