

political leaders in the Gulf were keen to ensure external food policies would serve, not impede, their domestic political security. Building on work by Robert Vitalis and Toby Jones, Woertz shows how food supplies figured in the early encounter between Saudi leaders and American oil companies. These relations in the 1940s led to later efforts by Saudi Arabia to achieve food security through self-sufficiency. The infamous Al-Kharj farms and wheat farming projects exemplified such efforts, but Woertz never exactly clarifies the policy intent of self-sufficiency. On the one hand, a recurring theme in the book is the claim that Gulf policies are rooted in fears of a return to crises of the 1940s and American threats to use food as a weapon. On the other hand, Woertz makes convincing arguments that much of the Saudi effort toward wheat production was tied more to patronage politics than to food security concerns.

The section on U.S. food policy and the Middle East is a concise and excellent review of shifts in American policies in the Cold War context. Food trade was used as a tool of foreign policy, and it was advanced as a reaction to the 1970s oil crisis and balance of payments worries. However, the effort to link that history to a “collective unconscious” among Gulf leaders that drives self-sufficiency today is more asserted than demonstrated. Even if the core factors influencing Gulf food policies are not quite wrapped up, the final two chapters do a thorough job of demonstrating why these policies have not progressed as hoped. Woertz analyzes the Sudanese government’s failure to turn the country into an agricultural exporter for the rest of the region. Emphasizing practical as well as sociopolitical complications of land tenure shifts, the failure in Sudan foreshadowed problems with similar offshore solutions decades later. Post-2008 plans for purchasing farming resources in Pakistan, the Philippines, and Ethiopia have never been implemented. Most of the Arab World, and particularly the Gulf, continues to import food from leading exporters and international agro businesses.

Woertz’s book is carefully and broadly researched. It will appeal to those interested in the political economies of food in the region as well as to students of the region’s transnational linkages and pressures.

MICHAEL J. WILLIS, *Politics and Power in the Maghreb: Algeria, Tunisia and Morocco from Independence to the Arab Spring* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012). Pp. 320. \$67.95 cloth, \$19.96 paper.

REVIEWED BY ABDESLAM MAGHRAOUI, Political Science Department, Duke University, Durham, N.C.; e-mail: abdeslam.maghraoui@duke.edu
doi:10.1017/S0020743814000749

In the concluding chapter of *Politics and Power in the Maghreb*, Michael Willis observes the striking common resilience of otherwise distinct autocratic regimes in Morocco, Algeria, and Tunisia. He notes that despite institutional and ideological dissimilarities, and different governing styles and personalities, exclusive autocratic circles dominated power for several decades in each country. Very few scholars of Maghribi politics would disagree with Willis’ general assessment.

Since independence, the three regimes made tactical concessions on various issues at different moments, but they made no credible democratic reforms. The strategy of liberalizing just far enough to sustain dominance remained in force even as socioeconomic and political challenges undermined the regimes’ legitimacy. In nationalist Algeria, a military oligarchy ruling in the shadows sabotaged steps to reform an opaque political system. In conservative Morocco, a predator monarchy used various restructuring schemes to co-opt elites, suppress political dissent, and gulp up the country’s wealth. Even in Tunisia, where a traditionally reform-minded regime could claim social progress and proceed with minimal political risk, it took popular uprisings to force political change.

So why, one might ask, have the three different regimes failed to reform when signs of systemic crises became quite obvious? Is it a lack of political vision and leadership? Is it the cohesion of the dominant elites whose interests are uniformly tied to autocracy? Perhaps it is the formidable repressive and cooptation capacity of the states. Or maybe it is the absence of a viable alternative to the existing regimes. Unfortunately, the book does not attempt to advance possible explanations. Willis is interested neither in venturing into theoretical accounts, nor in engaging seminal works on the Maghrib in any systematic fashion. Readers looking for new theoretical, empirical, or historical insight on the region's politics will be disappointed.

Willis states at the outset that he has a more modest goal in mind: to offer an introductory textbook on Maghribi politics and political history. He laments the mystifying lack of academic interest in the Maghrib, a distinct region in the midst of social turbulence with far-reaching regional repercussions. What the book proposes then is a broad comparative study of the region's political evolution, not an examination of separate political systems. In this respect at least, *Politics and Power in the Maghreb* makes a unique and important contribution.

The book is divided into nine chapters in addition to an introduction and a conclusion. The first two chapters provide a survey of the region's political history, from the precolonial era to postindependence state building. Willis highlights the region's shared history but does not downplay divergent historical paths and influences. For example, the establishment of a common Maliki school of law with the Almoravids and the Almohads is underlined, but so is the emergence of separate identities and distinct political institutions during the Ottoman period. Equally compelling are Willis' nuanced treatments of the anticolonial movements and the rise of postindependence states. As much as the colonial process and legacy, as well as nationalist ideology, varied in each case, the postindependence regimes and states shared common political features. Willis points to four major traits: the personal nature of power, highly centralized, autocratic state structures, limited political participation, and factional politics. The chapters illustrate both the book's great value and its limitation: a solid, concise synthesis of the region's political history but little new historical or political insight.

The three subsequent chapters (3 through 5) examine the main political actors: the military, the political parties, and the Islamist movements respectively. Willis notes that the degree of military involvement in politics in each country has something to do with the colonial legacy and the process of state building. However, irrespective of ideology or institutions, the three regimes relied heavily on the armed forces to survive. The chapter on the political parties depicts a similar paradox. The three regimes' tolerance for multiparty politics diverged significantly, but ultimately political parties failed to act as vehicles of political participation in all three countries. As for the Islamist opposition, two striking patterns are worth noting. First, the regimes' distinctive ideology—socialism in Algeria, historical tradition and religious descent in Morocco, and secular modernism in Tunisia—mattered little as an ideological shield. In all cases, Islamist movements emerged as the most formidable opposition to the regime. Second, the major Islamist movements oddly mirrored the regimes' ideological intensity and orientation. Hence the Islamic Salvation Front in Algeria turned out to be more radical and revolutionary than Islamist movements in Morocco and Tunisia. The Party of Justice and Development and the Justice and Charity movement in Morocco are rooted in local religious traditions. And in Tunisia, the Islamic Tendency Movement and *al-Nahda* have pursued a more reformist or constitutionalist agenda. Together, the three chapters are emblematic of the book's compelling argument that autocratic institutional and ideological variations do not translate into substantive differences in authoritarian rule.

Still, some readers may question the wisdom of giving comparable political weight to the same actors or institutions across the three countries. While the military plays a major role in Algeria, it has been much less prominent in neighboring countries. In Morocco for example, the military has been strictly out of politics since the middle of the 1970s. As Willis suggests throughout the book, the main political actors in Morocco and Tunisia are a

near-absolutist monarchy and a modern security–judiciary complex. On the Islamist movements' ideological moderation, divergent state policies of repression and accommodation provide a more compelling explanation. The Islamic Salvation Front behaved rather moderately in the municipalities it controlled prior to the 1991 legislative elections. And the Moroccan Monarchy's claim to religious legitimacy did not prevent *al-'Adl wa-l-Ihsan*, Justice and Charity, from contesting the king's religious status and prerogatives. Finally, it is regrettable that groups like new entrepreneurs in Morocco and Tunisia or human rights organizations do not receive much attention. Because of their international connections and access to Western European audiences, these groups often exert more influence on specific social and economic policies than the Islamists.

The next cluster of chapters (6 and 7) examines the challenges that have, according to Willis, the greatest impact on the region's politics. The first is the question of "Berber identity." Willis describes the different stages of Amazigh activism in Morocco and Algeria that has led into broad movements with mature political demands. He is attentive to both national differences and the distinctive character of Amazigh demands within each country. Amazigh activism in Algeria comes across as more advanced and politically assertive than in Morocco. This is mainly due to the geographic contiguity and linguistic homogeneity of Kabylia. Yet one could argue that the Moroccan Amazigh movement has articulated a more universal agenda precisely because Amazigh identity in Morocco is not attached to a single location or spoken language. In any case, both movements have not been able to effectively challenge the autocratic regimes and achieve a meaningful degree of autonomy. Five decades after independence, Arab identity is still officially endorsed and culturally hegemonic. Moreover, it is not at all evident that the "Arab Spring" is a boost for the "Berber Spring," as the chapter seems to suggest. Amazigh activists are wary of Islamists rulers who may be even less sympathetic to their culture and identity.

The other challenge that has affected the region's politics, according to Willis, is economics. But here, too, there is a rather limited transformative impact on how political power is shared and exercised. Neither the structural adjustment programs nor liberalization and privatization campaigns changed the rules of the game in any significant way. Ultimately, the three regimes managed to implement some economic reforms without shedding much autocratic power. None of this suggests that the autocratic regimes in the Maghrib are static. Rather, the point is that even in the face of serious societal challenges and economic constraints, Maghribi regimes were not tempted by reforms from within.

The book's final two chapters deal with the Maghrib's regional and international relations. Chapter 8 provides a very instructive summary and explanation of the region's volatility, but the main focus here is on Morocco and Algeria. At the center of regional tensions is the Western Saharan conflict and the unsettled struggle for hegemony between Morocco and Algeria. Willis notes that the two regimes remain the major beneficiaries of the continuing conflict because it enhances mass nationalism and elites' cohesion, especially in Morocco. Chapter 9 describes how the region's relatively marginal position grew progressively in importance after 9/11 and the U.S.-led war on global terrorism. But while the regimes paid more attention to public sentiments in the aftermaths of the Iraq War and the Arab Spring, autocratic rulers have generally pursued a foreign policy in accordance with their own interests.

In sum, *Politics and Power in the Maghreb* is an excellent work of political history. It is a must read for any student interested in past and present politics of the region. Willis delivers concise, well-documented, and clearly organized chapters on the region's major political events, actors, and institutions. It is regrettable that Libya was not included in the study, notwithstanding the country's different historical trajectory. Some readers may be irritated by the book's theoretical timidity and overly cautious historical method. Others may find wisdom in such a careful approach.