

# MERIA

## WHO AM I?: THE IDENTITY CRISIS IN THE MIDDLE EAST

P R Kumaraswamy\*

*More than democratic deficit, most countries of the Middle East suffer from the fundamental problem over their national identity. More than three-quarters of a century after the disintegration of the Ottoman Empire from which most of them emerged, these states have been unable to define, project, and maintain a national identity that is both inclusive and representative. None of the countries of the Middle East is homogeneous; they consist of numerous ethnic, religious, cultural, and linguistic minorities. Yet they have not succeeded in evolving a national identity that reflects their heterogeneity. Countries of the Middle East are internally diverse and, hence, a narrow exclusive national identity could not be imposed from above.*

Speaking at the meeting of the Foreign Ministers of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) in September 2005, Sheikh Mohammed bin Mubarak al-Khalifa of Bahrain urged the need for safeguarding Iraq's "Arabic-Islamic identity so that Iraq can remain an active member of the Arab and Islamic environment."<sup>1</sup> Coming from an organization that in the past led the anti-Iraqi and anti-Saddam sentiments in the region, it exhibited a basic concern over possible fragmentation of Iraq and its ramifications for its Arab neighbors. Yet the statement also brought to focus the fundamental problem facing the Middle East, namely identity.

Contrary to the conventional wisdom about democratic deficit, most countries of the Middle East suffer from the fundamental problem over their national identity. More than three-quarters of a century after the disintegration of the Ottoman Empire from whom most of them emerged, these states have been unable to define, project, and maintain a national identity that is both inclusive and representative. None of the countries of the

Middle East is homogeneous; they consist of numerous ethnic, religious, cultural, and linguistic minorities. Yet they have not succeeded in evolving a national identity that reflects their heterogeneity.

The problem is universal. Whether they are democracies (Israel and Turkey), evolving democracies (Iraq and Palestinian areas), republican regimes (Egypt, Syria, and Algeria), quasi-liberal monarchies (Jordan and Bahrain), or Islamic regimes (Iran), the region suffers from the inability to recognize, integrate, and reflect its ethno-cultural diversity. Without exception, all the Middle Eastern states have tried to impose an identity from above. Whether ideological, religious, dynastical, or power-centric, these attempts have invariably failed and have often resulted in schism and sectarian tensions.

The region as a whole has been unable to address, let alone resolve, the core issue of national identity. While borrowing the European (though gradually weakening) model of territory-based national identity, the Middle Eastern countries have been unable to build a "nation." In other parts of

the world, nations, both old and new, have become states; the process has been reversed in the Middle East where states are still in search of a nation. Instead they have tried numerous other means to circumvent the problem of national identity.

### **IMPERIAL-COLONIAL LEGACY**

Much of the identity problem facing the region can be traced back to imperialism and colonialism. The dismemberment of the Ottoman Empire and the formation of new states in the region were anything but smooth. States were carved out with little concern over people, geography, or history. The states, which emerged from the ruins of the Ottoman Empire, were neither homogeneous nor cohesive. They not only had artificial boundaries, but they also lacked any sense of internal cohesion.

Driven by imperial legacy of the British and French, the two imperial powers that were active in the region, different ethnic/national groups were clubbed together into one state or the same national group was divided among different states. If the formation of Lebanon, supposed to be a homeland for the Maronite Christians exemplifies the former, the plight of Kurds scattered in Iran, Iraq, Syria, and Turkey symbolizes the latter. Even the modern boundaries of ancient states like Iran contain a large portion of the religious other.

In places like Iraq and Jordan, leaders of the new state were brought in from the outside, tailored to suit colonial interests and commitments. Likewise, most states in the Persian Gulf were handed over to those who could protect and safeguard imperial interests in the post-withdrawal phase.

Each of the new states were confronted with the problem of defining their national identity. This was problematic because most of them were never a nation before.

They often had boundaries defined by colonial powers, formal title and a ruling dynasty, support and patronage from the former rulers, diverse population, but no cohesive national identity. With notable exceptions like Egypt, Iran, Iraq, and Syria, most lacked, or hence had to invent, their historical roots.

How did they resolve the problem of national identity? Some tried to resolve this through religion, the most dominant and easily identifiable individual identity.

### **RELIGIOUS IDENTITY**

With the exception of Turkey, all the countries of the Middle East have opted for a religion-centric identity. In some cases, this coincided with state formation and in others, religion gradually replaced others as the pre-eminent national identity. If the Turkish decision to present itself as a secular state was the choice and outcome of the destruction of the Ottoman Empire, others have sought to buttress their identity through religion. While Islam is the dominant identity of most Arab states and Iran, Israel defines itself as a Jewish state. Even though Lebanon is not an Islamic state, its society is a mirror image of the sectarian tension among various religious groups.

This emphasis on religion became more apparent when some ruling dynasties tried to justify their claims to their supposed membership to the Qureshi tribe to which Prophet Mohammed belonged. The ruling Hashemite dynasty in Jordan for example, traces its lineage to the days of the Prophet and sought to claim both religious and temporal loyalty of their subjects.<sup>2</sup> The Hashemites had been thrown out of their role as custodians of Mecca by the Saudis. For a while, however, they found a new source of religious and political legitimacy

by ruling over east Jerusalem. Their control of the Islamic holy sites in the city until the June war of 1967 was even seen as a minor compensation for the losses suffered by the Hashemites at the hands of Saud. At one time, King Abdallah-I even aspired to declare east Jerusalem as the capital of Jordan but was dissuaded by the British.

For this reason, Jordan never gave up its aspirations to gain a foothold in Jerusalem. According to the Israel-Jordan of 1994, Jordan enjoys a "special status" over the Islamic religious places in Jerusalem. This came against the backdrop of the Declaration of Principles of 1993 and the impending installation of the Palestinian National Authority (PNA), thereby underscoring the importance of Jerusalem to the Hashemites.

Likewise, Saudi Arabia also thrives on its strong links to Islam. While the House of Saud does not have a pedigree to the Qureshi tribe, it seeks political mileage over the presence of the two holiest places in Islam, Mecca and Medina. Indeed, following domestic opposition from Islamic groups, the Saudi monarch changed his official title to "Custodian of the Two Holy Places."

Even nominally secular regimes are also not immune from the drive for a religion-centric identity. Following the Arab defeat in the June 1967 war and the gradual radicalization of the Middle East, even these states have also come under the influence of the Islamic undercurrents. With the result, religion--mostly Islam--plays an all-pervasive role in the public as well as private domain in the Middle East. In most Middle Eastern states, Islam is recognized as the official religion and the

jurisprudence is based on the Islamic *Sharia*.

The case of Iran is even more peculiar. Under the constitution, "Twelever Ja'fari School" is the official religion of the Islamic republic. This narrow Shi'a-Islamic identity excludes a large portion of its population, including the Arabs, Turkmen, Assyrians, and Kurds--who are all Sunnis--as well as others both non-Persian-like the Azeris--and non-Muslim--like the Armenians and Bahais. In other words, a vast majority of the Iranians would have difficulties in identifying with the current regime that represents Shi'a Islam. Likewise, efforts by the Islamists of the north to impose the Islamic *Sharia* upon the Christians and animists living in the south resulted in a prolonged civil war in Sudan.

The election of Kurdish leader Jalal al-Talabani as President of Iraq, therefore, is both a novelty and revolution in the Middle East. In all other states, senior positions are denied to the religious "other." In some cases, the prohibition is explicit and in others, the exclusion is circumspect. Monarchies, the most prominent system of governance, rest on dynastical succession, and this excludes almost the entire population--including the religious other--from being rulers of the country. The constitutions of Iran and Syria, for example, explicitly state that only a Muslim can be the head of state.

Since the countries of the region are not exclusively Islamic, such overarching influence of Islam in the public domain deprives the non-Muslim minorities of any role or say in the formation of national identity. In Egypt, for example, the Coptic identity pre-dates the introduction of Islam

but portraying them as a distinct minority gets people into trouble with the authorities. Many of the problems facing noted Egyptian socialist Saad Eddin Ibrahim emanates from his desire to recognize the plights of the minorities in his country. His attempts to highlight the predicament facing the Copts were viewed with suspicion because, as veteran journalist Muhammed Heikel put it forcefully, the Copts are not a distinct group but merely "a part of Egypt's unbreakable fabric."<sup>3</sup> The Copts who symbolized the Egyptian identity long before the arrival of Arabism and Islam to the land of the Pharaohs have been systematically marginalized from the national identity.<sup>4</sup>

Israel is also not immune from the religious winds blowing across the Middle East. Despite its democratic model, it is still unable to reconcile with the inherent contradiction between its Jewish and democratic identities. On one level, Zionism transformed the Jewish nation scattered in four corners of the world into a state in the historic land of Israel. The choice of erstwhile Palestine as the location of the Jewish national home was both a historic and religious choice. In spite of its accomplishments, however, both during the pre-state *yishuv* period and since 1948, it was unable to come to terms completely with its non-Jewish population. Israel Zangwell's slogan of "People without a land, going to a land without people" was far too powerful and blinding.

Since its establishment, Israel has been unable to resolve its identity dilemma. While the Arab citizens enjoy equal political, social, and religious rights, they are unable to identify with the explicitly Jewish symbols of the state, such as the flag, national anthem, holidays, and other cultural motifs. The prime focus of the

Jewish-Arab conflict inside the state pertains to the need to evolve a territorial-national rather than ethno-national identity for Israel. Such an identity cannot be exclusively Jewish but would also have to include and reflect its Arab citizens who constitute about a fifth of its population. At the same time, however, given the intensity of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, any resolution of the identity question in Israel or the dilution of the Jewish exclusive national identity, is neither realistic nor advisable.

Moreover, the demographic reality prevented even the hardened supporters of the settlement movement from advocating the Israeli annexation of the occupied territories. To retain its democratic credentials Israel would have to follow the erstwhile Jordanian model and grant citizenship to the Palestinian residents of the West Bank and Gaza Strip. This would mean Israel ceasing to be a Jewish State but automatically becoming a bi-national one.

In short, because all the states contain a large segment of the religious "other," any religion-centric identity is both exclusive and incomplete. Thus, one can go to the extent of arguing that most of the internal tensions and conflicts in many countries are due to their inability to accommodate the religious other.

#### **DYNASTIC IDENTITY**

Monarchy still remains the most dominant form of governance in the Middle East. Out of the 25 states in the region, as many as eight follow monarchy. At the time of their independence from colonial rule, a few more also had monarchs who were eventually overthrown through a revolution or a coup. In most cases, ruling family has become both the symbol and representative of the state. Given the longevity of the

rulers, most states witnessed very few successions and little new leadership. For example, since its founding in 1932, Saudi Arabia has had only six rulers.<sup>5</sup>

Not only does dynastic succession exclude the non-Muslims in these countries, but also excludes a vast majority of the population. In some cases, the ruling family does not reflect the majority community. The al-Khalifah family, which rules Bahrain, for example, is Sunni while the majority population is Shi'a. One finds similar situations in other countries as well. The orthodox Wahhabi Islam that provides legitimacy and religious sanctity to the ruling dynasty in Saudi Arabia rejects heterodox Islamic sects--including the Shi'a--as non-Muslims. The Shi'a who constitute over ten percent of the Saudi population continue to be marginalized from the Saudi national identity.<sup>6</sup> According to *Annual Report on International Religious Freedom* published by the US State Department, "Members of the Shi'a minority continued to face political and economic discrimination ... The Government continued sporadically to enforce other restrictions on the Shi'a community, such as banning Shi'a books and excluding Shi'a perspectives from the extensive religious media and broadcast programming."<sup>7</sup>

The Hashemites face a different dilemma in Jordan. There is an ongoing conflict between the original inhabitants of Transjordan and the Palestinians who became its citizens in the wake of the Hashemite annexation of the West Bank captured during the 1948 Arab-Israeli war. Despite the official position to the contrary, the Jordanians of Palestinian origin appear

to constitute the majority in Jordan. The Hashemite kingdom tended to view any suggestions of a Palestinian majority in Jordan as an attempt to undermine the Jordanian state and its stability. More so, a powerful segment of the Israeli right has argued that Jordan is a Palestinian state but without a Palestinian head of state.<sup>8</sup>

Yet the gerrymandering of parliamentary constituencies clearly favors the Bedouins, who form the backbone of the ruling monarchy, rather than the Palestinians, who live in the refugee camps. According to one Jordanian observer:

There are 45 electoral districts. Districting is considered unfair because there is a lack of balance between population and the numbers of seats per district. The division of districts is claimed to guarantee representation for the 'less fortunate areas' and to prevent the capital, Amman, from taking the majority of seats, but is seen as fanning the spirit of tribal competition and strengthening the concept of the 'services deputy' who concentrates on his or her electoral district. Districting is also seen as intended to reduce the representation of areas heavily populated by Jordanians of Palestinian origin.<sup>9</sup>

According to another:

Some defend the division into electoral districts on the ground that it guarantees representation of 'less fortunate areas', safeguards the share of some areas in economic development, or prevents the capital and surrounding towns from taking the majority of seats, but it is clear that politics is also behind the motives for arguing for a reduction of the representation of areas heavily populated by Jordanians of Palestinian origin.... Amending the law to create a more equitable distribution of districts might produce a huge increase in the representation of Jordanians of Palestinian origin, which might in time threaten the identity of the Jordanian state.<sup>10</sup>

In short, any meaningful representation for the Jordanian-Palestinians in the Hashemite Kingdom would have to wait for the resolution of the overall Arab-Israeli conflict.

The oil rich Arab countries in the Persian Gulf face a different kind of problem. In most countries, the native population constitutes only a minority and labor migrants constitute the bulk of the population. In United Arab Emirates, for example, Arab and non-Arab expatriates make up more than three quarters of the country's population.

Under such circumstances, national identity merely means the dynasty that rules the state rather than it being a reflection of

the wider population of these countries.

### **EXPANSIONIST IDENTITY**

Certain nations sought to circumvent the identity question by following in the footsteps of the imperial powers, opting for regional expansion, and coveting their smaller and less powerful neighbors. When their national identity remained unclear, they sought to expand their territorial limits and thereby hoped to present themselves as the leaders of the Arab world. Jordan ironically began this process. Backed by the then most powerful and well-organized Arab Legion, King Abdallah-I toyed with the idea of a greater Jordan. His annexation of the West Bank was merely a first step in his grandiose plan that would have included parts of Syria, Lebanon, and Iraq. Likewise, in the 1950s when King Hussein was facing domestic threats to his regime, Baghdad, then ruled by King Faysal-II, was hoping that Iraq could take over Jordan and other Arab countries.

Some countries found it difficult to accept the existence or emergence of new states on territory that had once been ruled as part of a unit with their own lands. Syria, for example, never reconciled itself with the French decision to carve out Lebanon as an independent country and to demonstrate this opposition never opened an embassy in Beirut. Its official representative in Lebanon is often referred to as "governor" rather than ambassador. This diplomatic situation, however, did not inhibit Syria from maintaining a large military presence in Lebanon until 2005.

Similarly, on the eve of the British departure from the Persian Gulf in 1971, the Shah resurrected Iran's historic claims over Bahrain. Likewise, Saddam Hussein's desire to claim Kuwait to be the 19<sup>th</sup> province of Iraq resulted in the US-led

military offensive in 1991. Even after the war and the eventual expulsion of its forces, Baghdad periodically referred to its historic rights over Kuwait. It was only the downfall of Saddam Hussein in the summer of 2003 and formation of an elected provision government that eventually led to Iraq giving up its erstwhile claims over Kuwait.

For long, Egypt and Libya had designs over their weaker neighbors, Sudan and Chad respectively. Turkey's control of Cyprus is also an indication of this expansionist trend prevalent in the Middle East.

The Israel-Palestinian conflict has also been influenced by the desire for hegemony. An influential segment of the Israeli right is opposed to any territorial compromise with the Palestinians. For its part, Hamas and its radical supporters seek the destruction of the state of Israel and aspire for a Palestinian state "within the 1948" boundaries. Both positions merely block any meaningful Israeli-Palestinian reconciliation. Above all, any territorial expansion of Israel would merely accentuate the identity debate and further erode Israel's Jewish identity.

In short, democratic, monarchical or revolutionary, states of the Middle East have sought expansion as a means of circumventing the identity debate and often used Arabism as their national identity. Despite the best of their efforts, expansionism never proved to be successful. Even those who had temporary gains (Syria in Lebanon, Israel and Jordan vis-à-vis the West Bank, Turkey vis-à-vis Cyprus, and Morocco vis-à-vis the western Sahara), eventually could not escape from the

consequences upon the identity question. Expansion of the territorial limits does not resolve the identity crisis and in some cases, it only exasperated the problem.

### **TRANSNATIONAL IDENTITY**

If individual expansion was not always successful, some sought the transnational route to the identity crisis. Confronted with national identity, ideas of pan-Arabism and pan-Islamism offered some hopes. By aspiring for a transnational identity, they sought to circumvent and even resolve the immediate problem of national identity. This path, however, was troubled from the very beginning.

Arab states went into uncharted waters. The supra-nationalism of Europe today is the culmination of a process whereby states that have fully realized their individual national identities have opted to voluntarily surrender that identity and to seek a common European identity. For centuries Britain, France, and Germany fought bitterly to retain their individual national identities before emerging as the advocates of an all-encompassing European identity.

In the Middle East however, the pan-Arab and pan-Islamic identities were a substitute for individual national identities. Unable to transform states into nations, they opted for trans-state regional identities. They sought to overcome the difficulties of evolving a territory-based national identity by focusing on the common cultural and religious background. The inclusive Arab/Islamic identity thus came into conflict with the exclusive territory-based identity and national interests.

Tension thus became inevitable. Inter-Arab and inter-Islamic differences became

far more serious than the conflict with the outside world. The Arab attitude toward Egypt following the Camp David agreement sums up this dilemma. Egypt was isolated and expelled from the League because it pursued a narrow "national interest" and abandoned the larger "Arab interest."

Egypt's attitude toward the Arab League can also be seen as an indication of its desire to be the leader of the Arab world. Indeed the League is the only regional organization in the world where the formal leadership remains with a single country. Since its founding in 1945, the post of secretary general of the League was always held by an Egyptian.<sup>11</sup>

At times, even the expansionist desires of individual rulers are also presented as an effort to bring about Arab unity. The transnational Ba'ath socialist model also did not resolve this problem; both Iraq and Syria swore by the same ideology but pursued different paths.

Pan-Islamic drive presented a different kind of problem. Theologically, Islam does not recognize territorially defined nation states. It treats the believers—Muslims in this case—as one people, transcending all other barriers, divisions, and frontiers. Under these circumstances, the traditional European model of nation-states merely undermines the unity of the *ummah*. This theological dichotomy did not inhibit Saudi Arabia from promoting its interests both inside and outside the region through its support for various pan-Islamic movements. The formation of the Organization of the Islamic Conference in 1969 was a clear manifestation of this trend.

### **STATELESS IDENTITY**

The situation of Kurds and Palestinians, two prominent Middle Eastern groups

which have yet to fulfill their territorial aspiration, poses a different kind of problem. Colonial interests worked against the Kurds and deprived them of their self-determination and statehood. Scattered in Turkey, Iraq, Syria, and Iran, they lack a centrifugal power base. Turkey, despite the accommodating tradition of the Ottoman Empire, has been extremely slow in coming to terms with its Kurdish population. For long, it not only denied the very existence of the Kurds, but also wanted "Mountain Turks" to assimilate into the modern Turkish nation. Even the newly found freedom among the Iraqi Kurds would not resolve the situation of Kurds living in the neighboring countries. Ankara's vehement opposition to Kurdish autonomy in post-Saddam Iraq underscores its apprehensions about similar demands from Turkish Kurds.

Palestinians, despite their universal endorsement, also suffer from an identity crisis, though of a different nature. Currently the Palestinians live under four distinct types of political arrangements:

- Citizens of Israel
- Residents of the areas under the control of the PNA
- Citizens of Jordan
- Refugees residing in Jordan and other Arab countries

So long as the Palestinians lack sovereignty, their dispersal under different political arrangements would be a source of strength. They would be able to influence and exercise pressures upon the countries where they reside. The formation of a sovereign state would place a stark choice before the Palestinians who reside outside the territorial limits of the Palestinian state.

Statehood would pose a number of threats to the Palestinian identity. One,

unrestricted flow of refugees into Israel would bring about its destruction. Hence, Israel is unlikely to accept the Palestinian right of return to their erstwhile homes in mandate Palestine. This in practice would mean that refugees would have to be accommodated within the future Palestinian state. Given its limited "economic absorptive capacity,"<sup>12</sup> a Palestinian state would not be able to accommodate all the refugees who might wish to return. In such a situation, a large number of Palestinians, even if financially compensated, would have to be accommodated either within those states where they have been residing or in mutually agreed third states.

With the sole exception of Jordan, none of the Arab states has bestowed citizenship rights upon the Palestinians who lived in them for decades. Even if the Arab states were to be induced to modify this stand, the problem is far from over. The presence of Palestinian refugees significantly contributed to the Christian-Muslim tensions in Lebanon and eventually triggered a protracted civil war in that country. Moreover, the role played by the Palestinian leadership in Jordan (1970) and Kuwait (1990-91) would be extremely unnerving for many Arab regimes to accept Palestinians as full citizens. It would require more than a formal apology from the Palestinian leadership to overcome mistrust and past bitterness.

Two, Palestinian statehood is also raising concerns in Israel and Jordan over irredentist claims of the Palestinians and the possible demand for a greater Palestine that would encompass the Israeli Arabs and Jordanian-Palestinians with the future Palestinian state.<sup>13</sup> The determination of

King Abdallah in 1999 to abandon Jordan's erstwhile support for Hamas, close down its office, and expel its leaders was a clear signal.<sup>14</sup> Jordan does not wish to be entangled with the Palestinians, especially when the final status negotiations confront sensitive issues such as refugees, borders, etc.

Three, the emergence of Hamas as a serious challenge and a potential alternative to Fatah and the PLO poses a different kind of challenge to the Palestinian national identity. The secular Palestinian nationalism represented by Yasir Arafat and his colleagues faces the threat of being replaced by Islamic radicalism represented by Hamas. The hitherto Muslim-Christian unity exhibited by the secular nationalists will undergo a metamorphosis following the January 2006 victory of Hamas in the Palestinian elections. Places like Bethlehem and Nazareth that were traditionally associated with Christ are losing their Christian character and demographically have become predominantly Muslim.

Thus, if both individual efforts and transnational approaches have failed to resolve the identity issue in the Middle East, what could be the alternative?

#### **PROGNOSIS/CONCLUSION**

Countries of the Middle East are internally diverse and hence a narrow exclusive national identity could not be imposed from above. If experiences in Lebanon or post-Saddam Iraq were an indication, confessional arrangement or other forms of proportional representation would only intensify the internal tensions and conflicts. Proportional representation,

for example, did not prevent the marginalization of the Israeli Arabs.

Each state would have to evolve an identity that is neither parochial nor confessional, but rather a territorial identity that recognizes and encompasses their individual distinctness and variations. Each state would have to recognize the need for and eventually evolve an inclusive identity. In many or most cases, such an identity, given the mix of populations, would not be exclusively "Arab" or "Islamic" but would require lots of local variations and flexibility. The Middle East faces a stark choice: accommodate or fragment.

At the same time, the problem of national identity is universal in the Middle East and only individual countries can resolve this problem. Outside interference, even a well-intended one, would merely be a repeat of the colonial legacy. So long as this fundamental issue has not been resolved, any reforms in the system of governance, including a democratic model, would be insufficient to mitigate the problems facing the Middle East.

\* P R Kumaraswamy teaches Israeli politics at the Centre for West Asian and African Studies, School of International Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru, New Delhi, India.

## NOTES

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<sup>1</sup> *Khaleej Times*, September 7, 2005.

<sup>2</sup> The Hashemite Kingdom still emphasizes importance of this lineage. To see the Hashemite family tree, visit: <http://www.kinghussein.gov.jo/tree-english.html>, accessed on June 6, 2005.

<sup>3</sup> Karim al-Gawhary, "Copts in the 'Egyptian Fabric'," *Middle East Report*, Vol.26, No.3 (July-September 1996), p.21.

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Ami Ayalon, "Egypt's Coptic Pandora's Box", in Ofra Bengio and Gabriel Ben-Dor (eds.), *Minorities and the State in the Arab World* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 1999), pp.63-67.

<sup>4</sup> Indeed, President Gamal Abdul Nasser, the secular Arab nationalist, initiated some of the anti-Coptic measures.

<sup>5</sup> They are Abdul Aziz (1932-53) and his sons Saud (1953-64), Faisal (1964-75), Khalid (1975-82), Fahd (1982-2005), and Abdallah (2005-present). The situation is not different in other countries. Bahrain has had three rulers since 1971; Jordan has had four kings since 1946; Kuwait has had four emirs since 1950; Morocco has had three kings since 1957; Oman has had two sultans since 1932; Qatar has had three emirs since 1971; and the UAE has had four presidents since 1971.

<sup>6</sup> Shi'a groups, however, claim that they constitute as much as 25 percent of the Saudi population. Madawi al-Rasheed, "The Shi'a of Saudi Arabia: A Minority in Research of Cultural Authenticity." *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol. 25, No.1 (May 1998), p.132. See also, *The Economist*, June 17, 2002.

<sup>7</sup> International Religious Freedom Report 2004, <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2004/35507.htm>, accessed on July 3, 2005.

<sup>8</sup> See, for example, Raphael Israeli, "Is Jordan Palestine?" in Efraim Karsh and P R Kumaraswamy (eds.), *Israel, Hashemites and the Palestinians: The Fateful Triangle* (London: Frank Cass, 2003), pp.49-66.

<sup>9</sup> Zaid Majed, "Introduction and Executive Summary," *Building Democracy in Jordan: Women's Political Participation, Political Party Life and Democratic Elections* (Stockholm, International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance

(IDEA), 2005), p.19.

<sup>10</sup> Suleiman Sweiss, "Electoral Systems in Jordan", in *Building Democracy in Jordan: Women's Political Participation, Political Party Life and Democratic Elections* (Stockholm, International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IDEA), 2005), p.115.

<sup>11</sup> However, between 1979 and 1990 Chedi Klibi of Tunisia held the position, as Egypt was suspended from the League following its signing of the Camp David Accords with Israel.

<sup>12</sup> This expression was first used by the Zionist leadership to justify that the *yishuv* could absorb more Jewish immigrants.

<sup>13</sup> For a more in-depth discussion see, Hillel Frisch, "Ethnicity, Territorial Integrity and Regional order: Palestinian Identity in Jordan and Israel," *Journal of Peace Research*, Vol. 34, No. 3 (1997), pp. 257-70.

<sup>14</sup> P R Kumaraswamy, "The Jordan-Hamas Divorce," *Middle East Intelligence Bulletin*, Vol. 3, No. 8 (August-September 2001), [www.meib.org/articles/0108\\_me1.htm](http://www.meib.org/articles/0108_me1.htm).