Leader Language and Survival Strategies

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Abstract

Authoritarian leaders’ language provides clues to their survival strategies for remaining in office. This line of inquiry fits within an emerging literature that refocuses attention from state-level features to the dynamic role that individual heads of state and government play in international relations, especially in authoritarian regimes. The burgeoning text-as-data field can be used to deepen our understanding of the nuances of leader survival and political choices; for example, language can serve as a leading indicator of leader approval, which itself is a good predictor of leader survival. In this paper, we apply computational linguistics tools to an authoritarian leader corpus consisting of 102 speeches from nine leaders of countries across the Middle East and North Africa between 2009-2012. We find systematic differences in the language of these leaders, which help advance a more broadly applicable theory of authoritarian leader language and tenure.

Keywords: discourse, Arab Spring, leader survival
Authoritarian leaders’ language provides clues to their survival strategies for remaining in office. This line of inquiry fits within an emerging literature that refocuses attention from state-level features to the dynamic role that individual heads of state and government play in international relations, especially in authoritarian regimes (Jervis, 2013). The burgeoning text-as-data field can be used to deepen our understanding of the nuances of leader survival and political choices; for example, language can serve as a leading indicator of leader approval, which itself is a good predictor of leader survival (Love & Windsor, 2015). In this paper, we apply computational linguistics tools to an authoritarian leader corpus consisting of 102 speeches from nine leaders of countries across the Middle East and North Africa between 2009-2012. We find systematic differences in the language of these leaders, which help advance a more broadly applicable theory of authoritarian leader language and tenure.

Authoritarian leadership transitions are particularly fascinating because they are unpredictable and do not occur at regular intervals like democracies. Many factors help to explain leadership survival in authoritarian regimes during time of crisis, including the role of domestic audiences, the economy, conflict, and other sources of instability like natural disasters (Windsor, Dowell, & Graesser, 2014). However, a major trend in this body of research is the use of state-level features to explain outcomes that are also influenced by individual attributes, like political rhetoric and the way that leaders use language to influence public opinion (Love & Windsor, 2015). To better understand this process, we evaluate individual-level traits, using authoritarian leaders’ own words, to explore why some remain in office and others lose power during times of political crisis.
Brownlee, Masoud, & Reynolds (2015) provide a comprehensive structural explanation for the survival and removal of leaders across the Middle East and North Africa, namely that regimes with ample oil revenues and an established history of hereditary succession remained intact following the wave of Arab Spring protests. Oil rents and authoritarian lineage are perfect predictors of regime stability. Davenport (2007) identifies a chasm between state- and individual-level attributes, and language: “At present, an unwritten division of labor appears to exist: Scholars concerned with civil liberties, protest policing, human rights violations, and genocide/politicide focus on repression, while scholars interested in rhetoric, communication, and propaganda focus on persuasion… (Davenport, 2007: p9).” We seek to merge these two tracks, investigating whether a leader loses or retains power by examining how leaders talk about the political processes unfolding in their countries. Aggregate, state-level indicators like regime type, leader tenure, and economic success generate parsimonious predictions of leaders who remained in office following social disturbances, and leaders who were removed. Adding language to the evaluation may yield stronger predictive power in future cases where regimes exhibit identical higher-order traits. Moreover, language variables remain available during periods of crisis when many aggregate state level indicators are unavailable. The content and tone of leaders’ speeches is therefore much more widely applicable beyond the specific case of the Arab Spring.

Context and Audience

As domestic discontent grows, should autocrats inspire loyalty, invoke fear, cultivate a friendly dialogue, or convey authority through their public addresses? These decisions about linguistic maneuvering can help – or hurt – leaders as they navigate the rough
waters of public opinion. For example, populist leaders, like the Perons in Argentina, Chavez in Venezuela, or Gaddafi in Libya, utilize more emotional language to curry favor with the masses and needle the opposition (Love & Windsor, 2015). New evidence from the Arab Spring demonstrates that political discourse can shape a leader’s legacy. We show that variables derived from leaders’ language serve as good predictors of leader survival, and they augment state level indicators.

Leaders’ speeches have a specific aim, namely to persuade their supporters and citizens to keep them in power. Interestingly, leaders pursue different linguistic strategies in their speeches when faced with political crises, which is the central question addressed in this paper: What makes a particular rhetorical style effective in keeping authoritarian leaders in power, especially during times of political upheaval? To help manage uncertainty in times of crisis, authoritarian leaders lean on their control of the state media apparatus to disseminate messages and reach their intended audience. This includes the domestic public very broadly, their close group of supporters (the winning coalition (Mesquita, Smith, & Morrow, 2003)), and a foreign audience of leaders and institutions. As Petty, Cacioppo, Strathman, & Priester (2005) identified, formal language signifies that the speaker is using a central route to persuasion that signals a deliberate distancing strategy to convey a more authoritative and commanding presence, whereas speakers using informal language choose a more friendly, familiar peripheral route indicating common ground between speakers and listeners (Clark & Brennan, 1991). Informal language is also characterized by the use of emotionally-laden terminology. Authoritarian leaders generally use informal language during non-crisis times to foster rapport with their audiences, and more formal language during crises to influence close domestic and
international supporters, and to demonstrate their authoritative command of leadership (Windsor et al., 2014).

Whether or not a state is democratic or authoritarian broadly characterizes the language used by its leader, namely authoritarian leaders generally use more formal language in public venues than their democratic peers, potentially because they share less common ground with their audiences and must overcompensate linguistically for that fact (Windsor, 2016). However, among authoritarian regime types (including party-based, personalist, and monarchic), there is little variation in their use of formal language, indicating that they relate both to their democratic peers, and to each other, in the international system in similar ways.¹

This poses an interesting puzzle: if most authoritarian regimes broadly speak in similar ways, what if anything differentiates their language during times of crisis? Understanding this can help to distinguish between leaders who are likely to retain power, and those vulnerable to removal. To understand this, we examine particular features of language beyond formality, used in existing leadership studies (Slatcher, Chung, Pennebaker, & Stone, 2007; Windsor, 2016). These include linguistic measures that capture leaders’ risk acceptance, certitude, emotionality, and references to in- and out-groups. Understanding how and when leaders use these strategies can shed light on the audience they are trying to reach, and may help explain why some leaders remain in power and others are removed.

¹ Windsor (2016) does find that military regimes are even more informal than most democratic regimes. However, the sample size of military regimes was comparatively small. This point is moot in the present study, however, since there are no military regimes evaluated empirically.
The individual element – each person’s linguistic fingerprint – bears mentioning. While all leaders are constrained by their own language particularities and are bound by their previous rhetorical styles, there are also broad discernible, generalizable features that characterize authoritarian and democratic leaders’ language (Windsor, 2016). In short, regime level features appear to override leader-specific linguistic features. In line with this, previous research on authoritarian leaders has demonstrated that authoritarian leaders’ public rhetoric differs from democratic leaders’ language, suggesting that there are regime-level features that influence lexical, syntactic, and semantic choices. This work corroborates previous findings that during crises, successful authoritarian leaders tend to take the central, more erudite, and formal route, to connect with their audiences. In other words, they deliberately try to appear more authoritative, likeable, and credible, and these efforts manifest in their language patterns.

Language and Leader Survival in Authoritarian Regimes

Crises make leaders work harder to hold on to power, and language does much of the heavy lifting alongside the state security apparatus in authoritarian regimes. Exogenous shocks as well as endogenous stressors require leaders to be more persuasive and appealing to their supporters. They can choose tropes of optimism or anger, depending on the depth of discontent amongst citizens and the potential for collective mobilization. They can choose a more erudite, direct approach, or choose to use a more conversational, emotional tone (Petty et al., 2005).

Sentiment

Leaders literally set the political tone through their speeches, and citizens are receptive to these messages (Love & Windsor, 2015). When leaders use more positively valenced
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words, citizens in turn experience more positive emotions themselves and also reward leaders with higher approval ratings (Bono & Ilies, 2006; Love & Windsor, 2015). This initiates a feedback loop whereby the people in turn feel more positively about their leaders, resulting in higher leader approval ratings and a longer time in power.

Conversely, leaders using more negative emotion risk evoking negative sentiments in their citizenry, exacerbating discontent and potentially hastening removal from office. Expressing negative sentiment does not endear leaders to their people. This discussion leads to our first set of expectations:

*Authoritarian leaders who survive political crises use more positive language.*

*Authoritarian leaders who are removed from office use more negative language.*

**Analytic Thinking**

Leaders that demonstrate analytical thinking tend to use more formal, As previously mentioned, governance, like whether the country is a democracy or autocracy, contributes to the ways that leaders communicate (Windsor, 2016). In public forums, leaders of democracies tend to use informal language whereas leaders of autocracies use formal language. Formal language is characterized by stilted, and cognitively cumbersome phrasing, and it indicates distance between the speaker and listener(s). Authoritarian leaders who have been in power longer tend to use the less cognitively demanding peripheral route as they have an established rapport and share more common ground with their audience, except during times of crisis where they tend to use the central route (Dowell, Windsor, & Graesser, 2015). As such, the leaders who have been in power the longest should have to put forth the least amount of effort to communicate their messages (Petty et al., 2005).
This is a curious problem for leaders in the Arab Spring, as those with a longer time in office were removed from power. In this case, it makes sense to take a broader perspective on the question of common ground between leaders and their supporters and constituents. Leaders who lost power during the Arab Spring held office for an average of 32 years, whereas leaders who survived in office have been in power for half that time (14.6 years). The average age of the leaders removed from office was 74.5 years, whereas the average age of the leaders who remained in office was 59.2 years. Given that many of the leaders who lost power were elderly, spending too much time in office may have caused them to lose touch with their constituents and overestimate the amount of common ground they shared. In essence, they were out of touch and out of step, and their language reflects that. Yet even when leaders have established common ground, during crises they are likely to resort to more cognitively demanding and formal language, indicative of the central route to persuasion. In this case, the speaker is likely to use big words, conveying command and credibility. When they use this rhetorical style, they appear more authoritative in times of crisis and demonstrate they can steer the ship of state through rough waters. Given that the Arab Spring presented a significant threat to regime stability, we generate the following expectation:

*Authoritarian leaders who survive crises use the central route to persuasion.*

**Risk, Reward, In- and Out-Groups**

Do citizens respond better to linguistic carrots or sticks, and to inclusive or exclusive language? Language should mirror other tactics that authoritarians use to remain in power, including implementing social repression using the power of the state military and security apparatus. Using heavy-handed language associated with risks should signal the
death knell of an authoritarian regime. Leaders who remain in power use language to promote solidarity. They also focus discontent on outside parties less. If a leader has lost the ability to inspire loyalty and unity and resorts to blame, it is likely that s/he will lose power.

Leaders who remain in power use more in-group language.

Leaders who remain in power use more reward and less risk language.

Arab Spring Leaders in Context

We now turn to the unique circumstances concerning nine leaders of countries experiencing some level of dissent during the Arab Spring phenomenon. Leaders’ language provides an opportunity to observe their own evaluations of the upheaval across the Middle East and North Africa (MENA), and adds insight into their strategies for navigating the political uncertainty of the time. Given the absence of systematic analysis of leader language and survival in the literature, we seek to fill this gap by applying our workflow to the events of the Arab Spring. It is well established that governance and economic factors are solid predictors of a leader’s persistence in or removal from office (Brownlee, Masoud, & Reynolds, 2013). Other competing approaches for leader survival include sociopolitical vulnerabilities like natural disasters and leaders’ ability to make credible concessions (Flores & Smith, 2013; Windsor et al., 2014). The process of governance includes communication with constituents, and in authoritarian regimes, the leaders likely control the media as well as the narrative. Qualities like cognitive processing and emotional language are detectable in speech patterns, which we evaluate using computational linguistics tools.
The political changes across the Middle East and North Africa beginning in 2010 present some challenging misconceptions (Mansfield & Snyder, 2012). Language should reflect leaders’ strategies for remaining in office through politically contentious times. Leaders’ language should be characterized by the histories they share with their constituents, and also with the strategies they employ to retain power. We take the approach advocated by Davenport and Moore, disaggregating the phenomena by leader and evaluating the unique contexts of each regime alongside the language used by leaders (Davenport & Moore, 2012).

Our analysis evaluates the fate of each leader and the language he used during the most active years of the Arab Spring uprising. Table 1 provides summary statistics for the leaders in our sample. The number of speeches varies between the leaders, indicating that some leaders took fewer opportunities to address the public. The following section provides background information on the regimes, as well as excerpts from speeches given during the Arab Spring.

[Table 1 about here]

**Operationalizing Authoritarian Leader Language**

For this research we gathered all available speeches given by leaders in nine countries experiencing social and political unrest as a part of the broadly defined Arab Spring phenomenon as previously described in Table 1. All available public speeches were retrieved from English-language sources, and any translation of original texts occurred prior to our analysis. Some leaders gave more public addresses than others, yielding an unbalanced data set during our time of observation. We analyzed the documents in their

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2 This corpus may not represent the population of speeches given by the leaders in our study; however we gathered as many as were publicly available.
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unedited translated format; any syntax or semantic errors are original to the translator’s work. We acknowledge that both automated and human translations of Arabic language documents can present variations from the original source text. To help compensate for this we use measures that are calculated only from the words present in the document and that ignore syntax. The speeches were processed using Text Cleaner and analyzed with a computational linguistics tool, LIWC, described below. We provide summary statistics and also use logistic regression to evaluate the differences between leaders who lost power versus those who remain in power. We use Stata 13 software from StataCorp.

Computational Tool

*Linguistic Inquiry Word Count (LIWC)*

We use *Linguistic Inquiry and Word Count* to evaluate the language of leaders across the Middle East and North Africa. LIWC is an increasingly popular automated word analysis tool used in the social sciences (Pennebaker, Booth, & Francis, 2007; Pennebaker, Boyd, Jordan, & Blackburn, 2015; Tausczik & Pennebaker, 2010). LIWC analyzes texts files on a word-by-word basis using an internal dictionary of almost 6,400 of the most common words and word stems, and then categorizes them into over 80 linguistic dimensions. These dimensions are organized into language categories including the following: standard language like articles, prepositions, pronouns; psychological processes like positive and negative emotion words, cognitive processes; and content categories like sex, death, home, occupation. The standardized values are expressed as a percentage of the total words in the text sample. For example, if the number for the category “pronouns” is 9.22, this means that 9.22% of the total words in the text were pronouns. The only
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categories that do not reflect percentages are word count, words per sentence and words found by dictionary.

Because LIWC takes a “bag of words” approach, there is little reason for concern regarding the preservation of the original syntactic structure of the text. Furthermore, since LIWC utilizes category-based dictionaries, if a translator misses the exact word the speaker intended, it is likely that its nearest neighbor is included in the dictionary and as such the content word would be counted in the analysis. Any measurement error in the data as a result of Arabic to English translation transpired prior to the analysis with LIWC.³

Competing Hypotheses

Recent scholarship by Brownlee et al. (2013) on the Arab Spring highlights several key factors that succinctly explain why some leaders remain in power while others were ousted. These include oil wealth, and the regime type. They write, “Where dictators had inherited rule…or commanded vast oil rents, their repressive forces remained sufficiently loyal and cohesive to conduct brutal crackdowns, often reaching the level of outright warfare (Brownlee et al., 2013: 30).” Including regime type in our empirical analysis yields a perfect prediction of which leaders survive and which are removed. Given the previous findings (Windsor, 2016) on linguistic features of authoritarian discourse, we do not include a measure of government type since we anticipate that, ceteris paribus, the authoritarian regime types analyzed here (party, personalist, and monarchy/hereditary autocracy) use similar language.

Analysis

³ LIWC can analyze text in several original languages: English, Chinese, Arabic, Spanish, Dutch, French, German, Italian, Russian and Turkish
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Using computational linguistic tools, we evaluate the whether authoritarian leaders lost or retained power following the Arab Spring social movements. Our dependent variables are linguistic variables generated by LIWC. Our independent variable is dichotomous, indicating whether a leader survived in office or not. Our corpus is analyzed in blocks of 20 words (N=9438).

Language Variables

Our language measures come directly from LIWC variables, as shown in Table 2. In LIWC 2015 dictionaries there are 620 positive emotion words/word stems/emoticons, and 744 negative emotion words/word stems/emoticons. With only nine leaders we cannot hope to firmly establish any causal relationships. For this reason, our analysis should be considered exploratory. Moreover, this limitation means that we cannot use data-driven variable selection methods but must rely on theoretical considerations to guide our choice of variables. We focus on eleven primary LIWC variables for our analysis, which have clear theoretical justification and for which we can hypothesize a direction.

In our analysis, we should give higher weight to longer speeches. We do this via a simple expedient of breaking speeches into “segments” of 20 words (we ignore partial fragments in fitting our model but not when giving summary statistics). We compute our mean difference using linear regression of the “continuous” linguistic variable against a binary indicator variable that indicates whether a leader remained in office. The constant term then reflects the predicted value of the variable for a leader that loses power and the coefficient on the indicator variable is the difference between the predicted value of the variable for a leader who retained power and the predicted value of the variable for a
leader who lost power. If errors are not clustered, then this is exactly equivalent to a t-test. We cluster standard errors by country, the most conservative possible approach, which considerably increases our p-values. Unfortunately, the relative paucity of data makes more advanced panel analyses infeasible as well as precludes survival type models.

We present the p-values from this process for each of our eleven primary focus variables. This shows four of the eleven significant at the 0.05 level: She/He; Anxious; Negative Emotion; and Certain. Finally, we consider those that would remain significant after a Holm-Šidák correction for multiple comparisons to control the family-wise error rate. Even after such a correction two of the eleven variables show statistically significant differences.

The pronoun variables We, She/He, and They indicate whether a leader is focusing on inclusivity or whether they are trying to focus discontent on outside parties. We posit that leaders who remain in power use the first person plural pronoun We, used to promote solidarity, more and the third person pronouns She/He and They, used to focus discontent on outside parties, less. The first person singular pronoun is often associated with personalist authoritarian leaders but its role in retaining power is far from clear. It is possible that the role of the second person pronoun also serves to distinguish in from out groups and generate a ‘blame frame’. Ultimately the blame frame is an unsuccessful strategy for remaining in power; to quote the familiar phrase: those who sling mud lose ground.

Affective words, which seek to sway a listener’s emotions, are obviously important to a leader trying to remain in office. We posit that leaders who remain in power use more positive emotion words, and fewer words associated with negative
emotion, anxiety, and anger. The role of sadness is unclear. The cognitive process variables tentative and certain give insight into the leaders view of their own security. We suggest that leaders who remain in power use more certain words and less tentative words. The drives variables reward and risk indicating whether the leader is extoling the positive benefits of their remaining in power or the expounding on the negative consequences of removing them from power. It is possible that leaders who remain in power use more words indicating rewards and fewer words indicating risks.

We will examine two additional individual LIWC variables after the main analysis. The following table shows the means of our focus variables by leader.

[table 2 about here]

Since the actual usage of categories was different between leaders that lost power and leaders that retained power we present a column indicating the relative use of within the category.

[table 3 about here]

Interestingly we see that though only two variables show statistical significance, almost all follow our posited theoretical directions. Though the percentage of We words declined so did the entire pronoun category. We see that within our pronoun domain the proportional use of We was on average higher for leaders that survived, and the proportional use of She/He, and They was lower. Among the affective domain we see that all the variables behaved as predicted both as absolute percentages and proportionally. That is, leaders that retained power used on average more positive emotion words, and fewer negative emotion, anxious, and angry words. For the tentative and certain variables, we see that while both the percentage of tentative and certain words
increase for leaders that retain power, proportionally leaders that retain power used more
certain words and fewer tentative words than did leaders that lost power. The risk and
reward variables behaved as predicted both as absolute percentages and proportionally.
That is, leaders that retained power on average used more reward words and fewer risk
words. It is interesting to note that the Pronoun and Affective domains were used less
frequently by leaders that retained power while the domains of Cognitive Processes and
Drives were used more frequently. The changes in the She/He and Anxious variables are
statistically significant even after controlling for multiple comparisons.

Additional explanatory measures

We also include five other variables in Table 4 that reached statistical significance but did
not fit within the scope of our theoretical framework for this paper. These include
adjectives, male, comparisons, biological and health-related terms. For some of these
variables, we have no theoretical expectations explaining their statistical significance.
However, we do find most fascinating that leaders who lost power referenced male
terminology more frequently than did those who retained power. This finding fits nicely
with the statistically significant variable She/He from our main model, and adds depth to
the dimension of political opposition. One possible explanation for this is the youth bulge
argument and the threat posed to political stability by young, unemployed, and
disaffected young men (Nordås & Davenport, 2013; Urdal, 2006). The youth-driven
social movements and the armed anti-government factions were comprised largely of
young men, although in some cases young women participated in sizeable numbers as
well. Given the importance of – and threat posed by – young men during times of
political upheaval, leaders’ increased use of language related to males merits further exploration in future work.

[Table 4 about here]

Leader Specific Language Differences

Broadly speaking, regime characteristics influence leaders’ language more than individual linguistic quirks. However, in our sample of leaders there are outliers whose words are distinctly different from their peers: Gaddafi and Assad. Figure 1 shows the variables death and anger that leaders used from the speeches contained within our corpus. We note two important issues: first, Gaddafi uses the most extreme language of the leaders in this set. His use of death- and anger-related language stands apart from the others. Second, in many ways, Assad’s language behaves similarly to leaders who lost power. From a linguistic perspective, Assad’s persistence in office represents an anomaly given his dissimilarity to those who remained in power. From a geopolitical perspective, Assad’s persistence in office can largely be attributed to the foreign support and lack of international consensus that has benefited his tenure.

[Figure 1 about here]

Conclusions

Through an examination of leader speeches during the Arab Spring, we have provided evidence that leaders’ language during times of crisis may help explain which leaders will remain in office and which leaders will not. Leaders who remained in power following the political movements across the Middle East and North Africa used language that reflects solidarity and positivity, and minimizes blame and anxiety. Leaders that convey strong leadership through their words remained in office, whereas those who
resorted to emotionally laden populist strategies lost power. Given that other recent work has established that most authoritarian regimes (party-based, personalist, and monarchies) have very similar speaking styles, we feel it is premature to make the claim that these language features are exclusive to hereditary regimes. Rather, we propose that leaders who survived the Arab Spring relied on the central route to persuasion, echoing the findings of previous work (Dowell et al., 2015). Some higher order, regime-specific features are perfect predictors of survival, like the level of repression and the number of years in office. On the other hand, language provides considerable variation within and between leaders that adds nuance to the potential wider application of these findings.

This work suggests that language variables may provide useful insight into political phenomena and possibly provide information beyond traditional state level indicators for predicting regime instability. These findings are encouraging and indicative of the promise of using leader-specific language data to better understand complex political phenomena, like contagious social movements and political instability, and assist in political forecasting. This is especially true in the case of non-democratic systems where leaders have an “advantage” in implementing policies which would be otherwise moderated in more democratic societies (Huntington, 1968).

We hope that this type of analysis will bear fruit in future examinations of non-democratic regimes. In future research we would like to further investigate the ways in which leaders’ language deviates from their longitudinal baseline during political crises. We believe that leader language, especially in authoritarian regimes, can add value to our current understanding of international phenomena beyond the case of the Arab Spring. This type of discourse analysis can be applied to regimes in Iran or North Korea, for
example, to help demystify internal dynamics and external posturing presently not covered by state-level variables. Further, we can apply this workflow of leader-level linguistic variables to other pressing areas of international relations and comparative politics, like why leaders bluff or make credible threats, and why countries engage in interstate war.
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Table 1: Authoritarian leaders in the Arab Spring

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<th>Leader</th>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Speeches Count</th>
<th>Years in Power</th>
<th>Lost Power</th>
<th>Date Lost Power</th>
<th>Government Type</th>
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<tr>
<td>Ali Abdullah Saleh</td>
<td>Yemen</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7/18/1978-2/27/2012 (34 years)</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>2/27/2012</td>
<td>Personal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>King Mohammed VI</td>
<td>Morocco</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>7/23/1999 – present (16 years)</td>
<td>No</td>
<td></td>
<td>Monarchy</td>
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<tr>
<td>King Abdullah II</td>
<td>Jordan</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>2/7/1999 – present (16 years)</td>
<td>No</td>
<td></td>
<td>Monarchy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa</td>
<td>Bahrain</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3/2/1999 – present (16 years)</td>
<td>No</td>
<td></td>
<td>Monarchy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abdullah bin Abdulaziz Al Saud</td>
<td>Saudi Arabia</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>8/1/2005 – 1/23/2015 (10 years)</td>
<td>No</td>
<td></td>
<td>Monarchy</td>
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Table 2. Means of LIWC Focus Variables by Leader

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Leader</th>
<th>Country</th>
<th>We</th>
<th>She/He</th>
<th>They</th>
<th>Positive Emotion</th>
<th>Negative Emotion</th>
<th>Anxious</th>
<th>Anger</th>
<th>Tentative</th>
<th>Certain</th>
<th>Risk</th>
<th>Reward</th>
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<tr>
<td>Abdullah</td>
<td>Jordan</td>
<td>2.83%</td>
<td>0.12%</td>
<td>1.06%</td>
<td>5.58%</td>
<td>1.41%</td>
<td>0.29%</td>
<td>0.48%</td>
<td>1.59%</td>
<td>2.22%</td>
<td>1.04%</td>
<td>1.76%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Abdullah</td>
<td>Saudi Arabia</td>
<td>2.97%</td>
<td>0.16%</td>
<td>0.70%</td>
<td>4.15%</td>
<td>1.37%</td>
<td>0.41%</td>
<td>0.48%</td>
<td>0.90%</td>
<td>1.66%</td>
<td>1.04%</td>
<td>1.58%</td>
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<td>Assad</td>
<td>Syria</td>
<td>2.84%</td>
<td>0.30%</td>
<td>1.38%</td>
<td>3.03%</td>
<td>1.54%</td>
<td>0.22%</td>
<td>0.51%</td>
<td>2.25%</td>
<td>1.80%</td>
<td>0.99%</td>
<td>1.03%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hamad</td>
<td>Bharain</td>
<td>4.49%</td>
<td>0.40%</td>
<td>1.08%</td>
<td>5.65%</td>
<td>1.41%</td>
<td>0.21%</td>
<td>0.45%</td>
<td>0.91%</td>
<td>1.92%</td>
<td>1.02%</td>
<td>1.27%</td>
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<td>Mohammed</td>
<td>Morocco</td>
<td>1.40%</td>
<td>0.23%</td>
<td>0.52%</td>
<td>4.65%</td>
<td>0.64%</td>
<td>0.19%</td>
<td>0.17%</td>
<td>0.82%</td>
<td>1.80%</td>
<td>0.53%</td>
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<td>Ben Ali</td>
<td>Tunisia</td>
<td>3.15%</td>
<td>0.13%</td>
<td>1.63%</td>
<td>4.27%</td>
<td>1.36%</td>
<td>0.41%</td>
<td>0.31%</td>
<td>0.99%</td>
<td>1.98%</td>
<td>1.11%</td>
<td>1.48%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gaddafi</td>
<td>Libya</td>
<td>1.85%</td>
<td>0.57%</td>
<td>1.36%</td>
<td>2.71%</td>
<td>2.71%</td>
<td>0.36%</td>
<td>1.57%</td>
<td>1.77%</td>
<td>1.30%</td>
<td>1.12%</td>
<td>0.64%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mubarak</td>
<td>Egypt</td>
<td>2.98%</td>
<td>0.47%</td>
<td>0.95%</td>
<td>4.36%</td>
<td>1.59%</td>
<td>0.41%</td>
<td>0.36%</td>
<td>0.93%</td>
<td>1.56%</td>
<td>1.04%</td>
<td>1.28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saleh</td>
<td>Yemen</td>
<td>2.32%</td>
<td>0.42%</td>
<td>1.39%</td>
<td>5.91%</td>
<td>2.33%</td>
<td>0.53%</td>
<td>0.81%</td>
<td>1.21%</td>
<td>1.89%</td>
<td>1.49%</td>
<td>1.62%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 3. Linguistic Variable Means by Leader Survival

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Lose Power</th>
<th>Retain Power</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Different</th>
<th>P. Value</th>
<th>Null Hyp.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>We</td>
<td>2.40%</td>
<td>58%</td>
<td>2.29%</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>-0.11%</td>
<td>0.8645</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>She/He</td>
<td>0.48%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>0.24%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>-0.24%</td>
<td>0.0047</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>They</td>
<td>1.26%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>0.90%</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>-0.36%</td>
<td>0.2209</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive Emotion</td>
<td>3.77%</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>4.32%</td>
<td>72%</td>
<td>0.55%</td>
<td>0.5007</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative Emotion</td>
<td>2.18%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>1.09%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>-1.09%</td>
<td>0.0342</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anxious</td>
<td>0.40%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>0.22%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>-0.18%</td>
<td>0.0014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anger</td>
<td>0.96%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>0.34%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>-0.62%</td>
<td>0.1392</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tentative</td>
<td>1.34%</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>1.36%</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>0.02%</td>
<td>0.9686</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Certain</td>
<td>1.52%</td>
<td>53%</td>
<td>1.86%</td>
<td>58%</td>
<td>0.35%</td>
<td>0.0389</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Risk</td>
<td>1.15%</td>
<td>53%</td>
<td>0.79%</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>-0.36%</td>
<td>0.0571</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reward</td>
<td>1.04%</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>1.47%</td>
<td>65%</td>
<td>0.43%</td>
<td>0.2006</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 4. Additional Explanatory Measures

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Lose Power</th>
<th>Retain Power</th>
<th>Diff. of Means</th>
<th>P. Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Adjectives</td>
<td>3.81%</td>
<td>4.47%</td>
<td>0.66%</td>
<td>0.017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comparisons</td>
<td>1.50%</td>
<td>2.01%</td>
<td>0.51%</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>0.85%</td>
<td>0.51%</td>
<td>-0.34%</td>
<td>0.016</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bio</td>
<td>0.94%</td>
<td>0.67%</td>
<td>-0.26%</td>
<td>0.037</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health</td>
<td>0.46%</td>
<td>0.28%</td>
<td>-0.17%</td>
<td>0.006</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Figure 1. Anxiety, She/He, Negative Emotion, and Certainty by Country (LIWC 2015)
Leaders Removed From Office

Zine al-Abidine Ben Ali (Tunisia)

Zine al-Abidine Ben Ali was President of Tunisia between November 1987 and January 2011. He took charge of the government when longtime leader Habib Bourguiba was declared incompetent and Prime Minister Ben Ali was next in the order of succession. He had been Prime Minister for approximately one month when he became President. Ben Ali held a number of military and diplomatic roles prior to entering politics in the mid-1980s. He was re-elected President four times, most recently in 2009, and all of his electoral victories were landslides.

Ben Ali’s presidency ended in an abrupt and dramatic fashion that caught most by surprise (Gause III, 2011). In late 2010 and early 2011 Tunisians began to speak out against high unemployment rates, inflated food prices, and the lack of basic human rights like freedom of speech. While demonstrations and riots occasionally erupted during this time period, things were brought to a head by the suicide of a young man in southern Tunisia. In an act of self-immolation, Mohamed Bouazizi took his own life outside a police station after a policewoman publicly humiliated him, and the authorities denied him the meager wages he took in as a vegetable seller. Anger spread throughout the country and massive riots broke out in all the major cities as Tunisians called for Ben Ali to step down.

In an attempt to salvage his presidency, he offered to not run again when his current term of office expired. When that effort failed, he and his wife fled Tunisia for Saudi Arabia, where they currently reside with the stipulation that he not become involved in politics. Soon after his departure a Tunisian court found the couple guilty of
theft and illegal possession of money and jewelry, consistent with the widespread
corruption common to his regime (Raghavan, 2011). They were found guilty in absentia,
sentenced to thirty-five years in prison, and fined 65 million dollars.

(January 10, 2011): Justice has taken its course to clarify the conditions and the
ins and outs of these incidents, to determine those responsible. Citizens, citizens.
These incidents are the work of a small group of hostile elements who are
offended by the success of Tunisia and who are filled with resentment and
grievance, because of the progress and development achieved by the country, as
evidenced by the reports of institutions and international and UN organisations
known for their objectivity and impartiality. These ill-intentioned elements have
used the issue of unemployment, exploiting an isolated act of desperation, as
happens in all societies and in many situations. Hostile elements in the pay of
foreigners, who have sold their souls to extremism and terrorism, manipulated
from outside the country by parties who do not wish well to a country determined
to persevere and work.

Muammar Gaddafi (Libya)

Born to a Bedouin family in a small oasis in the Libyan Desert, Colonel Muammar
Gaddafi was the longest-serving head of state in the Arab world. Upon graduating from a
military academy he became a member of the Free Officers Movement, with additional
training taking place in the United Kingdom. Many members of that group were opposed
to the policies of the monarchy, and Gaddafi successfully organized a coup d’État that led
to the overthrow of King Idris I in 1969. Once he took the political reins Gaddafi
established a system of government known as “Jamahiriya,” which theoretically allows
the Libyan populace to have a say in government through local councils. In practice, Libya lacks political infrastructure and is the least politically institutionalized country in our sample. Gaddafi’s political philosophy is summarized in a publication titled *The Green Book*, which appeared in 1975 and has been ridiculed by many as a collection of rambling thoughts. Gaddafi has been a proponent of pan-Islamism, which favors unity among all Islamic nations and peoples. Ironically, some of his personal eccentricities and oddities have often marginalized him from his fellow Arabs and Muslims. During his long tenure in office Gaddafi was linked to terrorist acts and organizations, including the IRA, the Palestinian Black September Movement and most infamously, the attack on Pan Am flight 103 in 1988.

In the wake of the events in Tunisia and Egypt in late 2010 and early 2011, Libyans began protesting against Gaddafi and his government in February 2011. As the situation worsened a number of high-ranking government officials and ambassadors resigned from their positions and sided with the demonstrators. In order to protect Libyan civilians the UN instituted a no-fly zone over Libya in March 2011, and the following month NATO forces bombed one of Gaddafi’s residences, resulting in the death of his youngest son and several of his grandchildren.

He continued to restrict rights on political dissent, and many believe he recruited mercenaries from Ghana and elsewhere in Africa to intensify the violence he has committed against his own people. In June 2011 the International Criminal Court charged Gaddafi and several of his aides with crimes against humanity. Gaddafi rejected the ICC’s authority and has questioned its legitimacy to rule on the matter. The opposition to Gaddafi coalesced to form a group known as the Transitional National Council (TNC)
(Boduszyński & Pickard, 2013). In July 2011 representatives of almost three dozen
governments recognized the TNC as the sole and legitimate government of Libya.
Speaking on national television, Gaddafi denounced the TNC as a worthless entity that
does not represent the people or interests of Libya. Rebel forces killed him in a battle
near Sirte on October 20, 2011, and Libya has remained politically unstable and fraught
with civil violence amongst competing tribes in subsequent years.

(July 31, 2011) Forward, you soldiers of Saiqa and you soldiers of Al Fadil! Let
the masses go out in concerted effort with the brave soldiers, so Libya can return
as it was: free, dignified and peaceful, so that the bloodshed can be stopped. The
families in Misrata, our people in Misrata are being slaughtered. Women’s
breasts were being chopped off. Let the masses march, this is the Revolutionary
Youth, these are the Revolutionary Women, these are battalions who trained on
arms and who are ready to fight.

Ali Abdullah Saleh (Yemen)

Ali Abdullah Saleh was President of the Yemen Arab Republic (North Yemen) between
1978 and 1990. When South Yemen reunited with North Yemen in 1990 he became
President of the Republic of Yemen. Amid countrywide protests calling for an end to his
33-year leadership, in February 2012 his deputy, Abdrabbuh Mansour Hadi, assumed
power to form a unity government. A Shi’i Muslim, Saleh was in the military prior to
becoming a politician, and as a Field Marshall he is currently the highest ranking officer
in Yemen. He was an ally and supporter of Saddam Hussein, and he backed Iraq’s
invasion of Kuwait in 1990. Saleh also has had strong ties with Iran, which is not
surprising given his membership in the Shi‘i community, and in particular he has been supportive of Iran’s nuclear energy program.

Inspired by events in Tunisia and Egypt, in late 2010 and early 2011, Yemenis began to speak out against Saleh for his human rights abuses, heavy-handed tactics, and reluctance to commit to political reform (Alley, 2013). In February 2011 he announced that he would finish out his term and not run again, but more than two dozen members of his administration resigned in protest because they felt he should step down immediately. In March government forces killed more than 50 Yemenis and wounded more than 200 during demonstrations in the capital city of Sana‘a. He fired his entire cabinet in late March, but asked them to stay in office until they could be replaced. In April he agreed to leave office within a month and announced plans to hand over the reins of power to his Vice President. In mid-May, he reiterated that promise, but then did an about-face a few days later, leading to more demonstrations and unrest. On June 3 his compound was attacked by a rocket-propelled grenade, resulting in the death of several people in his inner circle, including the Prime Minister, and the injury of a number of others. Saleh himself was wounded in the attack, and the government initially downplayed the severity of his condition. He was flown to Saudi Arabia for treatment, and it was subsequently revealed that he suffered severe burns over much of his upper body and had also been wounded by shrapnel. While he recuperated, the Vice President was appointed as acting President. In early July, Saleh appeared on national television and acknowledged that he would transfer power permanently, but he said it must be done legally and within the framework of the Yemeni constitution.
(May 21, 2016) Unity is a strategic and historic accomplishment and a great fruit resulted by the struggle of the people and sacrifices of the homeland's martyrs. Unity has embodied in reality goals and principles of the 26th of September and 14th. of October revolutions and aspirations of the Yemeni people to rid of eras of imamate, colonialism as well as their aspirations for the sake of a better future. In light of separation our people suffered from bloody catastrophes and conflicts either between the two parts or inside each part of the homeland. Unity was achieved to end those disasters and bring freedom, democracy, security and safety. Since then citizens enjoyed freedom, security and safety of their lives, families and properties.

Hosni Mubarak (Egypt)

Muhammad Hosni El Sayed Mubarak was the fourth President of Egypt. Prior to his political career, he was an officer in the Egyptian Air Force, and he served as its commander from 1972-1975. In 1973, Mubarak played an important role during the Yom Kippur War against Israel, and was credited with showing the strength of the Egyptian Air Force. Although other sources suggest that Mubarak altered photographs in order to take credit for the successes of the military, Mubarak became the Vice President of Egypt in 1975. He was appointed by the third President Anwar Sadat, and accompanied him to many meetings with United States Ambassadors. Throughout the events leading up to his assassination, Sadat’s popularity took heavy blows from his political and economic policies. To the detriment of the citizens of Egypt, Sadat broke ties with the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR), who were long-time supporters of Egypt. He also signed treaties with Israeli opposition, in particular the Camp David Accords, and opened
up Egypt’s economy to foreign investments and ownership. Despite being held in high regard by the western world, the outrage of anti-colonialist revolutionaries and Islamic fundamentalists culminated in Sadat’s assassination in 1981.

Multiple sources question Mubarak’s involvement in Sadat’s assassination and some propose that the Sadat was murdered in order to preserve the Camp David Accords (Fahmy, 2011; “Mubarak involved in Sadat assassination?,” 2011). Subsequently, the peace treaties with Israel and the participation in the Gulf War as a member of the allied coalition garnered for Egypt Western support and economic stimulus. Mubarak’s regime increased the availability of affordable housing, medicine, and clothing, but his views against Islamic fundamentalists and his allegiance with Israel and the United States made him the target of multiple assassination attempts (Daniszewski, 1999; Wright, 2007). On four occasions in 1987, 1993, 1999, and 2005, Mubarak was re-elected through majority votes in referendums. Tensions rose to new levels in Egypt when opposing candidate Ayman Nour of the reformist El-Ghad Party was sentenced to five years in prison after accusing Mubarak of rigging the election. The imprisonment of Nour was amongst a pile of evidence of Mubarak’s corruption. The regime imprisoned many other political figures and activists without trials, built illegal detention facilities, and rejected proposals for universities, mosques, and newspapers that spread word of dissent and opposed Mubarak’s power. In early 2011, mass protests demanding the resignation Mubarak began in major Egyptian cities (Brown, 2013). By 2012, Mubarak was sentenced to life in prison for not putting a stop to the massacre of peaceful protestors in Egypt. The life sentence was overturned by an appeals court, but he remains in custody (Kirkpatrick, 2012).
(February 1, 2011) The Hosni Mubarak that is speaking to you today is proud of his long years of service to Egypt and her people. This great nation is my nation, just as it is the nation of every Egyptian man and women. I have lived in it, fought for her, and defended her territory, sovereignty and interests, and on her land I will die, and history will judge me and others.

Leaders Still in Power

Bashar al-Assad (Syria)

Bashar al-Assad has been the President of Syria since 2000, when he took office after the death of his father, Hafez al-Assad, who ruled the country for nearly 30 years. The family belongs to the Alawi Shi`i sect that comprises about 10% of the Syrian population. Al-Assad is an ophthalmologist by training who did some of his studies in London and had no political aspirations as a young man. However, he was thrust into the political limelight when his older brother, who was being groomed to be their father’s replacement, died suddenly in a car accident. Al-Assad was brought back to Syria and entered the military, achieving the rank of Colonel. With his father’s death, he became President after the minimum age for office was lowered by Parliament from 40 to 34, Bashar’s age at the time. He was elected President in 2000 with 97% of the vote, and reelected again in 2007 with the same percentage. As President, al-Assad is head of the Ba’ath party, a secular movement that controls Parliament and is virtually unopposed by other political parties. The state exerts a great deal of control in Syria, and the al-Assad regime has very close ties to the military that it deploys coercively to exert control over civilians. Al-Assad’s family belongs to the largest religious minority in Syria, the Alawites (18%). Other groups include the Sunni (64%), Shi’a (9%), Druze (3%), and Christians (12%).
Since 1963 Syria has been under emergency law, which has curtailed the rights and freedoms of its citizens. In January 2011 Syria’s civil war began, resulting in extensive human rights abuses including more than 140,000 killed, 500,000 wounded, 17,000 imprisoned, and 2.5 million displaced.\footnote{1}{http://reliefweb.int/report/syrian-arab-republic/deaths-refugees-and-damage-syrias-crisis-figures} Al-Assad has blamed the violence on radical Islamic groups and outside agitators, while his opponents point the finger at government security forces acting at al-Assad’s command. The UN and many western nations have condemned the use of force and hold the government responsible for the violence and bloodshed. Throughout this tense period al-Assad has promised changes and called for reform, and his most notable concession has been a recent change in the law that would allow the formation of opposition political parties.\footnote{2}{(“Counting Casualties in Syria,” n.d.). Human Rights Data Analysis Group.} Protest leaders dismissed the move as a disingenuous symbolic gesture. Human rights groups have documented gross violations throughout the conflict, and the United Nations has played a mixed role in the conflict. A divided Security Council continues to equivocate on a decisive plan of action, while humanitarian agencies provide care for those displaced by the conflict in neighboring countries. Despite Al-Assad’s continued tenure in office, the power vacuum in Syria amidst the continued fighting has invited a pernicious and particularly ruthless group to emerge, the self-titled Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS).

\textit{(June 21, 2011) Today we meet at an important juncture in the history of our nation. This is a moment in which, through our will and determination, we strive to make a point of departure from a past burdened with pain and unrest where innocent blood, which has pained every single Syrian heart, was shed. We aim at a future full of hope; hope that our homeland will restore the harmony and...}
tranquility that it always enjoyed, based on strong foundations of freedom, solidity and engagement. We have been through difficult times. In terms of our security and stability, we have paid a heavy price. What happened was an unprecedented ordeal that overshadowed our country and led to a situation of distress, confusion, and frustration. This was due to riots, the killing of innocents, terrorizing the population, and sabotaging both public and private property. A number of martyrs died and others were injured during these incidents, being ordinary citizens, security personnel, and the Armed Forces. That was a great loss to their families and loved ones, a great loss to the homeland, and an extremely heavy loss for me personally. I pray the Almighty God to have mercy on the souls of all martyrs, and offer my deep and heartfelt condolences to their families and relatives.

King Mohammed VI (Morocco)

Mohammed VI became King of Morocco in 1999 after the death of his father, Hassan II. He holds a Ph.D. in International Relations and attained the rank of Major General in the Royal Moroccan Army. Throughout his reign he acknowledged the need for reform and democratization in his country, but until lately had done very little to bring about change, with one notable exception. His most notable achievement in this area was his creation of a new code of family law in 2004 that gave more rights to women. This type of political concession undertaken during the Arab Spring uprisings helped to placate potentially destabilizing contentious behavior.

As in most Arab nations, 2011 saw a change as more and more Moroccans have begun to express their displeasure with the status quo and their desire to improve the
situation in their country. Protests and demonstrations have occurred in all the main cities and towns of the country, but they have been relatively peaceful and have resulted in very few injuries and only a handful of deaths. As Stephan and Chenoweth have noted, nonviolent civil resistance tactics are successful more than half the time in gaining desired concessions (Stephan & Chenoweth, 2008). In March 2011 Mohammed gave a televised speech in which he announced a plan for constitutional reform, and the following month he pardoned or reduced the sentences of almost 200 prisoners, including a number of Islamists. In June he announced a set of specific reforms that were passed in a public referendum in July, but some have criticized the effort as not going far enough. Among the changes made as a result of that announcement are the following: the Prime Minister and Parliament now have more power, Berber is an official language of the country along with Arabic, and the King is the supreme religious authority in Morocco.

(July 30, 2011) Dear Citizens, Completing the overall institutional set-up provided for in the new Constitution requires determined efforts to revamp and upgrade the political landscape, and to capitalize on the climate of confidence in order to rehabilitate political involvement and action in our country. Political parties from the majority as well as the opposition, whose standing has been enhanced by the new Constitution as pivotal players in the democratic process, are called upon to help reconcile the citizens - especially young people - with politics, in the noble sense of the word. They should work within political parties, whose mission, under the Constitution, consists, among other things, in helping voters voice their will. They may also join government institutions which exercise executive powers, or the parliamentary institution, which enjoys wide
prerogatives in terms of law-making and control of government action. In addition, they may work within the various bodies and organs which play a part in local, participatory, citizen-centered democracy.

King Abdullah II (Jordan)

After the death of King Hussain in 1999 his son Abdullah became ruler of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan. His father appointed him heir to the throne on his deathbed after bypassing his own brother Hassan, who had been crown prince for many years, Abdullah’s brother, and several of his cousins. Abdullah, whose mother is British, spent a good deal of his early life abroad and studied in both the UK and the US. Until the recent downturn in the global economy Jordan’s financial situation had improved dramatically under Abdullah’s leadership. He encouraged and cultivated much foreign investment in his country, establishing the only free trade agreement between the U.S. and a Muslim nation. He and his family have enjoyed popularity among Jordanians, and have done much to insure they have adequate housing, health care, and education. Women in the Jordanian royal family, including Queen Noor and Queen Rania, have been vocal advocates of human rights and women’s rights issues. King Abdullah II has also successfully negotiated the challenges related to Jordanian involvement in the ongoing Israeli/Palestinian conflict and has remained a point of stability in a tumultuous region, absorbing refugees from neighboring conflicts while remaining seemingly impervious to the widespread unrest.

Although Jordan has been relatively peaceful compared to some of its Arab neighbors, things came to a head in early 2011. Protests first began to erupt in January 2011, but they were generally non-violent. For the most part Jordanians want to
transform the regime, not topple it. Abdullah acknowledged their complaints and made some efforts to respond to them, like allowing peaceful demonstrations, replacing the Prime Minister, and announcing plans for reform. In addition to introducing changes to the tax system, he has committed himself to establishing a parliamentary form of government, which has been a major demand of the protesters. These changes have not been implemented yet, and time will tell if they will be sufficient to quell any future unrest in the country.

(February 20, 2011) And when I say reform, I want real and quick reform, because without genuine reforms, the situation will remain as it was, when many officials wasted opportunities because of reluctance to move forward and fear of change when they retreated before people with private agendas who resisted reform to guard their own interests. I will not allow that to happen again.

King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa (Bahrain)

Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa proclaimed himself the first king of Bahrain in February of 2002. Prior to that he had ruled with the title of Emir since 1999, a position he assumed upon the death of his father Isa bin Salman Al Khalifa whose reign as the country’s first Emir began in 1961. The Al Khalifa family has ruled Bahrain in an unbroken line of dynastic succession since 1783. In his younger years he studied abroad and received military training in the United Kingdom and the United States. Upon returning to Bahrain he served in several capacities, including as minister of state for defense between 1977 and 1988. He became head of state toward the end of a period of unrest between 1994 and 1999 that was coordinated by a coalition of groups who were dissatisfied with the way his father was ruling the country. Upon assuming control, he instituted a series of
political and social reforms that helped to strengthen the economy. Due to its large oil reserves, Bahrain is a major financial hub in the Middle East.

As king, Al Khalifa exercises virtually unlimited control over the country’s political system. He appoints the prime minister and other ministers, commands the military, chairs the judicial council, and selects half the members of parliament. He and his family are Sunni Muslims, as are the vast majority of those in positions of power, but Sunnis comprise only one-third of the country’s population. This imbalance has led to frequent complaints among the Shi’a majority of mistreatment and second-class status. During the Arab Spring the situation reached a boiling point as many Shi’a rallied against the regime’s oppressive and harsh practices. Al Khalifa cracked down brutally against protesters calling for his removal beginning in February 2011, resulting in dozens of deaths and many injuries. In March of that same year he declared a three-month state of emergency and asked for assistance from his Saudi and UAE neighbors, who responded by sending troops and police. Many of his opponents denounced this move as tantamount to foreign occupation, resulting in more demonstrations that led to further bloodshed and deaths. In June of 2011 Al Khalifa formed an independent commission to investigate the matter, but he has been criticized by human rights organizations for the ineffective and halfhearted way he has addressed the political turmoil.

(March 20, 2012) Security and stability are central pillars of growth, development and reform. What affects the stability of the country also affects its sovereignty, and invites foreign interventions. Countries do not seek stability solely in the interest of economy, but also to protect the sovereignty and integrity of the country, and we will never relinquish this at all. The hands of time never
turn backwards. We are grateful and appreciative of the sincere efforts of the BDF, the Ministry of Interior, and the National Guard, who diligently uphold the security of this nation and who protect its borders and land. They remain stationed in love and loyalty to their homeland and in the protection of all citizens and residents. We also include the “Peninsula Shield” forces which are fulfilling their collective role in protecting the vital installations in our country, part of their larger mission to protect the countries of the Gulf Cooperation Council whenever needed. All our gratitude, appreciation and praise go to them.

King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz Al Saud (Saudi Arabia)

Abdullah bin Abdulaziz Al Saud (August 1924 – January 2015) ruled as King of Saudi Arabia from August 2005 until his death. He had become the de facto ruler of the country in 1995, when his predecessor and half-brother Fahd suffered a stroke that left him incapacitated. Abdullah, the tenth son of the founder of Saudi Arabia King Abdulaziz, had been crown prince since 1982. Prior to his ascent to the throne, the most prominent position he held was as commander of the Saudi Arabian National Guard. He served in that role for more than forty years, and in that time he did much to modernize Saudi Arabia’s military system and its capabilities. During his reign Abdullah made some attempts to upgrade the Saudi infrastructure and improve conditions within the country, but for the most part he maintained the status quo established by his predecessors, all of whom were also sons of King Abdulaziz.

Saudi Arabia is a Sunni-majority country, and its Wahhabi interpretation of Islamic law is extremely conservative and hostile toward innovation and change. It is based on a literal reading of the Qur’an and other Muslim sources, and so punishments
like amputation of one’s hand for theft, whipping for adultery, and beheading for more serious crimes are commonly enforced. Abdullah and the other Saudi monarchs have never called for religious reform or publicly questioned these practices, and so they continue to be endorsed by the political elites. There is a small Shi’a population within the country, and they and other religious minorities have sometimes accused Abdullah and his predecessors of mistreating and oppressing them. These complaints, some of which have been well founded, have typically fallen on deaf ears. Other forms of social discrimination continue to exist, particularly in the area of women’s rights, which are particularly restricted in Saudi Arabia (“WomanStats Database,” 2012). For example, Saudi Arabia is the only country in the world where women do not have the legal right to vote. This is scheduled to change in December of 2015, when legislation enacted by Abdullah in 2011 will allow women to participate in elections for the first time. In 2013 he also changed the law so that at least twenty percent of the one-hundred-and-fifty member consultative assembly must be female.

As a result of the Arab Spring a series of anti-government demonstrations were held in 2011 and 2012, and the monarchy and its policies were the main target of many complaints. In particular, charges of corruption and entitlement were leveled at the ruling class, and change was called for in the treatment of women, prison conditions, employment opportunities, and relations with Shi’a and other religious minorities. These rallies led to some crackdowns and a few deaths, but also the aforementioned noteworthy political concessions. Abdullah responded to these demands with gestures aimed at self-preservation, like distributing rents for maintaining allegiances, relieving debt, and releasing some prisoners.
(September 25, 2011) Since we reject to marginalize the role of women in the Saudi society, in every field of works, according to the (Islamic) Sharia guidelines, and after consultations with many of our scholars, especially those in the senior scholars council, and others, who have expressed the preference for this orientation, and supported this trend, we have decided the following: First, the participation of women in the Majlis Al-Shura as members from next session in accordance with the Sharia guidelines. Second, as of the next session, women will have the right to nominate themselves for membership of Municipal Councils, and also have the right to participate in the nomination of candidates with the Islamic guidelines.
Works Cited


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