Princes and Parliaments in the Arab World

Michael Herb

Georgia State University

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Abstract

Several Arab monarchies have held reasonably free elections to parliaments. Some observers argue that these parliaments, despite their limited powers, are an important step toward democracy; others assert that they merely perpetuate authoritarian rule by giving it a veneer of legitimacy. While monarchism is a very distinct sort of authoritarian regime, with its own specific process of democratization, little comparative work has been done on the process of democratic transitions in monarchies. This makes it difficult to evaluate the democratic potential of the parliamentary experiences of the Arab monarchies. In this article I compare the Arab monarchies with monarchies in other parts of the world, including both those that made a successful transition from monarchism to democracy and those that did not. From this I derive a set of prerequisites, potential pitfalls, and expected stages in the monarchical path toward democracy. I compare the experience of the Arab monarchies against this yardstick, and conclude that in several important respects their parliamentary experiments hold real promise for further democratization.

The Arab lacks any electoral democracies, yet we find elected parliaments in several Arab monarchies. Elections to these parliaments are often reasonably fair: if the elected parliaments had more power over the executive, these countries would be democratic, or close to it. There is a wide divergence of opinion on what to make of these parliaments. Some observers see them as augurs of a fuller democracy: while acknowledging drawbacks in Kuwait's parliamentary life, Kuwaiti political scientist Shafeeq Ghabra (2001) argues that "advocates of democracy should continue to derive satisfaction from the progress being made in Kuwait." Others, less sanguine, see the parliaments as hollow façades that actually perpetuate authoritarianism by giving it a veneer of legitimacy. Daniel Brumberg (2002: 66-7) finds in the Arab monarchies (and other liberalizing Arab autocracies) a "gradualism whose small steps trace the sad contours of an unvirtuous circle," which does not offer "a real path forward." An analyst of Jordanian politics writes that "The façade democracy in Jordan … has been strengthened and – more importantly – buttressed by a complex series of political reforms" (Milton-Edwards 1993: 201).

In this article I examine the experiences of monarchies that have opened parliaments in other parts of the world – including monarchies that successfully democratized, and those that did not. From this I derive a set of prerequisites, potential pitfalls, and expected stages in the process of democratization in monarchies. I use this to measure the achievements (or lack of achievements) of today's Arab monarchies. My approach is informed by work on the role of regime type in

shaping the process of liberalization and democratization (Lust-Okar & Jamal 2002; Bratton & van de Walle 1994; Snyder & Mahoney 1999). Monarchies have followed a very distinctive path to democracy, one which has its own rhythm and peculiarities. Yet there is very little *comparative* work on the process by which parliaments wrest control of cabinets from monarchs, in the Arab world or elsewhere.

Some will question the logic of a comparison between Arab monarchies and constitutional monarchies in other parts of the world. Yet there are reasons to think the comparison not only makes sense, but is long overdue. Those who wrote the constitutions of the Arab constitutional monarchies clearly found the European experience relevant, because they patterned their constitutions after the European tradition of constitutional monarchy: a reading of the constitutions of Kuwait, Morocco, Bahrain and Jordan reveals this quite clearly. The comparison, too, does not require an assumption that the Arab monarchies will recapitulate in every respect the experience of monarchies elsewhere – this is not an assumption of cross-regional comparative research generally. My argument is simply that profound constitutional similarities make it useful to explore how it is that democratization works in constitutional monarchies.

For some observers of the Arab world, a gradual transition to democracy is attractive: in a region with little success with democracy, and facing powerful Islamist movements, a gradual transition offers a way to move toward democracy while avoiding the risks of a sudden transition. Others, convinced that the problems besetting the Arab world owe much to its persistent authoritarianism, impatiently await a full transition to democracy. In this latter view, gradualism – even gradualism with real potential to evolve into democracy – is a failure. Yet the argument here is relevant even for those who favor an immediate transition to democracy: for better or for worse constitutional monarchy is likely to be a feature of Arab politics for some

years, and it is worth understanding how it works.

Constitutional monarchy

I use the term *constitutional monarchy* to denote a monarchy with an elected parliament, but in which the parliament has not wholly usurped the monarchy's power to determine the composition of the ministry. This usage is consistent with the terminology used in many political histories. Unfortunately, in general usage today the term *constitutional monarchy* denotes a democracy decorated by a monarchy. As a consequence, the use of the term incorrectly suggests that constitutional monarchies inevitably democratize. Yet the term 'constitutional monarchy' cannot easily be avoided: it is the standard term in the historical literature, and coining a new term – always to be done with hesitation – is unlikely to make matters clearer.[1] The historical literature also provides us with a standard term - *parliamentarism* – to describe a constitutional monarchy in which political parties in the parliament determine the composition of the government, with the monarch having little voice. This is not synonymous with democracy, because parliamentarism does not require a wide suffrage and because monarchs may retain some residual powers.[2]

Like any regime type, though perhaps more clearly, constitutional monarchy is bound to a specific historical context. Its origins are in a nineteenth century attempt to systematize a version of the British model of government suitable for elsewhere in Europe. Setting aside Britain, constitutional monarchy emerged in any durable form only during or after the Napoleonic wars. Such a system did not deprive monarchs of all of their powers: it forced monarchs to share them. This arrangement was viewed with favor in nineteenth century Europe, and it was exported – much as electoral democracy is today – to other parts of the world: the new Balkan states, with their Belgian constitutions and German monarchs, are particularly suggestive examples. Outside Europe, in the period up to World War One, constitutions were sometimes thought to be the

secret to European power, and this contributed to the creation – in form, at least – of constitutional monarchies in the Ottoman Empire (Kayali 1995), Iran and (somewhat more successfully) Japan.

World War One did away with constitutional monarchism in most of Europe, while World War Two finished off the Balkan survivors. Outside Europe, however, constitutional monarchism remains a viable form of government. It no longer enjoys the international respect it commanded in the nineteenth century, but constitutional monarchy still allows monarchs to liberalize partially without giving up all of their power. Given that new monarchies are not being created, constitutional monarchy will pass into history when the last of the existing monarchies falls or durably achieves democracy. Yet constitutional monarchy today remains a live issue for the 14 surviving monarchies that are not democracies, and which comprise more than 7% of the world's regimes: eight in the Middle East, Swaziland and Lesotho in Africa, Tonga in the Pacific, Bhutan and Nepal in South Asia, and Brunei in Southeast Asia.

There little explicitly comparative work that attempts to understand the process by which parliamentarism is achieved in constitutional monarchies. Political scientists who have explored the process of transition in earlier democratizers – working in the context of the transitions literature – tend to identify democratization with the enfranchisement of the male working class, rather than with the equally important issue of ministerial responsibility. Dahl, for example, hardly mentions kings or monarchies in his discussion of the earliest democracies in *Polyarchy*. Berman (2001), in a perceptive article that sets the experience of Imperial Germany in the context of authoritarianisms in the modern developing world, deals with the issue of parliamentarism without theorizing how monarchies differ from other "soft authoritarianisms." In fact, political scientists seem to have something of a blind spot for the issue of how

parliamentarism is won. This hobbles our understanding of the Arab constitutional monarchies, where democratization is about control of the cabinet more than about the franchise.

The existing literature on the Arab monarchies features few extended comparisons with the experiences of monarchies outside the region (though see Brown 2002): indeed, it is only recently that the dogged persistence of the region's monarchies have convinced scholars to think of these regimes, in a theoretic sense, as monarchies at all (Kostiner 2000; Lust-Okar and Jamal 2002). Several scholars have argued that monarchism facilitates democratization in the Arab world; these arguments tend to center on the ability of monarchs to create a system of mutual security (to use Dahl's phrase) that reduces the risks associated with moves toward democracy (Dahl 1971: 16, 47; Mufti 1999: 101-3; Brynen, Noble and Korany 1998; Herb 1999: 262-3). Zakaria argues that nineteenth century European regimes, because they were liberal before they were democratic, established the necessary groundwork for stable democracy. Plattner, otherwise a critic of Zakaria, suggests that only the developing world's surviving monarchies could follow this path (Zakaria 1997, 27; Plattner 1998, 177). Marsha Pripstein Posusney, while she does not distinguish monarchies as a specific regime type, cites evidence that "democratic transitions can emerge from prolonged periods of controlled contestation" that allow oppositions to "ultimately negotiate democratization with reluctant incumbent authoritarians" (2002, 36).

Yet there is also much skepticism, especially of the idea that the Arab monarchies could in any sense follow a path to democracy resembling that of the successful European cases. Constitutional monarchies mix two principles of political legitimacy, one monarchical and the other democratic: some doubt that this mixture can be stable in the modern world (Anderson 2001, 59; Huntington 1968, 166-91).

Paths to parliamentarism

In seven European countries (Britain, Belgium, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, Denmark and Luxembourg) monarchs surrendered power, over time, to a parliament.[3] In all but Britain, the granting of a written constitution marked the initial step toward parliamentarism, though the process itself generally required several decades to complete. The constitutions provided for a reformed parliament with at least one elected house.

The core issue in democratization in constitutional monarchies, apart from the suffrage, is ministerial responsibility to parliament (only Britain had a hereditary upper house). In most of these cases – Britain is the exception – a specific date conventionally marks the achievement of parliamentarism: 1847 in Belgium, 1868 in the Netherlands, 1884 in Norway, 1901 in Denmark, 1917 in Sweden (see Table 1). Britain achieved parliamentarism earlier, and gradually: some scholars identify the reign of George IV (1812-1830) as marking a decisive decline in royal powers (Briggs 2000: 163; McCord 1991: 143). These dates, while important, did not mark the sudden ascent of parliaments nor the decisive defeat of monarchs. Before these dates monarchs selected their ministers under varying degrees of constraint imposed by parliament; after these dates, monarchs often retained real input into the composition of the cabinet, especially with regard to ministers responsible for the military. Indeed the conventional dates are not strictly comparable across monarchies - Sweden achieved more in 1917 than Belgium in 1847. This imprecision derives from difficulties in pinpointing exact inflections in the changing balance of power between monarchs and parliaments.

[Table 1 about here].

The ministry provided the key linkage between the king and the parliament in the process of achieving parliamentarism. Kings, historically, have governed through all sorts of agents, in

arrangements that range from very formalized to exceedingly informal. Parliamentarism requires that kings delegate their powers to a ministry with fixed responsibilities. In the successful European cases this had both a constitutional and a practical aspect. All of the constitutions provided for ministers and specified that at least some royal acts required the countersignature of a minister. This made the minister, rather than the monarch, responsible for acts of the king before the parliament, and made it possible for parliament to avoid the immense political problems of holding the king personally to account for his conduct (Roberts 1956; Brown 2002, 116-7). The counterpoint to ministerial responsibility for the conduct of the government was the provision that the person of the king was inviolable. In some cases, some royal acts did not require ministerial countersignature, leaving an area of royal power that parliaments could not formally capture: in practice, once parliamentarism was achieved kings generally ceased to employ these powers. As a scholar notes of the Norwegian constitution, it has been interpreted, "by implication," to insert "'the King in Council' in practically all instances where the grant of power has any real governmental importance" even where the Council is not mentioned (Storing 1963, 44).

These constitutions typically did not formally provide for a prime minister, and in the early years many kings directed their cabinets personally. Over time, however, prime ministers emerged as kings removed themselves from direct participation in rule: the post had emerged, to one degree or another, by the time parliamentarism was achieved.

Despite provisions for ministerial responsibility, these constitutions did not explicitly provide for a vote of confidence in the cabinet. Instead, parliaments were usually given the power to impeach ministers. This power usually required conviction by a body independent of the elected lower house (viz., the House of Lords in Britain) and it rarely proved effective

(Roberts 1966, 436; Verney 1957, 9-10, 125). The exception was Norway, where members of the Storting dominated the body that had the power to convict on impeachment charges (Storing 1963: 51-2, 150-2).[4] The modern vote of confidence was a power that parliaments seized, not one granted in constitutions (Brown 2002: 105). To this day the Norwegian and Dutch constitutions lack an explicit provision for a vote of confidence.

Constitutions gave these parliaments one core power: the ability to block legislation. This led to the characteristic political struggle in constitutional monarchies. The determined exercise of parliamentary powers could bring constitutional government to a halt. Without budgets, governments could not legally tax and spend. Yet parliaments took this course at some risk. Monarchs sometimes ignored parliaments: the Danish king ruled without a budget for extended periods in the late nineteenth century; a Norwegian prime minister kept his job despite being impeached and convicted by the Storting in 1836 (Storing 1963: 52). The electorate might side with the monarch and punish an overly ambitious parliamentary opposition in the next elections. But monarchs, too, had reasons to seek compromises: parliaments also had political resources. The fate of James II could not stray far from the minds of the later Stuarts or their Hanoverian successors. Oppositions could call strikes, lead demonstrations, form rifle clubs (in Norway and Denmark) and even threaten revolution.

These sorts of considerations, on both sides, led to a wide variety of balances in power between monarchs and their parliaments. In earlier stages, parliaments could occasionally defeat government policy, and perhaps throw a government's survival into doubt. Later on, the parliament could demand that the monarch appoint a government congenial to the house (from the monarch's point of view, the goal was to find ministers who could "manage" the parliament). In the third stage, political parties in the parliament took the initiative in appointing the

government – that is to say, parliamentarism was achieved. Finally, monarchs lost their residual voice in the composition of the ministry.

Parliamentarism could not be achieved without political parties. A parliament of constantly shifting factions, or a collection of independents, could defeat a government on specific issues, or vote ministers out of office, but it could not formulate a program or form a government itself. Only parties could make parliament's preferences durable, and give parliament the ability to dictate the composition of the ministry to the monarch.

In the Netherlands in 1868 parliamentarism was achieved when the elected lower house held the budget hostage (Newton 1978: 73-4; Raalte 1959: 4-5; Kossman 1978: 285-8). In Norway the Storting enjoyed the power to impeach and convict ministers, and used this power to achieve parliamentarism in 1884 (Storing 1963: 52-3; Derry 1957, 179-80). In Belgium, neither the power to impeach nor the power to block legislation was employed in any determined way, because the king conceded to parliamentarism early, and without much struggle, in 1847 (Kossman 1978: 201, 368-8; Hislaire 1945: 97). In eighteenth-century Britain impeachments fell out of favor and "undertakings" took their place: a group of politicians volunteered to undertake the difficult task of managing Parliament for the Crown in matters including, but not limited to, finances (Roberts 1966, 432-446; 1985): this, however, was something short of parliamentarism, which emerged gradually in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.

The wishes of the electorate shaped the political ambitions of elected houses and monarchs. The Farmers, Sweden's first political party (from 1867), rejected the idea that it should form a party government. "Imagine a farmer in gold trousers!" one party leader scoffed, referring to the traditional attire of ministers. This sort of hesitance, along with a king who accommodated the wishes of parliament, long delayed the formal achievement of parliamentarism (Verney 1957,

103, 132-3). The limited franchises of most of these cases were more conservative than the population at large: this was especially evident in Sweden, where a plutocratic upper house could usually prevent the more popularly elected house from blocking legislation, through a constitutional provision for a joint vote (Verney 57, 89-90, 133).

Denmark is distinguished both by its history of absolutism, which was much better established than in any of the other cases, and by its early adoption of more-or-less universal manhood suffrage in 1849, a half century before party governments emerged. Perhaps as a consequence, the Danish monarchy put up the most spirited resistance to parliamentarism of these cases. Parties which sought parliamentarism enjoyed majorities in the lower house from the 1870s, and they periodically used their power over legislation to block the budget. This impelled the monarchy not to grant parliamentarism, but instead to ignore the constitution: Denmark operated without a budget approved by parliament for one nine year period in the 1880s and 1890s (Ogg 562). (A very similar dynamic played out in Bismarck's Germany.) The opposition, impotent in parliament, considered an armed insurrection in the mid-1880s, but thought better of it. The monarchy gave up in 1901, faced with a Right that had been reduced to a mere 8 of 102 seats in the lower house (Jones 1970, 75-87).

We can derive several general lessons from this brief review of the cases.

- Parliamentarism required a constitution with three minimum provisions: (1) an elected house in a reformed parliament; (2) the ability of the elected house to block legislation; (3) ministerial responsibility, in the original sense that royal decrees required a ministerial countersignature.
- Parliamentarism required political parties capable of forming governments.
- Monarchs appointed governments that could "manage" parliaments before conceding

the principle of parliamentarism altogether.

- Electorates did not always demand parliamentarism.
- Monarchs could delay parliamentarism by ignoring the constitution.

Parliamentarism frustrated

Government manipulation of elections characterized almost all constitutional monarchies that failed to make a transition to parliamentarism. It was rare in the successful cases. This makes government electoral manipulation the most serious pathology of constitutional monarchism. This is distinct from electoral fraud generally - government manipulation destroyed the independence of the parliament against the government, while the undue influence of local notables did not. The standard political histories of Sweden, Norway, Denmark, Belgium and the Netherlands make little or no mention of electoral manipulation by governments, even in earlier periods. Britain is a partial exception: patronage allowed British cabinets to control a sizable number of seats in Parliament in the eighteenth century (1721-42). Yet rotten boroughs could be controlled by the opposition, and even in Walpole's day districts with comparatively numerous voters were not controlled (Black 1990, 35; Holmes & Szechi 1993, 37). The reforms of 1832 and later did not lead to the innovation of newer forms of electoral manipulation suited for larger constituencies (as they did elsewhere), and British elections came to have a high degree of freedom from direct government manipulation.

Sometimes monarchs have ruled absolutely, using elections to disguise palace absolutism. Bhutan today is an example.[5] The kings of Libya and Afghanistan banned the (small) urban opposition from parliament, and let in rural elites unlikely to make trouble (Herb 1999). More typically, in constitutional monarchies with fraudulent elections, kings have ruled through

political parties, in systems that look, on the surface, to be parliamentarisms. A typical example can be found in Brazil, in the long nineteenth century reign of its last monarch, who ruled to 1889. When the cabinet became troublesome, the king would

> name a new, more acceptable ministry, and grant it a dissolution of the Chamber of Deputies. To follow this course, Pedro II needed to find a president and Council of Ministers who possessed political standing and the willingness to use all means available to win the ensuing elections. … [A]ny cabinet presiding over elections to the Chamber of Deputies had to be supremely incompetent if it failed to secure a large majority of seats (Barman 1999, 169).

In Bulgaria, at the turn of the century, elections were held "to provide a newly appointed cabinet with a dependable majority in the assembly" (Crampton 1997, 124). In Italy "it was the government which made the election, not elections the government" (Mack Smith 1997, 180). Similar descriptions abound in the political histories of failed constitutional monarchies. Electoral manipulation of this sort did not necessarily prevent the emergence, or survival, of parties with some real electoral appeal: the will of the electorate could sometimes be felt in a muffled way. And electoral management could sometimes fail. But government electoral manipulation had a corrosive effect on parties, and it tended to throw the legitimacy of the entire system in doubt. The Egyptian Wafd, for example, stands out in the history of Arab political parties for its early vitality and grassroots organization. By the end of the parliamentary monarchy in Egypt, however, it was perceived to be as corrupt as the rest of the political establishment, and was swept away by the Free Officers (al-Bishri 1987). Almost all failed constitutional monarchies suffered from serious electoral manipulation for much of their

histories, including those of Iraq, Egypt, Portugal, Spain, Bulgaria, Romania, Italy, Brazil, and Hungary.[6] The constitutional monarchies of France, Japan and Greece also suffered from electoral fraud in substantial periods.

Once a tradition of electoral manipulation was in place, it was hard to overcome: free elections were held on occasion in some of these cases, but none managed a durable transition to parliamentarism. Some fell to military coups (which the monarchy itself might or might not survive): Brazil in 1889, Portugal in 1910, Japan in 1932, Egypt in 1952, Iraq in 1958. Others reverted to undiluted royal authoritarianism (Yugoslavia from 1929, Bulgaria from 1934, Romania from 1938), though in the end it was the Second World War that put an end to these monarchies. War, too, brought an end to France's final effort at constitutional monarchy, under Louis Napoleon. In Spain and Italy, monarchs sought out – or at least acquiesced to – the appointment of strongmen, Primo de Rivera and Mussolini, respectively – and in both cases the monarchy did not long survive the dictatorship (Mack Smith 1989). Greece, unusually, appears to have achieved something close to real parliamentarism for a decade or two after 1882, following a period of widespread electoral manipulation: but a coup in 1909 but an end to this (Campbell and Sherrard 1968, 100-1; Woodhouse 1968, 172-3). Many of these cases saw persistent intervention by the military, further depriving the system of democratic legitimacy. It would appear that, where elections had some measure of honesty, political actors remained within the system, even though they might strongly protest limitations on the franchise or continued royal power. Where governments stole elections, the answer did not so clearly lie in parliamentary parties and leaders, themselves corrupted by the system.

It would be wrong, of course, to attribute the fall of each one of these constitutional monarchies wholly to electoral manipulation, which itself no doubt sprang from deeper causes.

Clearly, however, these deeper causes of the future failure of parliamentarism seem to have been manifested in electoral manipulation: the correlation between electoral manipulation and the failure of constitutional monarchies is striking.

Among the failed cases of constitutional monarchy, elections in Imperial Germany and (to a lesser degree) Austria met the high standard of the successful cases. This was true in Germany especially after the Social Democrats were allowed to participate as a party in 1890; universal manhood suffrage dated from 1871 (Suval 1985, 42). In 1909 the parliament brought down a government that had, for the first time, claimed to rule with the support of a bloc of parliamentary parties (Mommsen 1995, 152-3). Berman argues that the course of political development in Imperial Germany, but for the war, might well have led to stable democratization: she finds in Imperial Germany at least some of the favorable conditions for democracy – these are of the sort that emerged in the nineteenth-century European constitutional monarchies that had fair elections and did not lose the war (Berman 2001, 456). Others are less optimistic, blaming the war itself on the contradictions of the German political system (Mommsen 1995, 160). Yet the deepest problem appear to be ideological, rather than constitutional: a durable sense of German exceptionalism in the country's political culture was matched with a strong authoritarian core in the state, one not found in the successful cases (Hewitson 2001; Mommsen 1995). The closest analogue to the German case is found in Japan, where a formidable anti-liberal bloc, associated with the state bureaucracy and the military, fought a long battle against parliamentarism and eventually overthrew a regime that had come close to achieving it (Scalapino 1953).

Elections in the Austrian half of the Dual Monarchy, while not up to the standards of the successful cases, were not regularly stolen by the government. Conflict between nationalities

blocked the formation of a coherent party governments (Kann 1974; Jenks 1974, 178; Ogg 1913: 465).

From these failed cases we can derive two additional points:

- Fair elections, free of government manipulation, are crucial to the achievement of parliamentarism.
- An anti-liberal group intertwined with the state bureaucracy and with close ties to the military can block parliamentarism.

Tonga and Nepal

Two existing monarchies outside the Arab world deserve brief mention for their experience with constitutional monarchy. Free elections are held in the pacific microstate of Tonga under its 1875 constitution, yet for only 9 of 30 parliamentary seats, with the balance held by nobles or appointed by the king (Lawson 1996). Pro-democracy candidates have won a majority of the popularly elected seats in elections since 1987 (James 1994, 252; Campbell 1999, 272; BBC Worldwide Monitoring March 12, 2002), yet they are powerless in parliament, having neither the ability to block legislation nor to remove confidence in ministers.[7] This degree of impotence is unusual in constitutional monarchies, and there is some risk that the GCC ruling families could write constitutions as weak as this.

Nepal was nominally a constitutional monarchy in the 1980s, but parties were banned and the opposition did not participate. A 1991 transition to democracy followed, and it in many ways resembled other recent transitions – in non-monarchies – more than any specifically monarchical path to democracy (Parajulee 2000; Khadka 1993). The collapse of Nepalese electoral democracy in late 2002, however, appears to have returned Nepal to the ranks of absolutisms, though something like constitutional monarchy may yet emerge in that troubled country.

Arab monarchies

There are three constitutional monarchies in the Arab world today: Morocco, Kuwait and Bahrain. In response to regional political difficulties, Jordan suspended its parliament in 2001, but will likely resume parliamentary life when and if the regional situation settles. Four other monarchies are still absolutist: in Oman, members of the (advisory) consultative council are elected, but in a process that ensures control by the regime. Qatar and Dubai (part of the UAE) have held local elections (*al-Hayat* April 3, 2003). There was talk of elections in Saudi Arabia in the lead-up to the third Gulf war. In what follows, I will focus on the four constitutional monarchies (including Jordan).

Constitutional powers

While the constitutions of the Arab constitutional monarchies make it difficult for parliaments to block legislation, they explicitly provide for the removal of confidence in governments by the elected house of parliament, in contrast to most of the successful European cases. In Morocco and Jordan the power to remove confidence is not qualified, and includes provisions requiring new governments to secure a positive vote of confidence.[8]

Kuwait's 1962 constitution is more complicated. It calls for a unicameral legislature in which the entire cabinet has voting rights. Only one member of the cabinet (which can contain up to 16 members) must be an elected member of parliament, so that the monarchy enjoys the support of what amounts to a bloc of (at most) 15 appointed deputies. These appointed members dilute the ability of the elected deputies to block legislation (though the parliament does block government bills). Yet parliament can demand an interpellation (*istijwab*) of an individual minister, and can follow this with a vote of confidence. The parliament can also declare that it cannot work with the prime minister, at which point the emir chooses whether to dismiss the

government or the parliament; the government falls if the prime minister loses a subsequent vote. Ministers cannot vote on these questions, giving a majority of the elected members of parliament (except those in the cabinet) the power to remove the government. Clearly this arrangement, however, would produce oddities if party government were achieved, for the government might well destroy its own majority by appointing deputies to cabinet posts.

Bahrain's 2002 constitution requires a two-thirds majority for a declaration that the elected lower house is unable to work with the prime minister: as in Kuwait, the ruler then decides to dismiss the government or the parliament, though there is no provision for the subsequent parliament to force a dismissal of the government by again declaring its inability to work with the prime minister.[9] The constitution also provides for an appointive upper house: a provision for a joint vote of the two houses makes it impossible for the elected deputies to block legislation opposed by the appointed upper house (each house has 40 members). The 2002 alterations to the 1973 constitution (which resembled Kuwait's) led the main opposition bloc – the Wifaq, a Shi'i Islamist group - to boycott the 2002 parliamentary elections, the first held since 1973 (*al-Hayat* October 26, 2002). There is a risk that any constitutions drawn up in other GCC states will take Bahrain, rather than Kuwait, as a model, and seriously limit the core powers of the parliaments.

Ministerial government

All four constitutions call for a ministry. The constitutions divide monarchical powers into those exercised by the cabinet and those exercised by monarchs personally. The Jordanian constitution demands ministerial countersignatures for royal acts, with no exceptions, while the Moroccan specifies a set of powers that do not require a countersignature (including the powers to declare a state of emergency, appoint judges, and dismiss parliament). Kuwait's constitution merely states that the emir will govern "through" his ministers, while Bahrain's less liberal constitutions says that the king will govern "directly and through" his ministers.

In practice, kings and ruling families delegate only some powers to their ministers, or hold these posts themselves. In the GCC (Gulf Cooperation Council) states, members of the ruling families hold the portfolios of defense, foreign affairs, and the interior (viz., the "ministries of sovereignty"). Prime ministers, where they exists, are invariably members of the dynasties. Parliamentarism cannot be achieved without removing the dynasty from these posts, and this is not a trivial issue: the balance of power within the ruling family depends on the allocation of these posts to its members (Herb 1999). It is possible, of course, that the ruling family could give up these portfolios incrementally: in Kuwait, the opposition has pressed for the ruling family to give up the prime minister's post (*al-Qabas*, February 4, 2001). Unlike the other Gulf monarchies, the emir of Kuwait delegates the business of governing to the prime minister (or the deputy prime minister). In Bahrain, the king actively participates in rule (the emir declared himself a king in 2002): his relative liberalism counterbalances the reactionary attitudes of his uncle, the prime minister.

The Moroccan dynasty does not hold cabinet posts in the style of the GCC monarchies, but in practice the king wields many powers directly, particularly over the ministries of sovereignty (ben Mlih 2001, 7). This is at the expense of the prime minister and has little constitutional basis: when Muhammad VI removed Driss Basri (his father's strongman interior minister) the prime minister learned of the event – and the name of the new minister – only after the fact (Maghraoui 2001). The king, in a 2001 interview, found it necessary to deny that there were two governments, one inside the palace and one outside, all the while asserting that the king had "special responsibilities" for foreign affairs, defense, the interior, religious affairs and justice (*Al-Sharq al-Awsat* July 24, 2001). Moroccan kings have long held the defense portfolio personally.

In one sense the reservation of these ministries of sovereignty to the dynasties is a clear

obstacle to parliamentarism, which cannot be fully achieved unless parliamentary parties appoint all ministers. Yet in the European cases monarchs gave up their influence over these ministries as a final step in the move toward democracy, and this had the positive effect of reducing the risks of democratization for authoritarian elites.

Elections

Gulf elections meet a high standard of fairness, and this is the single most compelling factor in entertaining the notion that these systems might gradually evolve toward parliamentarism. In Kuwait the government has dabbled in electoral manipulation (mostly through vote-buying), but this appears to have been neither very determined nor very effective (Tétreault 2000; *al-Hayat* July 5, 1999). Parliament represents the diversity of opinion in Kuwait, and the political behavior of parliamentary deputies suggests that they keep a close eye on the opinions of their constituents. (Suffrage is limited: women do not have the right to vote.) Bahraini elections, too, have been free of government manipulation, as were the 1999 local elections in Qatar.

In Jordan elections have suffered from irregularities, and opposition figures have experienced serious pressure from the authorities, particularly in the mid-1990s (Wiktorowicz 1999; Robinson 1997, 380-383). The government stole some elections in the 1950s and 1960s (Aruri 1972, 176; al-Madi & Musa 603). Nonetheless the elections of 1989, 1993 and 1997 did not suffer from the sort of pervasive manipulation seen in many of the failed constitutional monarchies, nor have elections lost their legitimacy to the degree often seen in monarchies in other parts of the world.

Morocco stands out for the prevalence of fraud in its parliamentary elections. Election results, especially in the past, have owed as much to the machinations of the interior ministry as to the will of the electorate. Voter turnout has suffered accordingly (Maghraoui 2001, 80; Eickelman 1986). This had led to serious corrosion of the party system, and has thrown into

doubt the legitimacy of the parliament. Nonetheless, the trend is positive. The new king (who came to power in 1999) staked some of his credibility on the fairness of the 2002 elections, and they met a higher standard than previous efforts. Nonetheless, there were still problems: the Islamist party, which did very well in the elections, decided beforehand to run candidates in only 56 of the 91 electoral districts, thus reducing the threat it posed to the monarchy and the existing elite, but also minimizing the degree to which the elections clearly represented popular opinion (*Al-Hayat* September 26, 2002. *Le Monde* September 27 & 29, 2002). A more radical Islamist party, which might or might not have garnered significant votes, did not participate. Voter turnout actually fell from its previously low levels.

Two of the monarchies also suffer from a different sort of electoral manipulation: districts in Jordan and Bahrain are designed to reduce the representation of the majority Palestinian and Shi'i populations (respectively) in these two countries (Herb 1999, 228). Reforms proposed in early 2003 in Jordan addressed this problem in part. In a comparative sense it is not clear what to make of this manipulation of electoral districts: it detracts from the legitimacy of the system, but also might be seen as a way to limit participation (in Dahl's sense) while developing the rules of contestation. Earlier democratizers suffered from electoral inequalities (and some still do), though not with such a clear ethnic motivation.

Parties and electorates

Parliamentarism cannot be achieved without parties capable of forming governments, and in this regard we see sharp differences across the monarchies. Political parties are legal in Morocco and Jordan. In Kuwait and Bahrain they are officially banned, though party-like blocs compete in elections and vote as groups in the parliament, and in Bahrain there has been some talk of legalizing parties (*Al-wasat* [Bahrain], September 9, 2002). Electoral systems generally are designed to encourage independents and discourage the emergence of strong parties (Lust-Okar

& Jamal 2002). This reduces the threat that parliaments pose to monarchs: the dominance of the Wafd made it difficult for the Egyptian king to tolerate free parliamentary elections (and the same happened when a dominant party emerged in Brunei in the 1960s). But the fractionalization of the party system also makes party government hard to achieve.[10]

Kuwaiti voters cast one vote in two-member constituencies with no run-off: some tribes hold primaries. In the 1999 elections, organized blocs won only 13 of 50 seats (Tétreault 2000, 230-2). Independents align with parties and each other to form voting blocs in parliament: some are close to the government. The fractionalization of the Kuwaiti parliament reflects the society itself, where there are real divisions between liberals and Islamists, urban Kuwaitis and tribal Kuwaitis, Sunnis and Shi'a.

Jordan's largest political party, associated with the Muslim Brotherhood, won only about 16% of the vote in the 1989 and 1993 elections. It won 28% of the seats in 1989, but the introduction of SNTV for the 1993 elections cut its seat yield back to 20%, leading the party to boycott the 1997 elections (Mufti 1999, 109, 118-120). In 1997 political parties won only 10% of the seats, with the remainder going to independents. Even in 1993, however, independents won most seats (Lust-Okar 2001, 550-1). While SNTV has a role in this, so too do the wishes of voters, who tend to choose candidates on the basis of tribal, clan or family affiliations, rather than party. Morocco, unusually, adopted for the 2002 elections the use of party lists, discouraging the sort of independents that are so common in the Jordanian and Kuwaiti parliaments (*al-Hayat* September 26, 2002). The parliament is nonetheless highly factionalized, with the largest party controlling only 51 of the 325 seats.

These election results, and the consequent party structure in the monarchies, tend to cast doubt on the thesis that the two principles of political authority – monarchical and democratic –

cannot coexist in a modern constitutional monarchy. In Kuwait and Jordan, and Morocco as well, there is a good deal of evidence that the electorate tends to favor candidates who accept the reality of monarchical authority, and do not seek to overturn it immediately. Electorates in these monarchies (especially Kuwait and Jordan) do not make parliamentarism their highest priority. This is true even though, in the Arab monarchies, the expansion of the franchise has preceded the achievement of parliamentarism.

Bahrain is something of an exception, and here its ethnic divide is important: there is little doubt that the majority Shi'i population would like to rule Bahrain, via parliamentarism or otherwise. The largest part of the Shi'i community supports a single Islamist electoral bloc, the Wifaq, which swept Shi'i votes in the 2002 municipal elections (*al-Hayat*, May 12 & 18, 2002). It boycotted the parliamentary elections, but in parliament such a single dominant party would pose a threat to the monarchy of a sort not seen in the fractured Kuwaiti or Jordanian parliaments. Yet the ruling family will not turn over power to the Wifaq or any other Shi'i group, regardless of the depths of its parliamentary support, and the regime's control of the security and military forces ensures that it cannot be forced to do so. Recognizing this, the Wifaq has adopted a moderate stance, even during the boycott of the 2002 elections (*al-Hayat* October 23, 2002).

The political influence of the parliaments

In the successful European cases, parliamentarism was preceded by a stage in which monarchs selected ministers who could "manage" parliaments. Such parliamentary managers were not appointed by parliamentary parties, but they were selected with the demands of the parliament in mind. To at least some degree politics in Kuwait and perhaps Jordan resemble this stage. In Bahrain the parliament just recently reopened. In Morocco, parties have actually formed governments, but not in a way that suggests the achievement of parliamentarism.

The ruling family today finds Kuwait's parliament difficult to manage. The parliament

makes active use of its right to interpellate ministers, and has removed several. In the 1960s, parliament forced a government from office (Crystal 1990, 87), and nearly did so again in the summer of 2002. In the latter episode, the head of the government turned a vote of confidence in the minister of finance into a vote on the cabinet as a whole: the government barely survived; the outcome was in doubt even as the voting commenced (*al-Hayat* July 4, 2002). Members of the ruling family have resigned cabinet posts under parliamentary criticism. It is increasingly clear that the ruling family takes the expected reaction from parliament into account when appointing ministers, including even ministers who are members of the family itself – in, for example, the messy cabinet shuffle of February 2001, the product also of a major dispute within the ruling family (*Al-Qabas* February 9, 2001; *al-Hayat* February 16, 2001). Even the negative aspects of Kuwaiti parliamentary life resemble those of parliaments in constitutional monarchies at a similar stage: before parliamentarism is achieved, parliaments exercise a negative, blocking power against monarchies. Since parliaments do not have the responsibility of rule, they appear obstructive: the Kuwaiti parliament is not the first to have this mien.

The Jordanian parliament has demonstrated, over the years, a certain degree of influence over the composition of governments. Certainly this was the case in the mid-1950s. A parliament elected in 1962 passed a motion of no confidence in the ministry – the monarchy responded, however, by dismissing the parliament and rigging the subsequent elections (Aruri 1972: 180-1). The most recent revival of parliamentary life began with elections in 1989: in 1992 parliament brought down a government, though not by directly using its power to withdraw confidence (Brown 2002, 118). Even the parliament elected in the boycotted 1997 elections did not lack vitality – it too brought down a government, also indirectly. In May of 2000, 44 of 80 deputies signed a petition demanding a special session of parliament (not then in session) to remove

confidence in the government. The deputies also threatened to prevent a quorum for a special session of parliament to be held in June to pass needed economic legislation (*al-Hayat* April 28 & May 12, 2000). In June the king dismissed the government and appointed a leader of the rebellious deputies to form a new one. Nonetheless, this was not quite as vigorous an exercise of parliamentary power as it may appear at first blush. The prime minister had lost popularity not only in parliament, but also apparently in the court. A cabinet crisis in 1994 revealed a similar dynamic, in which opposition elements in the court and in the parliament united against a ministry (*al-Hayat* May 24, 1994). (This sort of interaction between court and parliament was hardly unknown in Europe.) It was also perhaps the case that in 2000 the new king Abdallah wanted his own man as prime minister. Overall, it appears that the Jordanian monarchy does select governments with the parliament in mind, though the overall balance of power favors the monarchy more than is the case in Kuwait. In both cases the absence of strong parties gives parliament an essentially negative voice in the composition of governments.

In Morocco, the king called on the opposition parties to form a government in 1998, and the leader of the opposition USFP (al-Ittihad al-Ishtiraki) held the post of prime minister until 2002. Yet the exercise was more reminiscent of the failed constitutional monarchies (those with fraudulent elections) than it was of the true achievement of parliamentarism. The connection of the political parties with the electorate often seems tenuous, and by appointing an "opposition" government in 1998 the king did as much to co-opt the opposition as he did to turn over power to it (ben Mlih 2001). And the king, of course, retained control over the ministries of sovereignty. The aftermath of the 2002 elections put the limitations of the system in sharp perspective. The elections resulted in a fractured parliament, with each of the four largest parties winning 40 to 50 of the 325 seats. These parties began coalition building in earnest, and two major, and fairly

evenly balanced, blocs emerged, with the Islamist party a key part of the right-leaning bloc (*Al-Hayat* October 11, 2002). Had this process continued, Morocco might have found itself with a relatively clearly defined governing coalition and a distinct opposition. Yet the king apparently did not want this, and ended the process of coalition formation by asking his minister of the interior – a technocrat - to appoint a cabinet. The blocs immediately dissolved as parties rushed to join the government: of the larger parties, only the Islamist party remained in the opposition. The result tended to confirm the skeptics' view of the entire political elite – with the possible exception of the Islamists – as creatures of the regime.[11] Similarities with the nominal parliamentarism of the failed constitutional monarchies are striking, though again efforts to clean up Morocco's elections suggest some grounds for limited optimism.

Regime choices

In the end, parliamentarism cannot be achieved in any of these monarchies unless the dynasties decide to let it happen: monarchs can be pressured, but parliamentarism has not been achieved via revolution. The Danish example suggests that recalcitrant kings can avoid parliamentarism for long periods, if they are willing to violate the constitution. There is no reason to think that any of the Arab dynasties are ready to allow parliamentary parties to form governments today or in the near future. Their habit of shutting down their parliaments for extended periods reinforces this impression.

Does this, however, make parliamentarism unlikely, and these parliaments mere façades? In some failed constitutional monarchies (Germany and Japan) there was a hard core of anti-liberal authoritarians in the state and military: the Arab world lacks this. Islamists are outside the power structures of these regimes, and most Islamists view parliaments as valuable avenues of participation. In Bahrain, however, the history of ethnic division (and oppression of the Shi'a) has created an anti-parliamentary Sunni authoritarian group revolving around the current prime

minister, and which has resisted the king's liberalizing moves: the ethnic divide is no small barrier to parliamentarism. In Jordan and Morocco, there are those with anti-liberal views associated with the state and the dynasties, but they do not have the power to permanently check any liberalizing moves by kings, should they be made. There has been, for example, little or no suggestion that the military could launch a to coup to force the rulers to give up their liberal reforms. When the military dabbles in politics in Arab monarchies, it generally starts by overthrowing the monarchy, and all of the surviving monarchies have retained very firm control over their military establishments. In the Gulf, ruling families occupy a wide range of posts in the state, and in the end moves toward parliamentarism would force many of them to give up these posts (though a military tradition among members of the dynasties could be expected to continue for decades). Yet liberals within the families have often initiated reforms, and in all of these dynasties there is at least a constituency for liberalization. Among the members of Kuwait's ruling family, the reformers appear to have had the upper hand in several periods, and especially since 1993. Many in the ruling families explicitly see parliaments as a way to adapt to the challenges (and dangers) facing dynasties in the modern world: such an attitude of careful and reluctant compromise can delay parliamentarism, but it will not prevent it when conditions are otherwise propitious.

Conclusions

Monarchies appear to have their own distinctive path to democracy, one that is characterized by the gradual capture of the ministry by political parties in parliament. In the earliest democratizers the specifically monarchical character of the regimes facilitated the gradual – and relatively peaceful – achievement of parliamentarism. Dahl's analysis of the virtues of

contestation before participation does not explicitly give credit to monarchism – but arguably monarchism is at the center of the gradual development of the rules of contestation in these cases. The gradualist process by which parliamentarism is achieved allows political actors in the authoritarian regime to gain information about the likely consequences of democratization, and to create a system of mutual security that protects their interests. It also allows for the creation and consolidation of a set of liberal norms that can make democracy more durable.

The comparative lessons of other constitutional monarchies suggest that parliamentarism is most likely to fail where governments steal the elections. With the partial exception of Morocco, that is not the case in the Arab constitutional monarchies, and this is the single most promising aspect of their political development. If this tradition of free elections is maintained (and with relatively positive regional, ideological and economic developments) it would not be surprising if these monarchies achieved parliamentarism, though there is not reason to think that this will occur quickly. The parliaments hold out real promise for the transformation of these political systems in a more democratic direction.

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Table 1: Milestones on the path to parliamentarism

	Parliamentarism achieved, by convention	Constitution with elected house of reformed parliament	Ministerial countersignature	Power to block legislation	Constitutional provision for impeachment or censure.
Britain	No set date (early part of 19th century)	Before 1688	Before 1688	From 1688	Impeachment, tried by the House of Lords
Belgium	1847	1831	From 1831	From 1831	From 1831: Impeachment, tried by non-parliamentary body
Netherlands	1868	1814	From 1840	From 1815	From 1840, lower house could dismiss one or all ministers for ignoring or violating the constitution or legislation.
Norway	1884	1814	From 1814	From 1814	From 1814: Storting could impeach and convict.
Denmark	1901	1849	From 1849	Budget could be issued by decree	No provision.
Sweden	1917	Parliament reformed in 1866	From 1809	From 1809; from 1866, shared with a plutocratic upper house.	From 1809: Impeachment, tried by non-parliamentary body. Parliament could also “request” (not demand) the dismissal of ministers.

Sources (in addition to cites in the text): Belgium – Blaustein & Sigler 1988; Reed 1924, 38-9; Netherlands – Raalte 1959, 4-5; Kossman 1978: 107-8, 180 ; Norway – Storing 1963, 51-2, 54, 59, 150-2; Sweden – Verney, 1957: 3

Endnotes

[1] "Mixed monarchy" and "limited monarchy" generally refer to non-absolutist European regimes with unreformed parliaments and no written constitutions, in the period before the French Revolution.

[2] In the political science literature, parliamentarism is also used to describe a type of democracy (often with monarchical roots), a counterpart to *presidentialism* (Stepan and Skach 1993, 3).

[3] The literature on Luxembourg is sparse, and I will have little to say about it.

[4] The States-General of the Netherlands, too, had the right to interpellate individual ministers and remove them from office (Newton 1978: 66, 71), though this was not much used.

[5] The National Assembly has significant powers, but the monarchy controls the elections (United States Department of State 2001).

[6] On Iraq (al-Hasani 1957): Egypt (al-Bishri 1987); Portugal (Livermore 1976: 288, 297, 314); Spain (Carr 1982: 213-4, 357; Herr 1971: 115); Bulgaria (Crampton 1997: 124, 133, 140, 151); Romania (Hitchens 1994: 21, 379); Italy (Seton-Watson 1967: 17, 45, 91, 151-4, 246-7; Mack Smith 1997: 180, 199); Brazil (Barman 1999).

[7] See the constitution at http://www.vanuatu.usp.ac.fj/paclawmat/Tonga_legislation/Tonga_Constitution.html.

[8] Jordan's constitution can be found at www.kingabdullah.jo/about_jordan/about_jordan.html. Morocco's constitution can be found at www.mincom.gov.ma/english/generalities/state_st/constitution.htm. See Denoeux and

Maghraoui 1998, 108-114.

[9] The constitution can be found at www.bahraintoday.net/pages/e_constitution.pdf .

[10] For a differing view, see Brown 2002, 124-5.

[11] It hardly helped that when the prime minister selected ‘younger faces’ for the cabinet, he wound up with the sons and daughters of party leaders and former cabinet ministers. *Al-Hayat* November 8, 2002.