in the state instead of God deserves to be stuck in historical time, trapped in its own secular particularity.

Hallaq's account of what he calls the "form-properties" of the modern state locates them squarely in their deracinated history. He leaves no stone unturned in the literature of philosophy, critical theory, and legal theory in order to shed a most unflattering light on this modern state and its "form-properties." The critique he marshals is indeed quite devastating, nihilistically using writings from Western authors on the left and right alongside each other, quoting simultaneously and at times in one paragraph Bourdieu (a leftist French intellectual) and Glendon (a conservative legal writer), Adorno (a Marxist critical theorist) and MacIntyre (a Catholic moral philosopher), Foucault (a leftist poststructuralist historian) and Gray (a conservative critic of the enlightenment). So not only does Hallaq compare the premodern with the modern, but he also compares the paradigmatic (in the case of the Islamic) with the critical (in the case of the modern state).

Curiously, while Hallaq shows an impressive mastery and understanding of this Western literature of critique, he seems unaware of its implications. Critique is premised on the act of unmasking the structural dynamics that remain latent and hidden behind normative evocations. Not only does Hallaq treat the critique of the West as an account of the modern state's paradigm, thereby transforming the "behind" unearthed by critique into the "front" of the system, but he also seems completely uninterested in adopting an equivalent critical posture in relation to the "Islamic." Furthermore, Hallaq's writing is rife with anthropomorphisms (e.g., "Shariʿa is patient"), his conclusions about history are made deductively, and he uses quotes to refute or assert historical claims, all of which undermine his undeniable mastery of Islamic thought and often make teaching his writings to students all the more difficult.

Hallaq proves to be a conservative theorist of identity. He bemoans the loss of patriarchal rule in the West and frets over its demise in the Islamic world. He is also appalled by the high rate of taxation in the industrial West and compares it unfavorably with the meager 2.5 percent of Zakat on growth of income proposed by Islamic jurists. Without a hint of disquiet, he reassures his readers that contrary to popular opinion, jihad was not obligatory in Islam because there were slave soldiers whose task it was to wage war. But Hallaq is "paradigmatic" of those who have populated the field of Islamic law in Western academia during the last couple of decades: scholars who refuse to accept that the demise of "Islamic governance" was final and irretrievable, and that Muslims pine more for rights and liberties than they do for political Islam, as recent events in Egypt have made clear as day.

JOSEPH A. KÉCHICHIAN, *Legal and Political Reforms in Saudi Arabia* (New York: Routledge, 2013). Pp. 361. $160 cloth, $51.95 paper.

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In *Legal and Political Reforms in Saudi Arabia*, Joseph Kéchichian, a leading authority on Saudi Arabia, takes aim at the understudied area of legal and political reforms in the country. Although Kéchichian's study adds significantly to our understanding of both the drivers and the ramifications of legal and political reforms in Saudi Arabia, it is better read as a pertinent analysis of the puzzling question of the longevity of the Al Saʿud regime. Saudi rulers have indeed had impressive staying power despite internal and external pressures of such magnitude that they could reasonably have provoked the regime's demise. Due to their

lack of understanding of the Saudi polity's inner workings and of the authentic legitimacy that its rulers retain in the eyes of a majority of the Saudi population, Western observers of Saudi Arabia have for many decades been overly preoccupied with the potential downfall of the Saudi regime and the wider strategic implications of such a scenario. Kéchichian explains this resilience with reference to the Saudi rulers' "will to power" and their ability to adapt to new challenges while managing to maintain their religious and political legitimacy. It is this legitimacy that constitutes the foundations of the Saudi social contract and that provides the glue holding Saudi society together. However, the answer to the underlying question of whether the Al Saʿud will be as resilient in the future seems less evident in a country with a significant youth bulge, sky-high unemployment, and greater demands for diversity, inclusion, accountability, and participation by a well-educated, globally connected, and increasingly politically savvy Saudi youth. The challenges seem daunting in a country where the leadership has always championed gradual change. It is likely that new generations will demand more fast-paced change—a point that merits more attention by Kéchichian in his study, which is written from the perspective of the rulers. Another challenge is the potentially destabilizing transition from the first to the second generation of Saudi throne contenders over the next fifteen years.

Kéchichian's ambitious study is organized around three specific sets of interrelated issues: changes within the judiciary, the ongoing national dialogues, and internal royal family dynamics that are leading the way to the establishment of political parties. The author poses the fundamental question of whether conservative Saudi Arabia can tolerate change even if it would mean the erosion of entrenched interests. He offers a tentative answer when he argues in reference to the post-9/11 debate in Saudi Arabia on the introduction of comprehensive reforms, which was supported by a small group of reformers led by King ʿAbd Allah, that "the greatest risk to the kingdom's stability came either from doing nothing at all, or championing excruciatingly slow measures" (p. 203).

Chapter 1, which discusses reforms within the judiciary, is broken down into several subchapters that deal with a variety of topics, including the restructuring of the judicial system and its effects on the balance of power in the religious and political alliance between the Al Saʿud and the ʿulamaʾ, as well as the related questions of religious education, the status of women, and the war on terrorism. The second chapter focuses on the national dialogues, which were mechanisms established by King ʿAbd Allah in 2003 to address a specific set of sensitive issues with intrinsically destabilizing potential: the rise of extremism, national unity, women's rights, youth expectations, interaction at different levels with other world cultures, education, employment, and health. The third chapter deals with political participation and municipal elections, while the fourth chapter discusses political reforms—and more specifically, the contentious issue of the creation of political parties—as well as the succession dilemma.

Chapters 4 and 5 stand out in this tremendously detailed and carefully sourced study, which is supplemented with numerous helpful appendices detailing key documents such as excerpts from the 1992 Basic Law and the Allegiance Law of Succession. In his discussion of Saudi Arabia's succession dilemma, Kéchichian builds on his previously published study, *Succession in Saudi Arabia* (New York: Palgrave, 2001), his intimate knowledge of Al Saʿud intra-family dynamics, and his acute understanding of the sociopolitical and religious underpinnings of the Saudi polity. However, the discussion of recent developments remains quite topical due to the changing nature of Saudi succession affairs, as exemplified by King ʿAbd Allah's recent nomination of his son Mutaʿb bin ʿAbd Allah bin ʿAbd al-ʿAziz al-Saʿud as Minister of National Guard. This move suggests that King ʿAbd Allah is making preparations for the looming succession crisis. The fifth chapter, which is dedicated to reforms and the petition industry, puts into historical perspective the process of submitting political petitions, which

grew in importance after the December 1990 draft calling for political reforms. Kéchichian suggests that even if the very idea of supplication emerged within Islam, it also carried a political message through the linkages it made between divine supplications and the earthly task of securing sustenance. As a consequence, some believers came to understand the secular meanings of supplication in terms of requests to their governors (pp. 161–62).

The sixth and final chapter is dedicated to the American view of the legal and religious reforms carried out in Saudi Arabia after 2005. It also discusses other key areas of contention in Saudi–U.S. relations such as scientific education, sociopolitical dialogues, elections, and women's emancipation. One of the chapter's more revealing passages includes Kéchichian's discussion of U.S. security ties with Saudi Arabia. The author notes that after 9/11, U.S. policymakers were much less inclined than before to concentrate on alleviating the severe socioeconomic problems that confronted the kingdom, such as "rising unemployment and poverty in a context of galloping population growth, assuming that they were far less important than the urgent threat of extremism" (pp. 203–4). The focus on security and stability in relations with Saudi Arabia has continued under the Obama administration, evidenced by the U.S. government's tepid reaction to the deployment of Saudi troops to Bahrain in March 2011 (p. 206) and its pursuit of arms deals directed against Saudi Arabia's hegemonic foe, Iran.

Kéchichian's tremendously rich and well-researched study could have benefited from a tighter focus on the legal and political reforms in Saudi Arabia. This is a pity for a work of such magnitude, which aspires to fill an important gap in the literature. As Kéchichian rightly argues, few scholars, with the notable exception of Mansoor Jassem Alshamsi, Ibrahim Ibn ʿAbdul ʿAziz al-Bishr, and Daryl Champion, have addressed the issue of legal and political reforms in Saudi Arabia in depth.

Organizing the book around the analytical construct of "will to power"—to which the author alludes throughout the study but neither fully explains nor puts into context—would have provided much-needed structure and coherence to a complex subject such as legal and political reform in Saudi Arabia. In one of his previous articles, Kéchichian explains "will to power" as a "unique political framework with a clear ideological basis that, ultimately, legitimized Al Saud rule." The development "of a *will to power* … benefited from the family's strict adherence to Islamic values and, with oil wealth, transformed the desert into a modern country. This 'will to power' has evolved and adapted to changing circumstances." (Joseph A. Kéchichian, "Testing the Saudi Will to Power," *Middle East Policy* 6, no. 2 [2000], PDF, accessed 15 July 2013). King ʿAbd Allah's reform efforts undertaken in response to the internal and external challenges to his rule as described by Kéchichian in this study, then, should be understood as the expressions of his firm ambition to retain power.

The above-mentioned shortcomings notwithstanding, Kéchichian's book will prove tremendously valuable to anyone interested in the political and social evolution of Saudi Arabia.

THOMAS PIERRET, *Religion and State in Syria: The Sunni Ulama from Coup to Revolution* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2013). Pp. 287. $95.00 cloth, $29.99 paper, $24.00 e-book.

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This study is a welcome addition both to the limited scholarship on Islam in Syria and to research on religious scholars (bearers of religious knowledge, *ḥamalat al-ʿilm*) in Muslim