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Political Stability in Contemporary Monarchies: The Case of Oman

An All College Thesis

College of St. Benedict and St. John's University

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Abstract

Since the beginning of the Cold War, the stability of monarchies in the Middle East has had major implications for U.S. influence in the region. Building on Michael Herb's work, I explore whether dynastic institutions create better outcomes in economic development and alliance systems, and thus lead to less instability in the state. I conducted this research using an alternative approach to Herb's comparison of case-studies by process-tracing the relationship between dynastic institutions and political stability in the case of Oman.

The findings of this study suggest that the strength of dynastic institutions in the Al Bu Said from 1913-2018 regime are instead associated with less political stability. It appears that dynastic institutions are not necessarily stabilizing as the previous literature has suggested. Instead, the dynastic institutions in Oman inhibited reforms due to the need to accommodate a larger number of political elites. I suggest that while dynastic institutions can increase the likelihood of a state remaining stable, they can also serve as a trap for the regime once there is severe instability. *Other dynastic monarchies may experience more stability but they may be less suited than non-dynastic monarchies to adapt at the pace that is needed to avert regime collapse when an unlikely case of instability does occur.*

Political instability was evident in the earliest years of the first time period I examined, which suggests future research needs to be conducted on how the political conditions that exist when dynastic institutions are established affect the success of dynastic institutions in the long-term.

Introduction

In 2011, a wave of uprisings known as the ‘Arab Spring’ put pressure on authoritarian leaders across the Middle East to implement reforms and in many cases these uprisings threatened the existence of the regime. Three regimes in Egypt, Libya, and Tunisia did collapse while civil wars have created humanitarian disasters in Syria and Yemen. However, none of the eight monarchies in the Middle East experienced regime change or civil war. The Arab Spring illustrates the phenomenon of monarchies being the most stable type of authoritarian regime during the twentieth century and early twenty-first century.¹ Initially, the persistence of monarchies in the contemporary world took the scholarly community by surprise and much is still unknown about the causes of their survival. In this study, I seek to address the question: *Why do monarchies persist or collapse?*

The benefits of studying this question are not limited to U.S. foreign policy. Researching explanations of monarch persistence contributes to our understanding of regime persistence.² Since political science is concerned with how humans distribute and use power in a society, the concept of regime is fundamental to the study of political science. And this makes it all the more important to understand why some regime types persist while others do not.

To examine this research question, I start with a review of the current literature concerned with monarchy stability. The literature review covers the explanations of economic conditions, historical influences, and foreign influences. In the literature gap, I discuss the

¹ Mona El-Ghobashy, “Governments and Oppositions,” *Politics and Society in the Contemporary Middle East*, Boulder, Colorado. Lynne Rienner Publishers, Inc. (2013): 39.

² Patrick H. O’Neil, *Essentials of Comparative Politics*, Fifth Ed. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2015, 34. O’Neil defines regime as “the fundamental rules and norms of politics.”

importance of testing Michael Herb's theory on dynastic institutions increasing political stability further.

In the research design, I discuss my use of the process-tracing and case-study methods to test whether or not dynastic institutions affect political stability. I test the hypothesized process using the Al Bu Said monarchy in Oman. Oman is a valuable case for testing this process because it is a case in which the strength of dynastic institutions and political stability fluctuate. This allowed me to examine how changes in the strength of dynastic institutions affected political stability over the span of 105 years (1913 to 2018). And few of the previous studies that have tested the effects of dynastic institutions on political stability used an in-depth case-study. Herb, who created the theory of dynastic institutions, mentions that each of the cases he used needed in-depth studies.

In the third section, I divide the 105 years of Omani history into three periods defined by the rules of Taimur bin Faisal, Said bin Taimur, and Qaboos bin Said. I separate the data testing each hypothesis according to the period that the data has implications for. The first variable that I test is dynastic institutions. Then I test two causal mechanisms that act to connect dynastic institutions to political stability, the dependent variable. At the end of the data analysis section, I lay out variables that I did not anticipate when designing my methods and approach to the study.

The next section discusses a process of monarchy persistence based on my findings in Oman. All three of the hypotheses I tested were inconsistent with the data presented in this study. I adjust the process developed from past research to account for the inconsistencies past theoretical framework and the political history of Oman, leaving a process for future researchers to test.

The final two sections are limitations and conclusion. Finally, I describe the limitations of this study and provide advice to guide future researchers. The conclusion gives a brief recap of the study.

Literature Review

The literature describes three explanations for monarchy persistence. First, economic conditions may, or may not, offer an incentive for the population within a state to tolerate the persistence of a monarchy. Second, historical influences may shape the narratives of elites and create the present institutions within each monarchy. The final explanation is the effect of foreign influences on domestic actors. This last explanation includes the influence of the relations with foreign regimes as well as the domestic events in foreign states that can affect the attitudes and narratives within a state's population.

All of these factors influence the outcome of the dependent variable, political stability, which is the frequency and severity of *domestic* events that threaten a regime. External events that directly threaten political stability are omitted in this study. The scope of this study only examines foreign variables for the effects that those variables have on the behavior of domestic actors when that behavior has implications for regime stability. For the purpose of this study, the literature incorporated in this section is primarily focused on contemporary Middle Eastern monarchies, though it does incorporate research on monarchies from pre-contemporary times or other regions if the concepts are still relevant to contemporary Middle Eastern monarchies. Scholars across all three of these themes also bring in other regime types for the purpose of comparison to identify the strengths that they have observed as being unique to monarchies. After this section covers the three themes, I conclude by discussing the gaps in the literature.

Political Economy:

The political economy in a monarchy plays a major role in determining whether or not the population of a state will remain content with the status quo (meaning the continuity of the present regime). In the literature concerned with the stability of monarchies, two themes regarding this variable are present. The first theme is the rentier state theory, which is a state in which the government funds itself using the revenues from natural resource sales rather than having to tax its citizens. The second theme is concerned with the confidence of citizens in participating in the economy due to having the belief that their property is secure.

All of the eight monarchies in the Middle East act as rentier states. In rentier states, the government is able to collect enough revenue from the extraction and exportation of natural resources to fund government operations, rather than having to collect taxes from the population.³ In such states, authoritarian regimes are able to keep a hold on power as a result of the government not needing cooperation from its citizens in order to collect tax revenue.⁴ Scholars have adopted the term “resource trap” to refer to the persistence of an authoritarian regime as a result of the resource revenue that allows a government to fund itself without the help of tax payers.⁵ Jordan is the only monarchy with scarce natural resources, though Jordan is still able to act as a rentier state due to the financial assistance that they receive from other monarchies as well as Western allies.⁶ Six of the monarchies in the Middle East, all of which are on the Arabian Peninsula, have not only enough revenue from resource rents to fund government

³ Michael Herb, *All in the Family: Absolutism, Revolution, and Democracy in the Middle Eastern Monarchies* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1999): 7.

⁴ Michael Herb, *All in the Family*, 7.

⁵ Mary Ann Tétreault, "The Winter of the Arab Spring in the Gulf Monarchies," *Globalizations* 8, no. 5 (October 2011): 631.

⁶ Sean L. Yom and Mohammad H. Al-Momani, "The International Dimensions of Authoritarian Regime Stability: Jordan in the Post-Cold War Era," *Arab Studies Quarterly* 30, no. 1 (2008): 51.

operations, but also enough money to set up generous welfare programs to satisfy their subjects.⁷ On top of funding welfare programs, the abundance of oil revenue allows Middle East monarchs to heavily invest in infrastructure and education.⁸ Many of the authors who conducted post-Arab Spring studies observed that the monarchs of the Middle East were able to increase government payments to their citizens to create an incentive to be content with the status quo.⁹

The second explanation concerns the population's sense of security in market activities. This theme of economic conditions helps to satisfy the population and improve the monarch's legitimacy, while also being more closely associated with monarchies than republics. Menaldo's findings in a large-N analysis suggests this. In his study, he estimates property security based on the amount of currency held against the amount of property that requires the consistent enforcement of contractual and property protection laws.¹⁰ Menaldo draws from Clague's argument that people are more likely to prefer to hold more currency when property rights are less secure.¹¹ In his quantitative analysis on the issue of economic freedom, Menaldo found that increased consistency in the enforcement of property rights and contracts were associated more closely with monarchies than other types of authoritarian regime.¹² This situation allows subjects to make contracts and own property with assurance that the government will not violate these freedoms and it is associated with better economic outcomes in other areas such as production,

⁷ Sally Khalifa Isaac, "Explaining the Patterns of the Gulf Monarchies' Assistance after the Arab Uprisings," *Mediterranean Politics* 19, no. 3 (2014): 418.

⁸Robert S. Snyder, "The Arab uprising and the persistence of monarchy," *International Affairs* 91, no. 5 (September 2015): 1030.

⁹ Mary Ann Tétreault, "The Winter of the Arab Spring in the Gulf Monarchies," 631.

¹⁰ Victor Menaldo, "The Middle East and North Africa's Resilient Monarchs," *Journal of Politics* 74, no. 3 (2012): 720.

¹¹ Victor Menaldo, "The Middle East and North Africa's Resilient Monarchs," 720.

¹²Victor Menaldo, "The Middle East and North Africa's Resilient Monarchs," 721.

which is measured by Gross Domestic Product (GDP) per capita. This, in turn, leads to content within the population and gives citizens more to lose if the regime collapses.¹³

Historical Influence:

The second major theme that appears in the literature is the historical events and habits that influence the narratives of society and leave behind institutions and a ruler's legitimacy (or lack thereof). This explanation includes the length of the ruling family's hold on power, length of the tenure of each monarch's predecessor, rules and norms developed within the ruling family, and past societal narratives. All of these are institutions, which are historical influences when the length of their persistence bolsters their legitimacy. While the first two are institutions within the state, the other two are outside of the state since they deal with behavior within the ruling family and civil society. However, the latter two are able to influence individuals working within the state.

Dynastic structures are a major determinant in monarchy survival, according to previous scholars. The theoretical framework regarding this variable that most of the recent literature builds on was put forward by Michael Herb in 1999.¹⁴ At the time of his writing, many of the scholars studying monarchies in the Middle East argued that the regimes would not be able to modernize without it inevitably leading to collapse due to monarchies being an outdated regime.¹⁵ Five monarchies in the Middle East did in fact collapse during the second half of the 20th century but eight defied this trend and now appear to be more stable than the republics of the

¹³ Victor Menaldo, "The Middle East and North Africa's Resilient Monarchs," 711.

¹⁴ Michael Herb, *All in the Family*, 21.

¹⁵ Michael Herb, *All in the Family*, 1.

Middle East.¹⁶ Herb pointed out that Jordan and Morocco survived despite not having strong dynastic structures nor the massive oil wealth of Gulf States. But his hypothesis was not focused on the mixed results of non-dynasties. Instead, he pointed to the fact that while non-dynasties could survive despite being fragile, strong dynastic structures guarantee the survival of the monarchy even when faced with adversity, such as the reign of an incompetent ruler.¹⁷ After Herb published his theoretical framework in 1999, many scholars have supported the idea that the resilience of these monarchies is not a coincidence. Six of these eight monarchies can be distinguished from the monarchies that did collapse because of their dynastic structures which created rules for power competition within the family (though once again, Herb was reluctant to include Oman as a dynasty).

One outcome of dynastic monarchies that many scholars see as a major variable aiding a monarchy's survival is the rule of law, which is more evident in dynastic monarchies than other non-dynastic monarchies and republics. Herb is the first scholar cited in this study to suggest this.¹⁸ Okar and Jamal's qualitative analysis supported Herb's claim in 2002.¹⁹ A quantitative study conducted by Menaldo in 2012 also supported Herb's claim. Menaldo found that monarchies were more consistent in their enforcement of the law than Republics.²⁰ And this finding overlaps with the previous section on the issue of property rights and enforcement of contracts. The economic outcome of market security for each individual is in part derived from the rule of law because the rule of law makes a government more likely to enforce property rights in a predictable way. Menaldo claims that the rule of law is more closely associated with

¹⁶ Robert S. Snyder, "The Arab uprising and the persistence of monarchy," 1029. Also found in Michael Herb, *All in the Family*, 209.

¹⁷ Michael Herb, *All in the Family*, 103.

¹⁸ Michael Herb, *All in the Family*, 47.

¹⁹ Ellen Lust-Okar and Amaney Ahmad Jamal, "Rulers and Rules: Reassessing the Influence of Regime Type on Electoral Law Formation," *Comparative Political Studies* 35, no. 3 (2002): 342.

²⁰ Victor Menaldo, "The Middle East and North Africa's Resilient Monarchs," 711.

monarchies than with other authoritarian regimes.²¹ There are several reasons for why the rule of law is more closely associated with monarchies. According to Herb, the existence of the rule of law in dynastic monarchies can be in part explained by family competition, since the ruler will be more inclined to please their subjects with fair treatment to ensure that another family who is a potential substitute does not surpass them in popularity.²²

The rule of law also gives a monarch more options in calming unrest. Kamrava observes that monarchies are better structured for creating democratic institutions without giving up their power.²³ In this case, monarchs are more likely to consistently uphold the rules of the electoral process when they do make democratic reforms because they can afford to allow an opposition group to control parliament since the monarch is not an elected official and can also reserve their power to override or dissolve the parliament (so they still reserve the right to violate the principles of democracy if they do end up in a desperate situation).²⁴ Okar and Jamal back up the findings of Kamrava and also observe that the rule of law gives monarchs an option to calm unrest by implementing liberal reforms during times of economic turmoil.²⁵ This happened in both Jordan and Morocco, both of which are states that do not enjoy the very high degree of oil wealth that the Gulf States enjoy and have made democratic reforms in response to dissatisfaction with economic conditions.²⁶ This finding also helps to explain the persistence of regimes which Herb claims to be fragile, since both Jordan and Morocco lack the features of a dynasty.

²¹ Victor Menaldo, "The Middle East and North Africa's Resilient Monarchs," 710.

²² Michael Herb, *All in the Family*, 62.

²³ Mehran Kamrava, "Non-Democratic States and Political Liberalization in the Middle East: A Structural Analysis," *Third World Quarterly* 19, no. 1 (March 1998): 66.

²⁴ Mehran Kamrava, "Non-Democratic States and Political Liberalization in the Middle East," 68.

²⁵ Ellen Lust-Okar and Amaney Ahmad Jamal, "Rulers and Rules," 342.

²⁶ Ellen Lust-Okar and Amaney Ahmad Jamal, "Rulers and Rules," 344.

Finally, a non-institutional factor in historical influence that Abramson and Rivera point out is the tenure of past monarchs. While this study was not done on contemporary monarchies, they did find that there is a correlation between increased stability under a monarch and longer tenure lengths of their predecessor.²⁷ This study relates to the work of Menaldo because it supports importance of time in the consolidation of power.²⁸

Foreign Influence:

The final explanation for monarchy persistence discussed in the literature is foreign influence. This explanation comes in the form of multilateral cooperation, security dilemmas, and the events within the domestic arena of foreign states.

Monarchies in the Middle East enjoy extra help with regime security from the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC). The monarchies of the Middle East, especially Saudi Arabia, provide extra funds and/or extra security forces (as was the case in Bahrain during the Arab Spring).²⁹ Empirical evidence that Khalifa uses to support this is the Arab Spring uprising in Bahrain, when Saudi forces were sent to aid the regime in a crackdown on protesters.³⁰ Six monarchies on the Arabian Peninsula (Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, and the United Arab Emirates) make up the membership of the GCC.³¹ As mentioned in the first section, the benefits created by the GCC are not limited to its members. Jordan and Morocco, the non-

²⁷ Scott Abramson and Carlos Velasco Rivera, "Time is Power: The Noninstitutional Sources of Stability in Autocracies." *Journal of Politics* 78, no. 4 (2016): 1281.

²⁸ Victor Menaldo, "The Middle East and North Africa's Resilient Monarchs," 718.

²⁹ Sally Khalifa Isaac, "Explaining the Patterns of the Gulf Monarchies," 418.

³⁰ Sally Khalifa Isaac, "Explaining the Patterns of the Gulf Monarchies," 418.

³¹ Sally Khalifa Isaac, "Explaining the Patterns of the Gulf Monarchies," 417.

GCC monarchies in the Middle East, have also received economic aid from the wealthy states in the GCC.³²

There are also relationships outside of the GCC which contribute to the stability of monarchies. Core-periphery relationships between the United States and monarchies also explains the survival of monarchies. Contrary to the republic rejection of U.S. influence in the region, the monarchies of the Middle East tend to welcome U.S. aid and military assets.³³ That is not to say that the monarchies never face backlash as result of their decisions to develop closer ties with the West, but they do not face the same degree of popular pressure to cut ties with the West even though there is widespread popular disapproval of Western relations among the populations living under the rule of monarchy.³⁴

For monarchies, having this option allows them to alleviate the problems created by high military investment.³⁵ Reduced military expenditures opens up more revenue to be used for domestic investment which increases citizen satisfaction.³⁶ For example, in Qatar the government has elected to defer military investment and instead allows the U.S. to operate a military base within Qatar, with nearly ten thousand soldiers stationed there.³⁷ Savings open up state funds to invest in other places. And this core-periphery relationship overlaps with the historical narrative of revolutionary nationalism because of the fact that revolutionary nationalist

³² Sean L. Yom and Mohammad H. Al-Momani, "The International Dimensions of Authoritarian Regime Stability," 51.

³³ Fred H. Lawson, "Security Dilemmas in the Contemporary Persian Gulf," *International Politics of the Persian Gulf*, Modern Intellectual and Political History of the Middle East, Syracuse, N.Y., Syracuse University Press, (2011): 52.

³⁴ Mohammed Ayoob, "American Policy Toward the Persian Gulf," *International Politics of the Persian Gulf*, Modern Intellectual and Political History of the Middle East, Syracuse, N.Y., Syracuse University Press, (2011): 138.

³⁵ Fred H. Lawson, "Security Dilemmas in the Contemporary Persian Gulf," 57.

³⁶ Mohammed Ayoob, "American Policy toward the Persian Gulf," 123.

³⁷ Mohammed Ayoob, "American Policy toward the Persian Gulf," 128.

narratives are often heavily opposed to Western influence in the region.³⁸ The rejection of Western influence by revolutionary nationalists limits the ability for leaders to align with the West to increase regime security and so in this case it can be said that the monarchies benefit from having a reduced degree of revolutionary nationalism amongst their subjects.³⁹

While relations with other states can contribute to the stability of each monarchy, as explained above, relations with other states can also create instability. As pointed out by Lawson, monarchies in the Middle East are constantly stuck in an arms race with other states in the region which is perpetuated by an action-reaction spiral.⁴⁰ While Iran is an obvious rival for monarchies on the Arabian Peninsula, cooperation with GCC states is very conditional and the members of the GCC also seek to improve their security against the potential threats that may be posed in the future by other GCC members.⁴¹ This aspect of foreign influence relates back to the core-periphery relationship because it explains why monarchs have trouble reducing military spending without help from Western powers.

Finally, the domestic politics of foreign states can affect a population's approval of the monarch. While many scholars focus on the institutional structures that have contributed to the relative stability of monarchies in the Middle East, Snyder proposes that the instability of republics can actually explain the stability of monarchies.⁴² There are many factors that contribute to a monarchy's legitimacy such as distribution of massive oil wealth, which can cause monarchs to be perceived as being benevolent dictators by their subjects.⁴³ But Snyder points out that the poor outcomes of revolutions within republics is an extra incentive for the

³⁸ Robert S. Snyder, "The Arab uprising and the persistence of monarchy," 1039.

³⁹ Robert S. Snyder, "The Arab uprising and the persistence of monarchy," 1038.

⁴⁰ Fred H. Lawson, "Security Dilemmas in the Contemporary Persian Gulf," 66.

⁴¹ Fred H. Lawson, "Security Dilemmas in the Contemporary Persian Gulf," 53.

⁴² Robert S. Snyder, "The Arab uprising and the persistence of monarchy," 1040.

⁴³ Michael Herb, *All in the Family*, 24.

populations within states ruled by a monarch to tolerate the rule of the monarch.⁴⁴ Adding to Snyder's work on the issue, Isaac points out that this could incentivize monarchs to be selective with which authoritarian regimes they back. Isaac uses the monarchies discriminate support for other monarchical regimes during domestic instability while supporting oppositions in republics, with their support for Syrian opposition being an example.⁴⁵

However, this fear of the aftermath of a revolution can also be attributed to the failures of past monarchies that turned into republics that continued authoritarian rule.⁴⁶ Whether the tolerance is reinforced by the collapse of republics or past monarchies, in both cases there seems to be no point in a regular citizen risking the things that they already have, especially in wealthy oil states, if a successful revolution would make the conditions of the state worse. And in this way, the domestic politics of individual states, regardless of regime type, can have a major influence on the stability of foreign regimes.

Research Gap:

While a lot of research has investigated the question of why some monarchies survive and others collapse, more research that looks further in-depth on the cases involved is needed to explain the variations not accounted for in the current literature. The case fitting this criteria that I use in this study is the Sultanate of Oman. As pointed out by Herb, the Al Bu Said dynasty in Oman has dynastic characteristics but he does not classify as a complete dynasty due to the fact that the monarch appears to have absolute control, especially after 1939.⁴⁷ In Oman, the dynastic

⁴⁴ Robert S. Snyder, "The Arab uprising and the persistence of monarchy," 1031.

⁴⁵ Sally Khalifa Isaac, "Explaining the Patterns of the Gulf Monarchies," 424.

⁴⁶ Robert S. Snyder, "The Arab uprising and the persistence of monarchy," 1039.

⁴⁷ Michael Herb, *All in the Family*, 228.

institutions present eroded during the reign of Sultan Said bin Taimur.⁴⁸ And the data used by Herb is distributed throughout the 20th century and indicate that stability varies.⁴⁹

Research Method

Based on the research gap discussed in the literature review, I focus on regime stability in monarchies as a dependent variable. To clarify, this paper has not abandoned the outcome of persistence or collapse but is instead taking a look at political stability as a dependent variable. I assume increased stability increases the likelihood of regime persistence while decreased stability increases the likelihood of regime collapse.

This section discusses how I measure the dependent variable, monarchy stability. It also discusses the independent variables, which are dynastic institutions, economic development, and ties with a Western state. Finally, I turn to the research approach in which I discuss the method I used and the case that I selected to test these variables in.

Dependent variable

The dependent variable for this study is political stability. I measured political stability using the presence of open rebellions, coup attempts, clashes with the security forces of other states, and reports of widespread protests. These measurements are alterations of the measurements used by Menaldo to measure political stability. Menaldo used quantitative measurements for violence, demonstrations, casualties, and attempt to overthrow or murder the

⁴⁸ Michael Herb, *All in the Family*, 258.

⁴⁹ Michael Herb, *All in the Family*, 258.

leader in power.⁵⁰ Since this is a case-study instead of a large-N comparative analysis, these measurements are qualitative rather than quantitative.

Independent Variables

In this study, I tested three variables: the erosion of dynastic institutions, close ties with a Western state, and economic development. I discuss the measurements used for each variable. After I define the measurements used for each variable, I discuss the hypotheses for the independent variables and their relationship with the dependent variable.

The first variable, dynastic institutions, are rules and norms that allow the monarch's family members to have leverage over the monarch and a role in government. My definition is consistent with the one used by Michael Herb.⁵¹ I measure this variable using the number of the monarch's family members playing an active role in governance (both local and central government positions), incidents of ruling family members opposing the policies supported by or opinions expressed by the monarch without evidence of the family member concerned being reprimanded, and the proportion of government revenue being distributed to members of the ruling family (excluding the monarch from this total). All of these measurements give us an idea of how much power the members of the ruling family share with the monarch. It is especially important to pay attention to the second measurement because the inability of the monarch's family members to express disagreement without losing their government posts and/or incomes would suggest that these assets are not translating into leverage over the monarch for the ruling family.

⁵⁰ Victor Menaldo, "The Middle East and North Africa's Resilient Monarchs," 709.

⁵¹ Michael Herb, *All in the Family*, 14.

The second variable is economic development which I measure using life expectancy, infant mortality rate, GNP per capita, number of educational institutions, etc. These measurements are indicators of economic and human development and are the same measurements used by Menaldo⁵² and Herb⁵³ as indicators of a state's economic and human development. While I am not using an equation to calculate these statistics into one measurement, I compare these statistics to each other to see if there are patterns that hold across the majority of these measurements.

The third variable is close alignment with Western states. Mohammed Ayoob's work is the source of this variable.⁵⁴ For this study, I include both military and administrative aid, which are measurements used by Ayoob when he examines how Western states contribute to the security of monarchical regimes in the Gulf Region.⁵⁵ I exclude economic ties in the form of trade as meeting the definition of this variable on its own. To be a close alignment, the two states concerned need to exchange arms through an economic transaction for trade to count.

However, I also measure close alignment in terms of a direct military presence or if the regime delegates administrative or diplomatic responsibilities to a foreign government. Ayoob includes the former as an indicator⁵⁶ while the latter is drawn from Herb's observation of British interference in the governance of Gulf States.⁵⁷ For the latter two measurements, the regime has to consent to the West's presence or assumption of responsibility without any pressure from that Western State being evident.

⁵² Victor Menaldo, "The Middle East and North Africa's Resilient Monarchs," 709.

⁵³ Michael Herb, *All in the Family*, 39.

⁵⁴ Mohammed Ayoob, "American Policy toward the Persian Gulf," 127.

⁵⁵ Mohammed Ayoob, "American Policy toward the Persian Gulf," 128.

⁵⁶ Mohammed Ayoob, "American Policy toward the Persian Gulf," 128.

⁵⁷ Michael Herb, *All in the Family*, 262.

Hypotheses

The following three hypotheses predict different steps in the process of monarchy stability. Hypothesis one makes a prediction about the initial input in the process of monarchy stability. Both hypothesis two and three are concerned with causal mechanisms connecting the hypothesis one variable, dynastic institutions, to the outcome of monarchy stability.

Hypothesis 1: The presence of dynastic institutions will increase political stability.

This hypothesis is consistent with Herb's findings that dynastic institutions are associated with increased political stability.⁵⁸ I predict that the presence of dynastic institutions is the initial input in the process of monarchy persistence because of Michael Herb's evidence showing that all six of the monarchies that he defines as dynasties survive and finds this to be a better indicator of monarchy stability and persistence than other independent variables.⁵⁹ If his findings apply to all monarchies, then dynastic institutions should be the overall cause that shapes the outcome and effect of other independent variables.

Hypothesis 2: Economic development will serve as a causal mechanism connecting the variable of dynastic institutions to an increase in monarchy stability.

This hypothesis is based on a common theme which shows that there is more popular tolerance within the populations ruled by the monarchs of the Middle East when oil revenues better the living conditions of the population. The article used in my research that discussed this the most was by Isaac Sally Khalifa.⁶⁰ I expect to see the dynastic institutions affect the regime's

⁵⁸ Michael Herb, *All in the Family*, 11.

⁵⁹ Michael Herb, *All in the Family*, 12.

⁶⁰ Isaac Sally Khalifa, "Explaining the Patterns of the Gulf Monarchies' Assistance after the Arab Uprisings," *Mediterranean Politics* 19, no. 3 (2014): 418.

decision on whether or not to promote development and/or the regime's approach in promoting development. I expect to see the policies affected by dynastic institutions to have a positive outcome in preventing dissent within the population.

Hypothesis 3: The presence of a close alliance with a Western ally will serve as a causal mechanism connecting the variable of dynastic institutions to an increase in monarchy stability.

This hypothesis is drawn from Ayoob's observation of western allies, particularly the United States, play a major role in maintaining political stability in Middle Eastern Monarchies.⁶¹ I predict that western alliances will serve as a causal mechanism that connects the dynastic institutions to political stability. There are two things that will be evident if this hypothesis is true. First, the presence of dynastic institutions should restrict the ability of the monarch to distance the regime from western powers. Second, the presence of strong Western alliances should increase political stability. If dynastic institutions do not restrict the monarch from distancing the regime from Western powers but Western alliances do increase political stability, then it would be an intervening variable.

Research Approach

This study will be conducted using the single-case method. The reason for why this is appropriate for the research question asked in this study is because most of the literature discussing monarchy persistence and stability, especially in the literature discussing hypothesis one, examines variables affecting monarchy persistence across states, looking at trends in monarchical regimes. A very small number do an in-depth analysis of individual cases to

⁶¹ Mohammed Ayoob, "American Policy toward the Persian Gulf," 127.

examine how these independent variables fit into the process of monarchy persistence. Herb recommended that other researchers do more in-depth case-studies of the cases he used, since the scope of his study made him have to simplify a lot of the case's historical complexity.

Conducting an in-depth study on one of the cases used by Herb helps us understand what the process of dynastic institutions affecting political stability looks like.

To conduct this case-study, I used the process-tracing method. I used this method since there is already an idea of what the potential causes are of the outcome regime persistence. Conducting this study using process-tracing to test known causes and outcomes is in accordance with the guidelines set by Beach and Pederson.⁶² A qualitative study of a case which has the input of dynastic structures with erosion being present in the process of regime persistence can help in testing past theories using a different approach. This will either affirm or critique the current understanding of which independent variables are linked to the dependent variable, regime stability, which ultimately ensures regime persistence.

Case Justification

I conducted this study using the case of Oman. This is a strong case for testing dynastic institutions because the strength of Oman's dynastic institutions allow us to observe how the strengthening and weakening of those institutions affect political stability. In his work in 1999, Michael Herb examined thirteen different cases of contemporary monarchies to test his hypothesis that dynastic monarchism explains the persistence of many monarchies today.⁶³ Oman was a case which he had difficulty defining and he ultimately categorizes it as being

⁶² Derek Beach and Rasmus Brun Pederson, "Process-Tracing Methods," *Causal Case Study Methods: Foundations and Guidelines for Comparing, Matching, and Tracing*, Ann Arbor, Michigan. University of Michigan Press, 2016, 313.

⁶³ Michael Herb, *All in the Family*, 5.

mostly a dynasty, even though he acknowledges that any control that family members have had since 1939 has been entirely dependent upon the grace of the Sultan.⁶⁴ By categorizing Oman with the dynasties, he contradicts his claim in the introduction that a fundamental characteristic of a dynasty is that family members possess power that the monarch cannot simply take away from them, that the family must act as “a ruling institution.”⁶⁵ Classifying Oman as a dynasty in general and only measuring whether or not it survived completely overlooks how the fluctuation of dynastic institutions in Oman interact with the fluctuations in political stability. And Herb himself acknowledged that his own study overlooked the complexities of each case he used, including Oman.⁶⁶

Data Collection

Accessing data on Oman for the 1913 to 1932 and 1932 to 1970 periods was difficult due to both the lack of data available in English. However, I was able to collect enough to get a sense of what the dynastic institutions and political stability during these looked like. To collect data relevant to the hypotheses tested, I used news articles, the Omani government’s documents and databases, the United States government’s databases, and the entire collection of books about Omani history in the Alcuin library. *Oman and the World: The Emergence of an Independent Foreign Policy* by Joseph A. Kechichian provided a large number of primary documents and statistics which are cited in this study.

⁶⁴ Michael Herb, *All in the Family*, 6.

⁶⁵ Michael Herb, *All in the Family*, 6.

⁶⁶ Michael Herb, *All in the Family*, 4.

The Making of Omani Politics

Although this study focuses on Oman from 1913 to 2018, it is important to understand the historical origins of the Omani political system that existed in 1913. In this section, I provide a brief history of the Al Bu Said family and historical trends of Omani politics to put the data collected into context. This section covers the amount of political power held by Al Bu Said family prior to 1913, the Al Bu Said's historical connections to regime enemies, the role of geography in shaping Arabian politics, and the role of Great Britain in Oman and the Persian Gulf.

In the year 1913, Oman had a complex political system with a powerful entity, the Imamate of Oman, complicating the Al Bu Said's ability to consolidate their power.⁶⁷ The Imamate was led by an elected Imam and oscillated between recognizing authority of the Sultan and rebelling against the Sultan.⁶⁸

The Al Bu Said regime derives legitimacy was established through the old Imamate, sharing an origin with the Imamate. The first sultan from the family was an Imam elected by Omani tribal leaders.⁶⁹ Tribes had selected an Imam to serve as a centralized authority in the areas that make up modern day Oman since the year 750 C.E.⁷⁰

With the rise of the second Imamate, two distinct political entities existed in Oman which both claimed to rule the same land when they were at odds. At other times, the Imam recognized the Sultan but retained a significant amount of autonomy that made it difficult for the Sultan to coerce the people of the Imamate.

⁶⁷ Jeremy Jones and Nicholas Ridout, *A History of Modern Oman*, New York City, N.Y.: Cambridge University Press, 2011, 90.

⁶⁸ Jeremy Jones and Nicholas Ridout, *A History of Modern Oman*, 27.

⁶⁹ Jeremy Jones and Nicholas Ridout, *A History of Modern Oman*, 27.

⁷⁰ Jeremy Jones and Nicholas Ridout, *A History of Modern Oman*, 27.

The Al Bu Said's power was in decline leading up until the year 1913. During the 19th century, the Al Bu Said family had sovereignty over much of the territory that makes up the current state of Oman. But Oman used to expand beyond its current territory to include the Trucial Coast territories, which makes up the United Arab Emirates today, as well as Zanzibar, which is currently a part of Tanzania.⁷¹ Zanzibar broke away from Oman after it was given to a son who was not the Sultan of the mainland while territory in the Trucial Coast region was lost as a result in the decline of the Al Bu Said's administrative capacity.⁷²

It is also important to understand that geography has largely shaped the political organization of Arabia throughout history. Arabia has never been unified by a single political entity.⁷³ Historically, the terrain of Arabia has made travel difficult and, in turn, makes it easier for local leaders to resist a political entity that is attempting to bring the entirety of Arabia under its control.⁷⁴ Since Oman is in Arabia and consists of geographical barriers, such as the vast desert known as the 'Empty Quarter,'⁷⁵ it is important to note the increased importance of popular approval for any central authority to exist. Local political entities such as tribes have played a large role in Arabian politics and still limit the ways in which a central authority can influence their subjects because the consent of tribal leaders is generally necessary.⁷⁶ This is controlled for in comparing this study to the literature that analyzes other monarchs in Arabia since geographical barriers are present in those states as well. But it is still a variable to keep in mind, especially because it makes technological development more significant since it made the different regions of Oman more accessible.

⁷¹ Jeremy Jones and Nicholas Ridout, *A History of Modern Oman*, 65.

⁷² Jeremy Jones and Nicholas Ridout, *A History of Modern Oman*, 65.

⁷³ Jeremy Jones and Nicholas Ridout, *A History of Modern Oman*, 65.

⁷⁴ Jeremy Jones and Nicholas Ridout, *A History of Modern Oman*, 65.

⁷⁵ Jeremy Jones and Nicholas Ridout, *A History of Modern Oman*, 65.

⁷⁶ Jeremy Jones and Nicholas Ridout, *A History of Modern Oman*, 65.

The ubiquitous British influence in the affairs of Gulf Monarchies had not failed to reach Oman by the year 1913 and so it is important to contextualize British influence. An objection that may be raised to connections between the Al Bu Said's dynastic institutions and the outcome in political stability is that the Al Bu Said did not have sovereignty over Oman. It is true that Oman was a protectorate of Britain at the start of the first period observed in this study (1913) and it continued to be until the end of the second period (1970).⁷⁷ For this reason, it is important to contextualize Oman's status as a protectorate in order to avoid objections derived from a false interpretation of what a protectorate is. Interference by the British in Omani domestic affairs was rare. The only area of politics that they influenced was international affairs and they did so by the consent of the Sultan.⁷⁸ British courts recognized the sovereignty of British protectorates during this period.⁷⁹ In the eyes of the British courts, protectorates are sovereign states that have only allowed the British to handle their international affairs in exchange for benefits, especially military aid for the regime. Protectorates reserved the right, to exit from such an agreement.⁸⁰ In essence, protectorates were sovereign states entering into an agreement to act in a specified way in international affairs to receive military aid in return.⁸¹

Data Analysis

This section explores each hypothesis and the supporting and contradicting evidence for each. Then it discusses the two unanticipated findings from the data collected. Finally, this section concludes by applying all of the findings to create a theoretical process of causation that

⁷⁷ Joseph A. Kechichian, *Oman and the World: The Emergence of an Independent Foreign Policy*, (Santa Monica, CA: Rand, 1995), 31.

⁷⁸ Joseph A. Kechichian, *Oman and the World*, 31.

⁷⁹ *Mighell v. Sultan of Johore Court of Appeal*, Great Britain, Queen's Bench Division, 1894.

⁸⁰ *Mighell v. Sultan of Johore Court of Appeal*, 1894.

⁸¹ *Mighell v. Sultan of Johore Court of Appeal*, 1894.

connects the independent variable/input of dynasty erosion to the dependent variable/output of regime persistence. It must be emphasized that this theoretical framework is meant to be tested in future studies and future research should propose adjustments to this framework according to empirical evidence.

Hypothesis One: The presence of dynastic institutions will serve as an initial independent variable in a process that increases political stability.

The data that is relevant to this hypothesis is presented in three time periods. I first lay out the data from the 1913-1932 period, then the 1932-1970 period, and finally the 1970-2018 period. Each section discusses the data collected on dynastic institutions first and the data on political stability second. Each period concludes with a generalization of what we see during the period. At the end, I assess the data by comparing the three periods to each other and I identify critical events that influence the strength of dynastic institutions and political stability.

1913-1932

1. Data on Dynastic Institutions

There is evidence from this time period that indicates the Sultan's family members held formal positions in the government. A four person Council of Ministers was in place during this time. Two out of the four people on this Council were family members.⁸² The family council existed throughout the reign of Taimur bin Faisal, which is data that Herb includes in his own study.⁸³ It is important that there was a formal institution through which the ruling family

⁸² Joseph A. Kechichian, *Oman and the World*, 31.

⁸³ Michael Herb, *All in the Family*, 151.

members could have a place, at least to give advice to the Sultan. But degree of significance that this evidence holds depends upon how much power the Sultan actually delegated to this council.

There is evidence that suggests that the Ministers on the Council of Ministers would receive power independent of the Sultan's oversight. Sultan Taimur bin Faisal would delegate his governing power to the President of the Council of Ministers for prolonged periods away from Muscat.⁸⁴ And the Sultan's son, Said bin Taimur, held this powerful position from 1929 to 1932.⁸⁵ This suggests that family members shared a significant amount of the Sultan's power. The Sultan did not only give his family members positions that were mere formalities during this period. He gave them positions where they had the power to make decisions in policy and they had some degree of independence in wielding that power. The family possessing power which is not subject to the complete oversight of the Sultan is a sign of strong dynastic institutions during this period.

Sultan Taimur bin Faisal's disinterest in having a great amount of power may undermine the assertion that a dynasty was in place during this time. There are reports that he had expressed his desire to abdicate the throne before he finally followed through in 1932.⁸⁶ For many years, the British insisted that he remain the Sultan.⁸⁷ By pressuring a Sultan who no longer cared to have power to not abdicate the throne likely empowered the family members of the Sultan. A ruler who does not care to remain in power is more likely to be willing to share power with their family members since they do not care to hold on to that power. A ruler would also be less afraid of family members usurping their position if they do not care for it, which would likely prevent

⁸⁴ Jeremy Jones and Nicholas Ridout, *A History of Modern Oman*, 99.

⁸⁵ Jeremy Jones and Nicholas Ridout, *A History of Modern Oman*, 99.

⁸⁶ Carol Riphenburg, *Oman: Political Development in a Changing World*, (London, U.K.: Praeger Publishers, 1998), 44.

⁸⁷ Carol Riphenburg, *Oman: Political Development in a Changing World*, 44.

them from being reluctant to delegate power to potential competitors. This could be interpreted as evidence that this period was fit to foster dynastic institutions. It could also mean that family influence was not a result of institutions but rather an individual's ad hoc decision to have some family members assist him in his duties as a ruler. More evidence is needed to determine how this should be interpreted.

There is also evidence of Sultan Taimur bin Faisal's family members sharing a large portion of state revenue. The monarch's family members were pulling in 34% of the state's revenue as this period was coming to a close in 1931.⁸⁸ Data on the portion of state revenue going to family members during the earlier years of this period was not found and so there is no certainty that this figure is accurate for other times during this period. However, this is still significant because it shows that for at least a part of this early period, family members were pulling in a significant portion of government revenue. It suggests that the power of ruling family members was institutionalized through the distribution of government resources, which reflects a characteristic of strong dynastic institutions.

The ruling family's share of state revenue is also evidence of family members accumulating resources which can be used to assert their influence. Resources can be used to undermine the Sultan's authority through investments in mercenaries and other means of contesting the Sultan's authority. This prevents the Sultan from disregarding the interests of his family members, reinforcing dynastic institutions. Even if the Sultan's family members did not use political leverage to extract government revenue, it is still a sign that family members were accumulating resources that would allow them to exert influence in Omani politics during this period.

⁸⁸ Jeremy Jones and Nicholas Ridout, *A History of Modern Oman*, 103. This statistic specifically estimates the amount of government revenue received by the monarch's family members in the year 1931.

There is also evidence of British influence supporting dynastic institutions. The British appear to generally accept the will of the family in the selection of the Sultan which is evident in their acceptance of Said bin Taimur, who the British backed after it was apparent that he had the most support within the family.⁸⁹ This comes after the end of this period but it suggests that the British valued the consent of ruling family members in the time leading up to the accession of Said bin Taimur. The British acknowledging the family's role in choosing successors is a sign of strong dynastic institutions.

In addition the British valuing the consent of ruling family members, the end of this time period provides a reflection of how members of the Al Bu Said family valued the family's consent in succession. In his Letter of Accession, Sultan Said bin Taimur says:

“I am writing to inform you that I have in conformity with the order issued by my father ascended the throne of the Sultanate today and have intimated to the members of my family the decision of my father to succeed him. They have approved of that and have accepted me as Ruler of the State.”⁹⁰

This suggests that the Sultan sees the family's approval as being important to his legitimacy. It does not tell us how many family members approved of his accession nor the conditions on which they accepted him. But the fact that he felt it was important to claim that the family approved of him implies that family consent is valuable. Since family decision-making in the matter of succession is associated with strong dynastic institutions, this is an indicator of strong dynastic institutions.

⁸⁹ Jeremy Jones and Nicholas Ridout, *A History of Modern Oman*, 99. This page lays out the rise of Said bin Taimur to the throne. It is implied that Sultan Said bin Taimur had the support of his father and the Council of Ministers to become the new Sultan. It is also implied that the British were accepting of this decision. This supports the claim put forward by Kechichian that the British sought to influence the Sultan instead of deciding who the Sultan would be. Both of these descriptions are supported by my inability to find any evidence of British interference in this power transition.

⁹⁰ Said bin Taimur Al Said, *Letter of Accession of Said bin Taimur*, February 10, 1932. Found in: *Oman and the World: The Emergence of an Independent Foreign Policy*, by Joseph A. Kechichian, (Santa Monica, CA: Rand, 1995), 343.

The evidence suggests that strong dynastic institutions were present during this period. At least a few family members held significant leverage because the family council had four members. The amount of power that the Sultan delegated to his family members and the amount of wealth that the family members were receiving suggests that the family members who were involved in governance held a significant amount of power. Strong dynastic institutions entail the presence of family members who serve as more than mere symbols in their government offices which is why the amount of power held by family members is important. If this hypothesis is true, then there should also be data that indicate a relatively stable political environment in Oman during this period.

2. Data on Political Stability

This period was marked by several indicators of severe political instability. During this period, the greatest threat to regime survival was the Imamate which had established control over the interior.⁹¹ Several rebellions occurred, though the degree to which they threatened the regime varied. The rebellion that posed the greatest threat during this period resulted in a direct attack on Muscat. 3,000 rebel combatants were recruited and marched on Muscat against an army of 700 supporting the Sultan.⁹² The army supporting the Sultan consisted of the Sultan's personal guard and British soldiers.⁹³ While it is possible that the army supporting the Sultan enjoyed better weaponry and training because of British support, the fact that the Imam's army consisted of four times the number of soldiers in the Sultan's army suggests severe instability.

⁹¹ The "interior" refers to the territory surrounded by the coastal territories held by the Al Bu Said. While the Al Bu Said did not have control of the interior, it still held a long stretch of coastal territory that stretched from the capital, Muscat, to Salalah in the southern Dhofar region.

⁹² Joseph A. Kechichian, *Oman and the World*, 267.

⁹³ Joseph A. Kechichian, *Oman and the World*, 59.

For a long period, the Al Bu Said family did not have sovereignty over a large portion of the territory that they claimed to rule. This is evident in the Treaty of Seeb which was signed in 1920.⁹⁴ In this treaty, the Al Bu Said conceded most of the Omani territory outside of Muscat.⁹⁵ The Al Bu Said had already lost control of the interior of Oman and this treaty served as an acknowledgement of the Imam's control of the interior.⁹⁶ While the Imam agreed to recognize the Sultan, this treaty restricted the Sultan's ability to perform normal function of a government such as the restriction on his ability to impose taxes upon the people of the interior. The inability of the Al Bu Said family to maintain its sovereignty over a large portion of the territory it claimed coupled with the fact that the internal political entity disrupting their sovereignty posed a threat to the rest of the territory that the Al Bu Said family did control, suggests a severe case of instability.

Tribal affiliations with the Imamate throughout this time period suggests instability. Arabia consisted of tribes and clans that retained a great amount of autonomy.⁹⁷ Even with the creation of modern states in Arabia,⁹⁸ tribes and clans still have a significant role in politics and political entities needed co-opt tribal leaders. The evidence suggests that Sultan Taimur bin Faisal failed to co-opt the tribes, especially in the interior regions of Oman and heavily relied on British troops to maintain their power over the Omani tribes.⁹⁹ In contrast, the Imam solely relied on tribal support.¹⁰⁰ Sultan Taimur bin Faisal's inability to win the loyalty of the tribes indicates a threat to the regime.

⁹⁴ Joseph A. Kechichian, *Oman and the World*, 273.

⁹⁵ Joseph A. Kechichian, *Oman and the World*, 273.

⁹⁶ Joseph A. Kechichian, *Oman and the World*, 273.

⁹⁷ John Townsend, *Oman*, (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1977), 46.

⁹⁸ The modern state was conceived in the Treaty of Westphalia in 1648 which brought an end to the Thirty Year's War. This treaty established the idea of sovereignty within well-defined borders. No other country is to interfere in political affairs within those borders, the ruling regime has a monopoly of violence.

⁹⁹ John Townsend, *Oman*, (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1977), 46.

¹⁰⁰ John Townsend, *Oman*, (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1977), 46.

The data suggests that the 1913 to 1932 was politically unstable. Muscat, the capital, was attacked by forces intending to destroy the Al Bu Said regime. Concessions to the Imam in the Treaty of Seeb also suggest the Sultan's inability to rule. Finally, the Sultan was unable to win the loyalty of the tribes.

1932 to 1970

1. Data on Dynastic Institutions

The new Sultan that took over in 1932, Said bin Taimur, dissolved the four member family council within the first year of his reign.¹⁰¹ This is a major indicator of dynasty erosion because this was the only formal institution through which the members of the ruling family controlled influential government positions that was found during the data collection for this study. Even though not all of the seats on this council were controlled by family members, it was still a huge blow to the most influential family members.

Formal institutions that were introduced also detracted from the influence of any family members who controlled government posts. Sultan Said bin Taimur replaced the four person Council of Ministers with three departments which were unable to act without his approval.¹⁰² This suggests that ruling family members who did hold formal positions did not possess meaningful political power since they could not deviate from the preferences of the Sultan. The inability of family members to use at least some of their power independently is a characteristic of a weak dynasty.

A low number of family members holding state posts from 1939 to 1970 also suggests that the dynasty eroded during this period. Data that Herb managed to access for his study, which

¹⁰¹ Joseph A. Kechichian, *Oman and the World*, 267.

¹⁰² Michael Herb, *All in the Family*, 150.

I did not find elsewhere, only showed two family members of Sultan Said bin Taimur holding government posts, including posts in the military and local government.¹⁰³ And these family members occupy positions within the military rather than occupying central government positions.¹⁰⁴

There are also accounts from British officials that have implications in determining the strength of the dynasty during this period. In 1939, British officials in Oman said that they doubted that the Sultan's family members retained.¹⁰⁵ While this is an opinion shared by officials involved with the Omani government and not hard evidence it is still important for validating the analysis of dynastic institutions during this time period. From the outside, the evidence that is available to us between 1932 and 1939 suggests that the dynastic institutions have eroded. The fact that people who were close to the situation at the time drew the same conclusion from their observations helps to validate the way this evidence is being interpreted.

Sultan Said bin Taimur demonstrated on multiple occasions that he could chase out family members who displeased him. Most of his family members were exiled throughout his reign, including the two family members who had held government posts in 1939.¹⁰⁶ While a monarch may be able to exile some family members when there are strong dynastic institutions, they face more restrictions. Sultan Said bin Taimur did not need to gain support from family members to exile a family member and this approval is needed when family members have influence in political affairs.¹⁰⁷ He exiled a large majority of powerful family and such a proportion of the family being exiled would be a very unlikely event under a strong dynasty. It is

¹⁰³ Michael Herb, *All in the Family*, 150.

¹⁰⁴ Michael Herb, *All in the Family*, 150.

¹⁰⁵ Michael Herb, *All in the Family*, 151.

¹⁰⁶ Michael Herb, *All in the Family*, 153.

¹⁰⁷ John Townsend, *Oman*, (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1977), 18.

in the best interest of every family member to ensure that their own power is safe from the Sultan's authority. The Sultan's move to exile a majority of family members is a threat to the power of any family member since every family members that held a government post was chased into exile before the period ended. Such a complete ouster of family members suggests that dynastic institutions did not exist to give family members a check on who the Sultan chooses to reprimand.

The end of this period is marked by Sultan Qaboos' accession to the throne on July 23, 1970. But the new Sultan's speech four days after his accession illustrates a decline in dynastic institutions. In his broadcast to his people, Sultan Qaboos states that "My family and my armed forces have vowed their obedience and sincerity."¹⁰⁸ The Sultan mentions his family members in his speech. But he frames in terms of submission rather than approval. This word selection shows the attitude shift that occurred from 1932 to 1970 when compared to the words selected by Said bin Taimur. Sultan Qaboos' decision to not emphasize the consent of his family members indicates that the dynastic institutions that were left in 1970 were far weaker than the ones that existed in 1932.

This period shows a decline in dynastic institutions. Said bin Taimur's monopolization of power is evident in the reduction of family members in state posts, a large number of family members being exiled, a decline in revenue being distributed to the Sultan's family members, and Sultan Qaboos' emphasizing the submission of his family members rather than their approval.

¹⁰⁸ John Townsend, *Oman*, (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1977), 47.

2. Data on Political Stability

Four pieces of evidence illustrate the instability present during this period. First, two major civil wars were fought. Second, threats by family members show division within the political elites in Oman and a potential for civil war between the Sultan and his family. And further conflict within the family is apparent with the Sultan putting his son, Qaboos bin Said al Said, under house arrest. Third, there was an assassination attempt on the Sultan in the 1960s. Finally, the period concludes in 1970 with a coup that removes the Sultan from power but the regime persists since a member of the Al Bu Said family replaced him. At the end of this section, this period is compared to the 1913-1932 period.

The first civil war was a rebellion led by Imam Ghalib bin ‘Ali from 1954 to 1959 against the rule of Said bin Taimur.¹⁰⁹ This is an indicator of instability but based on the reported fear of political and military elites associated with the Al Bu Said regime and the United Kingdom, it did not appear to raise alarm to the extent that the second civil war did.

The second civil war took place in Dhofar from 1965 to 1975, consuming the last five years of this period.¹¹⁰ This period concludes with the war being unresolved and Sultan Said bin Taimur’s tenure coming to an end in 1970. Up until this time, the Dhofar War had been drawn out, since the insurgents benefitted from the mountainous terrain in the region and used guerilla warfare to holdout against the regime.¹¹¹ Not only does this fall under instability because it was an internal conflict and the Sultan did not have sovereignty over the whole of Oman, the fact that it never resolved before the end of Sultan Said’s tenure ended would suggest that without the transition of power to a new leader was necessary to turn the war around.

¹⁰⁹ Joseph A. Kechichian, *Oman and the World*, 266.

¹¹⁰ Joseph A. Kechichian, *Oman and the World*, 267.

¹¹¹ Ian Cobain, “Britain’s Secret Wars,” *The Guardian*, September 8, 2016.

The severity of the Dhofar War separates the instability during this period from the instability during the 1913-1932 period. During the insurgency, the United Kingdom attempted to keep their role in the Dhofar War a secret. Evidence of this is found in the fact that when a record was published by the United Kingdom government during the 1964-1970 period, the Vietnam War was mentioned 250 times and the Dhofar War in Oman was never mentioned.¹¹² This is despite the fact that leaders in the West saw the Dhofar as being a critical fight in the Cold War to prevent other Arabian monarchies from falling to communist revolutions.¹¹³

There is evidence that suggests that the leaders of the United Kingdom remained silent on the war in Dhofar because they were concerned that it would be seen as a failure of the U.K. government. The Guardian interviewed a British and Omani commanders involved in Dhofar. When asked why the United Kingdom was not open about their role in the Dhofar War, John Akehurst, the commander of the Sultan's Armed Forces in 1972, said "They were perhaps nervous that we were going to lose it."¹¹⁴ Since the insurgents intended to "liberate" all of Oman,¹¹⁵ an Omani commander reporting fear amongst the allies of the regime suggests a near collapse of the regime. The severity of the situation is illustrated by reports of insurgent control in many areas outside of the Dhofar region and influence in areas not under their control.¹¹⁶

Threats made by family members towards Sultan Said bin Taimur also suggest instability during this period. In 1958, the Sultan's brother threatened that he would work to overthrow his brother from Iraq.¹¹⁷

¹¹² Ian Cobain, "Britain's Secret Wars."

¹¹³ Ian Cobain, "Britain's Secret Wars."

¹¹⁴ Ian Cobain, "Britain's Secret Wars."

¹¹⁵ Joseph A. Kechichian, *Oman and the World*, 51.

¹¹⁶ Ian Cobain, "Britain's Secret Wars."

¹¹⁷ Joseph A. Kechichian, *Oman and the World*, 267.

An event that further demonstrates hostilities within the family is Sultan Said bin Taimur putting his son, Qaboos bin Said al Said under house arrest in 1964.¹¹⁸ This is evidence of tensions within the elite circle. And this division within the elite circle serves as a sign of instability.

Severe instability is also evident in attempts made on the Sultan's life during this period. Assassination attempts on Sultan Said bin Taimur occurred during the 1960s, including an attempt made by two of his own military personnel in 1967.¹¹⁹

This period concludes with a palace coup where Qaboos bin Said al Said overthrew his father and assumed power as the new Sultan on July 23, 1970.¹²⁰ A coup is sign of instability since it is a change in government against the former sovereign's will. But the same regime remained in place after this coup since power was transferred from one ruling family member to another.

1970-2018

1. Data on Dynastic Institutions

The strength of the Al Bu Said regime's dynastic institutions increased after the transition of power from Said bin Taimur to his son Qaboos bin Said al Said on July 23, 1970. Qaboos did recall a few of his uncles from exile and even gave some of them government posts.¹²¹ However, a monarch making the decision to give family members government positions alone does not mean that a monarchy is fully dynastic. Sultan Qaboos still had full control over the appointment

¹¹⁸ Ian Cobain, "Britain's Secret Wars."

¹¹⁹ Jeremy Jones and Nicholas Ridout, *A History of Modern Oman*, 139.

¹²⁰ Joseph A. Kechichian, *Oman and the World*, 267.

¹²¹ Joseph A. Kechichian, *Oman and the World*, 38.

for government posts and had the authority to remove family members who he did appoint at will.

Qaboos' absolute power, despite family members occupying a very few government posts throughout this period, is evident in who he appointed to those posts. After taking power in 1970, he recalled one of his uncles, Sayyid Tariq, out of exile and allowed him to become the second most influential individual in the government.¹²² He selected this particular uncle because of ideological similarities and due to the fact that Sayyid Tariq had gained a lot of popularity among Omani citizens which made him valuable for consolidating power.¹²³ The absence of need for the monarch to get support from other family members to appoint or remove government office holders suggests that the family power dynamics that are necessary for a monarchy to be classified as a dynasty are absent in Oman throughout this period.

Data on dynastic institutions after Herb wrote his study shows that the dynastic institutions that existed at the end of the twentieth was still present in 2017. During this year, Sultan Qaboos' family members occupied seven out of thirty of posts in the Council of Ministers.¹²⁴ The posts that Sultan Qaboos' family members occupied gave them significant influence rather than minor influence.

Members of the Al Bu Said family also held posts that are implied to be more influential than the other posts on the Council of Ministers. Sayyid Fahd bin Mahmoud al-Said holds the most influential post in the Council of Ministers with his official title being "Deputy Prime Minister for the Council of Ministers."¹²⁵ It is difficult to measure the influence of each post within the Council of Ministers except through the implications of their titles. The title held by

¹²² Joseph A. Kechichian, *Oman and the World*, 38.

¹²³ Joseph A. Kechichian, *Oman and the World*, 51.

¹²⁴ CIA, "Oman," *Chiefs of State and Cabinet Ministers of Foreign Governments*.

¹²⁵ CIA, "Oman," *Chiefs of State and Cabinet Ministers of Foreign Governments*.

Sayyid Fahd bin Mahmoud al-Said is worded to suggest that it is the head post over the whole Council by using “Prime Minister” in the title. Since his title implies that he is responsible for managing the operations of the Council of Ministers, it suggests that he has influence over every Minister which they do not have over him. This would mean that his post is more influential than every other post. And this makes the fact that one Sultan Qaboos’ family members is occupying the post even more important.

Six other Ministers are related to the Sultan and their positions appear of varying importance and also hard to measure. The following is a list of the other six ministers:

- **Minister of Heritage & Culture:** Sayyid Haitham bin Tariq al-Said
- **Minister of Diwan of Royal Court:** Sayyid Khalid bin Hilal al-Busaidi
- **Minister Responsible For Defence Affairs:** Sayyid Badr bin Saud al-Busaidi
- **Minister of Interior:** Sayyid Hamoud bin Faisal al-Busaidi
- **Minister of State and Governor of Muscat:** Sayyid Saud bin Hilal bin Hamad al-Busaidi
- **Minister of State and Governor of Dhofar:** Sayyid Mohammed bin Sultan bin Hamoud al-Busaidi¹²⁶

Sultan Qaboos has allowed his family to be much more involved in the state than his father did. At the very least the dynastic institutions in the Al Bu Said family have strengthened during this period.

Sultan Qaboos’ control over several significant government posts does limit the ability of the ruling family members to act without his oversight. He is still the Sultan (Head of State), Prime Minister (Head of Government), Minister of Finance, Minister of Defense, Minister of

¹²⁶ CIA, “Oman,” *Chiefs of State and Cabinet Ministers of Foreign Governments*.

Foreign Affairs, and Governor of the Central Bank of Oman.¹²⁷ Having control over these five offices gives him a position of oversight over all of the other positions that he gives to his family members. Herb points out that this is one way that Oman's dynasty contrasts other dynasties where the monarch typically gives one or more of these positions held by Sultan Qaboos to other members which gives them a greater degree of power.¹²⁸ And the data from 2001 to 2017 shows the continuation of this observation which Herb made in 1999, with Qaboos holding these powerful posts from year to year.¹²⁹ This is a major limitation on the ruling family's influence through dynastic institutions.

The Sultan also possesses significant leverage to minimize the involvement of his family members through his popularity. During the 2011 Arab Spring, Omani citizens criticized the government for institutions that they viewed as corrupt. However, there is no evidence of criticism of the Sultan, even among anonymous sources.¹³⁰ Many protestors not only tolerated Sultan Qaboos' performance, they also expressed their faith in the Sultan as the solution to corruption within the Omani government. When asked about whether or not they thought Oman would follow other states where authoritarian regimes collapsed during the Arab Spring, one protester told the BBC "We are not Tunisia, we are not Libya. Our leader is loved, he is not corrupt and I would be willing to lay out my life on the line for him."¹³¹ A leading protester from the Majlis Al-Shura denied that there was any opposition group. "There is no opposition as such, and I hate any attempt to describe people who are expressing their demands and their interests as opposition."¹³² This piece of evidence connects to the strength of dynastic institutions since it is a

¹²⁷ CIA, "Oman," *Chiefs of State and Cabinet Ministers of Foreign Governments*.

¹²⁸ Michael Herb, *All in the Family*, 150.

¹²⁹ CIA, "Oman," *Chiefs of State and Cabinet Ministers of Foreign Governments*.

¹³⁰ Nicoll Fergus, "Oman."

¹³¹ Nicoll Fergus, "Oman."

¹³² Nicoll Fergus, "Oman."

political tool. Sultan Qaboos' popularity is an indicator of the family having less leverage to solidify their role within the regime. An elite who opposes the Sultan's rule or criticizes the Sultan's policies would risk a reduction in their own legitimacy among the populace since the populace is likely to sympathize with the Sultan. It is less necessary for the Sultan to appease which is not characteristic of a dynasty.

However, the absence of criticism is a limited measurement of the Sultan's popularity because of free speech restrictions. The Basic Law, which was implemented in 1996, suggests that freedom of speech cannot be used to directly criticize the Sultan:

His Majesty the Sultan is the Head of State and the Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces, his person is inviolable, respect of him is a duty, and his command is obeyed. He is the symbol of national unity and the guardian of the preservation and the protection thereof.¹³³

"Respect of him is a duty" implies that verbal criticism of the Sultan is illegal, even though the Basic Law does not explicitly prohibit criticism against the Sultan. This likely affects the willingness of Omani citizens to criticize the Sultan. But it is unlikely that free speech restrictions on their own would be able to deter every protester from speaking out, especially with the option of remaining anonymous. Therefore, the lack of anonymous criticisms of the Sultan suggests that Sultan Qaboos enjoys high amount of popularity. And the loyalty of Omani citizens to Sultan Qaboos serves as a potential limitation on the ruling family's ability to pressure the Sultan which would undermine the dynasty.

Criticisms of government institutions with posts held by ruling family members shows a disparity in popularity between the Sultan and his family members. During the Arab Spring, protesters directed their criticisms at the Majlis al-Shura and the Council of Ministers.¹³⁴ A large

¹³³ Sultanate of Oman. *The Basic Law*. 1996.

¹³⁴ Nicoll Fergus, "Oman."

portion of the Ministers in the Omani government are members of the ruling family.¹³⁵ This indicates that more popular criticism is aimed at members of the ruling family rather than Sultan Qaboos. The family's inability to match Sultan Qaboos' popularity leaves them at a disadvantage in any attempt to accumulate more power.

The absence of provisions in the Basic Law suggest a limit on the ruling family's ability to push for their own legal protection. While the Sultan enjoys legal protection from criticism, his family members do not. Criticisms towards ruling family members, even if they are Ministers, are not prohibited in the Basic Law.¹³⁶ While this puts the possibility of the Sultan enjoying more genuine popularity in question, it also demonstrates a disparity in power between the Sultan and his family members. The ability of the Sultan to implement laws to protect himself from criticism while his family members have not managed to do this implies that the Sultan's family members are limited in their ability to pursue provisions that give them legal protections. This limitation contradicts the characteristics of a dynasty.

The final piece of evidence, which suggests that the dynasty is strengthening, is the legal provision that gives the ruling family members the power to choose a successor after the Sultan abdicates or is deceased. This is established in Article Six of the Basic Law.¹³⁷ "The Royal Family Council shall, within three days of the throne falling vacant, determine the successor to the throne."¹³⁸ Sultan Qaboos' choice to give this power to a family council indicates that the family's approval of the Sultan is valued once again. However, the effects of this provision will not become clear until after Sultan Qaboos' reign comes to an end. For now, Article 6 does not constrain Sultan Qaboos or subject him to the approval of his family members. It is a provision

¹³⁵ CIA, "Oman," *Chiefs of State and Cabinet Ministers of Foreign Governments*.

¹³⁶ Sultanate of Oman. *The Basic Law*. 1996.

¹³⁷ Sultanate of Oman. *The Basic Law*. 1996.

¹³⁸ Sultanate of Oman. *The Basic Law*. 1996.

that shows that dynastic institutions are starting to be acknowledged as important in the way that they were in 1932 but its impact is limited until the reign of Sultan Qaboos comes to an end.

Dynastic institutions in the Al Bu Said regime did strengthen during the 1970 to 2018 period. The evidence presented for this period shows that the Sultan's family members held several important state posts throughout this period, which contrasts the 1932 to 1970 period. However, Sultan Qaboos still holds six posts that have given him a final check over the decisions made by family members who he appointed to state posts. This contrasts the 1913 to 1932 period during which Sultan Taimur bin Faisal delegated his powers as an executive to family members. The available evidence suggests that the dynastic institutions of this period were overall stronger than the dynastic institutions of the 1932 to 1970 period but weaker than the dynastic institutions of the 1913 to 1932 period. However, provisions in the Basic Law that empower the ruling family to pick a Sultan offers prospects for the dynastic institutions becoming stronger after Sultan Qaboos is deceased and not during his reign.

2. Data on Political Stability

Several indicators of political stability are present that were not present to the same degree as the 1932 to 1970. There are two events that indicate instability after Sultan Qaboos took power.

First there was the second half of the Dhofar Insurgency which lasted until 1975.¹³⁹ This instability does not begin but does in fact resolve during Qaboos' reign which contrasts the instability that was present at the beginning of the 1913-1932 period.

¹³⁹ Joseph A. Kechichian, *Oman and the World*, 267.

The second event indicating a degree of instability after 1970 is the 2011 Arab Spring protests. During this wave of protests, demonstrators called for less government corruption, more citizen governance, and more jobs for Omani nationals.¹⁴⁰ Two protesters were killed in Sohar as some demonstrators did resort to violence in the form of burning law enforcement buildings, leading to a crackdown on the protests.¹⁴¹ While this is an example of mild instability, it pales in comparison to the instability that is evident prior to 1970.

Even violent protesters in Oman's Arab Spring advocated for reform rather than regime change. No prominent figures within these protests were reported as calling for regime change.¹⁴² And the quotes from protesters, discussed in the previous section, which expressed their love for Sultan Qaboos suggests that this event does not show major instability.

The anger expressed by protesters was in large part directed at the Majlis Al-Shura, the Omani parliament (a parliament that has no formal power but simply advises the Sultan).¹⁴³ And so this incident of instability is not necessarily a threat to the regime but rather one institution within the regime which has no authority, only the power to advise the Sultan.¹⁴⁴ Even though this qualifies as political instability, it still pales in comparison to the periods examined earlier in this section since only two people died as a result,¹⁴⁵ far from being an equivalent to the civil wars fought during the previous two periods examined in this study. And it was not a threat to the Sultan himself and so it does not indicate a severe threat to the regime.

¹⁴⁰ Nicoll Fergus, "Oman: Sultan Qaboos Still Popular Despite Discontent," *BBC World News*, March 3, 2011.

¹⁴¹ "CIA: The World Factbook: Oman." *CIA World Fact Book*.

¹⁴² Nicoll Fergus, "Oman."

¹⁴³ Nicoll Fergus, "Oman."

¹⁴⁴ Nicoll Fergus, "Oman."

¹⁴⁵ Nicoll Fergus, "Oman."

Summary Chart

	1913-1932	1932-1970	1970-2018
Dynastic Institutions	Sultan delegates a large amount of power to family members. Family members are more influential than in the other two periods.	Dynastic institutions are very weak. Overall, institutions are weaker than they are during the other two periods.	Dynastic features exist. Offices controlled by family members lack influence.
Political Stability	Consistent instability. Regime is heavily dependent on British support for survival.	Instability is present but not as consistent as 1913-1932.	Instability leftover from 1932-1970 period. Stability is consistent after 1975.

Significance

The evidence presented in this section mostly contradicts the first hypothesis. During the 1913 to 1932 period, dynastic institutions accompanied frequent instability. From 1932 to 1939, the dynastic institutions erode at a quick pace and what remains in 1939 slowly disappears. By 1970, dynastic institutions hit a low point and Sultan Qaboos bin Said takes power in a coup without a family council selecting him to be Sultan. This contrasts the family's selection of Said bin Taimur in 1932. However, this low point of dynastic institutions gives way to Sultan Qaboos having more control over policy than he would if dynastic institutions were present. With this power, Sultan Qaboos makes a series of radical reforms at the very beginning of his reign. In the years immediately following these reforms, the Dhofar War comes to an end and the Al Bu Said regime has experienced political stability ever since. This process of political stabilization in Oman suggests that the absence of dynastic institutions, not the existence of dynastic institutions, was a step in Oman's political stabilization.

Hypothesis Two: Political economic reforms will link the existence of dynastic institutions to an increase in political stability.

To test this hypothesis, this section lays out the evidence concerned with economic conditions for each period. The 1913-1932 and 1932-1970 periods both had limited data on economic development indicators that I could access. At the end of this section, I discuss the implications of the data in the context of the data regarding dynastic institutions and political stability.

1913-1932

1. Data on Economic Development

Data on economic development during this time was difficult to find. While some reports suggest that economic development was absent during this time, data that can measure development in similar measurements to the 1932-1970 and 1970-2018 periods was not available.

There is one indicator that suggests that development was poor, however, which is that the government had to tax many of the peasants in Oman by collecting goats and other livestock rather than currency.¹⁴⁶ This is an indicator that the peasants were living in poor conditions because the Al Bu Said family taking a food source instead of currency or less essential goods would suggest that the peasants did not have much else to give. Still, this measurement does not allow for this period to be compared to other periods. For this reason, I am only going to compare the 1932-1970 period and the 1970-2018 period, leaving this one out of the overall analysis.

¹⁴⁶ Wendell Phillips, *Unknown Oman*, New York: David McKay Company, Inc. 1966, 32.

1932-1970

1. Data on Economic Development

During this period, there are indicators of destitution in Oman. One indicator from this period that is available for examination is education. Only three primary schools existing near the end of Sultan Said bin Taimur's tenure.¹⁴⁷ The neglect of education, which suggests a neglect of human development, is further illustrated by an estimated five percent literacy rate during the 1960s.¹⁴⁸

The only indicator of increasing economic development is the sale of oil. It is reported in 1967 that Oman starts extracting and exporting oil in "commercial quantities."¹⁴⁹ However, Jan Morris observes that Sultan Said bin Taimur was receiving payments for oil contracts more than ten years before this, in return for allowing oil companies to search the area for oil.¹⁵⁰ But it appears that little of this was going towards infrastructure or human development, due to the reported hike in human development investment immediately following the end of Sultan Said bin Taimur's reign which will be discussed in the 1970-2018 period.

As discussed in previous sections, this period is marked by severe instability. The presence of instability along with underwhelming economic growth supports the hypothesis that a political economy's poor performance increases instability. This is due to the fact that there is low stability and very low economic growth, suggesting a correlation. Both of these variables are very similar to the 1913-1932 period.

¹⁴⁷ Nicoll Fergus, "Oman."

¹⁴⁸ Ian Cobain, "Britain's Secret Wars," *The Guardian*, September 8, 2016.

¹⁴⁹ Ian Cobain, "Britain's Secret Wars."

¹⁵⁰ Jan Morris, *Sultan in Oman*, London, U.K. Sickle Moon Books (1957), 63.

1970-2018

This period is marked by rapid and consistent economic development. Development during this period far outpaced both of the other two periods examined in this study. Several statistics used to measure the living/financial conditions of the Omani population drastically improved in the years immediately following Sultan Qaboos' ascension to the throne. Infant mortality rate dropped steadily year by year. In 1970, the year that Sultan Qaboos took office, the infant mortality rate was 159 per 1000 births.¹⁵¹ By the next year, 1971, it dropped to around 150 per 1000 births¹⁵² and in the first year after the Dhofar War concluded, 1976, that number dropped to around 110.¹⁵³ And by 1990, it dropped all the way to twenty per one-thousand births.¹⁵⁴ Since the infant mortality rate continued to fall steadily long after the Dhofar Insurgency, it is reasonable to assume that the drop can be attributed to more than just the war coming to an end. These statistics suggest an increase in human development

Improving education statistics also indicate economic development in Oman. The number of educational institutions in Oman increased from less than forty in 1971 to around 820 by 1991.¹⁵⁵ To provide a number on the investment in education during the Dhofar Insurgency, the number of education institutions surpassed two-hundred as the Dhofar Insurgency was concluding.¹⁵⁶ Literacy improved to 93% by 2018 along with the increase in educational institutions.¹⁵⁷ The steady increase in educational institutions is evidence of economic development because state revenue has enabled the state to provide these services for its people even

¹⁵¹ Joseph A. Kechichian, *Oman and the World*, 347.

¹⁵² Joseph A. Kechichian, *Oman and the World*, 347.

¹⁵³ Joseph A. Kechichian, *Oman and the World*, 347.

¹⁵⁴ Joseph A. Kechichian, *Oman and the World*, 347.

¹⁵⁵ Joseph A. Kechichian, *Oman and the World*, 347.

¹⁵⁶ "CIA: The World Factbook: Oman." *CIA World Fact Book* 52 (2018).

¹⁵⁷ Joseph A. Kechichian, *Oman and the World*, 348.

Life expectancy also rose consistently from year to year both during and after the Dhofar Insurgency. In 1970, life was expected to be very short for Omanis, with the estimate being forty-seven years at birth.¹⁵⁸ By 1976, life expectancy surpassed fifty years at birth¹⁵⁹ and by 1992 this number had risen to seventy.¹⁶⁰ This steady increase in life expectancy is another indicator of a growing economy and more investment in human development. And as with the other variables, these rising numbers occur before and during an increase in Oman's domestic stability.

An increase in state capacity is another sign of economic development during this period. With more government revenue, Sultan Qaboos was able to increase military investment and this action coincided with a perpetuated period of stability after 1975 which indicates that there may be a relationship.¹⁶¹

A Cause of Stability

Since the data collected to test this hypothesis suggests economic development is correlated with political stability, the analysis now turns to whether or not there was a causal relationship between these variables. The evidence collected points to the either economic being a cause of increased stability or that it is a two-way causal relationship. While the correlation was able to be examined with a high number of quantitative measurements, the only measurements on causality are qualitative and are limited in number.

There is the possibility that political stability caused an increase in economic development. Sultan Qaboos claimed that political stability is the source of economic growth

¹⁵⁸ Joseph A. Kechichian, *Oman and the World*, 348.

¹⁵⁹ Joseph A. Kechichian, *Oman and the World*, 348.

¹⁶⁰ Joseph A. Kechichian, *Oman and the World*, 348.

¹⁶¹ Joseph A. Kechichian, *Oman and the World*, 353.

rather than the relationship being the other way around.¹⁶² And this would fit with the claim made by Menaldo that stability in monarchical regimes explains successful economic development more than other variables, including oil revenue.¹⁶³ However, the claim made by Sultan Qaboos' is the only piece of evidence that suggests that political stability would be the independent variable in this relationship. Furthermore, this claim may not be based on anything that Sultan Qaboos knew. He would have a political motive to frame the relationship between stability and economic development in this way because it would discourage Omani citizens from rising up against the regime if they believe that economic development depended on regime survival. There is more evidence that supports economic development being an independent variable causing political stability.

The chronological order of economic development coming first and stability coming second suggests that Sultan Qaboos' claim is incorrect. Oman's economy started to improve during the second half of the Dhofar War (1970-1975) rather than after. It would make more sense to believe that the variable that comes first would be the causal variable. If Oman's political stability did not begin to improve until after economic growth started to steadily increase, then economic growth must be the input.

Due to the lack of public opinion polls in Oman, it is difficult to figure out the degree to which economic growth makes the citizens of Oman more willing to accept the regime's persistence. However, demands made by protesters during the Arab Spring suggest that lack of economic development can spur citizens into action against the regime. In the 2011 Arab Spring, the streets of Muscat and Salalah saw large demonstrations expressing dissatisfaction with the

¹⁶² Sultan Qaboos Bin Said al Said, "Speech by His Majesty Sultan Qaboos Bin Sa'id Al Bu Sa'id on the Occasion of the Opening of the Second Term of the Majlis al-Shura. *Oman and the World: The Emergence of an Independent Foreign Policy*.

¹⁶³ Michael Herb, *All in the Family*, 5.

government.¹⁶⁴ Once the Sultan made the promise of democratic reform and commended the demonstrators for voicing their concerns, the demonstrators gradually ended their protests,¹⁶⁵ indicating that the population is willing to create unrest when there is general dissatisfaction with economic and living conditions without economic reform in sight.

An increase in military spending as a result of rising economic development also suggests that economic development promoted stability. Increased military investment allowed Sultan Qaboos to end Omani dependence on other states for military aid. Though weaponry was still being imported in large quantities,¹⁶⁶ the Sultan no longer had to rely on auxiliary forces loyal to leaders in other states.¹⁶⁷ Moving away from dependence on the United Kingdom helped Sultan Qaboos gain popularity since the Omani population generally disapproved of the United Kingdom's influence in Oman and the region at large.¹⁶⁸ It also allowed Oman to have security without having to make large concessions to other states.¹⁶⁹ These points will be discussed further in hypothesis three. For right now we can say that increased military investment coincided with a perpetuated period of stability after the end of the Dhofar War in 1975.¹⁷⁰ This would tie increased economic development to increased stability since it is increased economic development and government revenue that allows for the increased spending.

It appears that political economic reforms have contributed to increased political stability in Oman. However, political economic reform does not appear to be a result of strong dynastic institutions because these reforms were made in the absence of a dynasty. So political economic reforms contributed to increased stability, the only way that it could be linked to the variable of

¹⁶⁴ Nicoll Fergus, "Oman,"

¹⁶⁵ Nicoll Fergus, "Oman."

¹⁶⁶ Joseph A. Kechichian, *Oman and the World*, 352.

¹⁶⁷ Joseph A. Kechichian, *Oman and the World*, 202.

¹⁶⁸ Ian Cobain, "Britain's Secret Wars."

¹⁶⁹ Joseph A. Kechichian, *Oman and the World*, 348.

¹⁷⁰ Joseph A. Kechichian, *Oman and the World*, 267.

dynastic institutions in Oman is if the absence of the dynasty caused the reforms. This alternative is explored further in the discussion and future research sections.

Significance

The evidence of economic growth in Oman occurring right before Oman’s domestic politics stabilized points to economic development being a part of the process of persistence in the Al Bu Said regime. Economic development was a step that occurred right after Qaboos’ rise to power and his proposal of major economic reforms.

Economic development served as a causal mechanism linking Qaboos’ radical agenda to an increase political stability. While there are other causal mechanisms that exist, it is apparent that economic development had a large role in this process.

	1913-1932	1932-1970	1970-2018
Development	Reported destitution. Not enough data to know the extent.	Severe destitution.	Large increase in economic development and state services.
Political Stability	Consistent instability. Regime is heavily dependent on British support for survival.	Instability is present but not as consistent as 1913-1932.	Instability leftover from 1932-1970 period. Stability is consistent after 1975.

Hypothesis Three: Close ties with a Western state will increase political stability.

Based on the data collected for this study, Oman having a strong alliance with a Western state, the United Kingdom, did not increase political stability. While there were ways that the

United Kingdom helped the Al Bu Said regime, the evidence shows that the alliance with the U.K. weakened the regime more than it helped.

1913-1932

During this time period, the Al Bu Said regime was heavily dependent on the United Kingdom for direct military support to uphold their rule. The British played a large role in the governance of Oman throughout this period.¹⁷¹ Oman was considered to be a protectorate at this time.¹⁷² And the British helped them in keeping control of Muscat as well as taking back territory outside of Muscat held by powerful Imams.¹⁷³

The British respected the Al Bu Said family's decisions in family power dynamics and in the government. An example that illustrates this is Britain's willingness to accept the family's decision to make Said bin Taimur the new Sultan at the end of this period.¹⁷⁴ However, it is possible that the British did not interfere because they felt Said bin Taimur was a favorable pick. The British were interested in ensuring that the Al Bu Said conducted their foreign affairs according to the policies that the British wanted them to adopt.¹⁷⁵ Sultan Said did not contest this interest and so we do not know if the British would have been willing to intervene in succession if their interests were compromised.

¹⁷¹ Joseph A. Kechichian, *Oman and the World*, 49.

¹⁷² Ian Cobain, "Britain's Secret Wars."

¹⁷³ Joseph A. Kechichian, *Oman and the World*, 266-267.

¹⁷⁴ Joseph A. Kechichian, *Oman and the World*, 267.

¹⁷⁵ Ian Cobain, "Britain's Secret Wars."

1932-1970

During the reign of Sultan Said bin Taimur, the Al Bu Said regime continued to benefit from the U.K.'s military support. The U.K. increased direct military support during the first half of the Dhofar Insurgency.¹⁷⁶ They did not start pulling out of the region until after this period ended and Sultan Qaboos came to power.¹⁷⁷ This section will first look at evidence of the United Kingdom's actions in Oman and then move to evidence on how this affected political stability.

The United Kingdom's role in Omani politics is evident in the historical fact that Oman was considered to be a protectorate of the United Kingdom and Sultan Said bin Taimur did not contest this.¹⁷⁸

The Al Bu Said conducted their foreign policy through London in exchange for military support. It is apparent that the United Kingdom played a role in Oman's political stability through the fact that they had these agreements with the regime.

The Al Bu Said's ties to the United Kingdom hurt the regime in four ways. Omani citizens felt resentment towards the British presence in Oman, since they saw the British as a colonizer. The United Kingdom was also confrontational with Oman's neighbors, including Saudi Arabia, which would raise the risk of conflict between Oman and a neighboring state. Furthermore, the United Kingdom increased resentment held by the population through brutal treatment of citizens and insurgents in Dhofar. The last way that the United Kingdom hurt the regime was preventing the regime from forming diplomatic ties. Oman had no direct diplomatic ties with any states besides the United Kingdom and London preferred for Omani diplomacy to go through them.¹⁷⁹

¹⁷⁶ Ian Cobain, "Britain's Secret Wars."

¹⁷⁷ Ian Cobain, "Britain's Secret Wars."

¹⁷⁸ Ian Cobain, "Britain's Secret Wars."

¹⁷⁹ Joseph A. Kechichian, *Oman and the World*, 47-48.

There was widespread resentment for the United Kingdom among the general Omani population. Rhetoric from external allies of the Dhofar communist insurgents shows that rebellions such as this drew support from Omani citizens who saw the regime as a puppet of the United Kingdom. Mao Zedong states Beijing's support for the insurgents saying that China "sympathized with and supported all struggles against colonialism, and pledged its firm support to the heroic Arabs who were fighting against British enslavement and plunder in Oman."¹⁸⁰ With actors opposed to the regime framing the British as the ultimate enemy of the Omani people in this rhetoric, it appears that the United Kingdom hurt the regime through their presence. The United Kingdom gave the enemies of the regime their rallying call.

The manner by which the United Kingdom pursued its interests in Oman went against the regime's stability interests. Pressure from London caused the Sultan to be confrontational with neighboring states, though the United Kingdom would often involve its own forces directly as well. The various border disputes with Saudi Arabia during the reign of Said bin Taimur is an example. These disputes which turned into standoffs with Saudi Arabia threatened stability with the potential for war. Saudi Arabia also used proxies within Oman, including Imam Ghalib bin 'Ali, to weaken the position of Said bin Taimur.¹⁸¹ Ghalib bin 'Ali openly rebelled against the Sultan from 1954 to 1959,¹⁸² which created a threat to the Al Said regime. This was triggered by the British pressuring Sultan Said bin Taimur's to engage in such standoffs to serve the British interests of taking control of additional oil reserves.¹⁸³

The British commanders used excessive force during the Dhofar War which also appears to hurt the regime during this period. The Guardian quotes an unnamed British officer describing

¹⁸⁰ Joseph A. Kechichian, *Oman and the World*, 187.

¹⁸¹ Joseph A. Kechichian, *Oman and the World*, 267.

¹⁸² Joseph A. Kechichian, *Oman and the World*, 270.

¹⁸³ Joseph A. Kechichian, *Oman and the World*, 118-119

their actions in Dhofar, “We burnt down rebel villages and shot their goats and cows. Any enemy corpses we recovered were propped up in the Salalah souk as a salutary lesson to any would-be freedom fighters.”¹⁸⁴ The population already saw the United Kingdom as an oppressive colonial power and the Al Bu Said as their puppet.¹⁸⁵ And while the British officer quoted saw the use of fear as a way of keeping the Omani people in line, the Al Bu Said regime and the British still appeared to be entrenched in a losing fight.

Evidence also shows a disregard for innocent lives within the U.K. government and military. One officer interviewed by the Guardian denies the presence of any innocent people in the Dhofar region. “The only people in this area – there are no civilians – are all enemy. Therefore you can get on with doing the job, mortaring the area and returning small arms fire without worrying about hurting innocent people.”¹⁸⁶ With multiple officers shamelessly advocating against human rights in Dhofar, it appears that the intent of brutal treatment towards all individuals in Dhofar was not limited to one officer within the military. Such brutal treatment added to the resentment that the people of Dhofar and perhaps the rest of Oman felt towards the United Kingdom.

It is clear that there was resentment towards the United Kingdom in Oman and that opposition leaders resented the regime for this relationship. However, something that is not clear from the data collected is the degree to which this turned the general Omani population against the regime during this time. The assassination attempts against Sultan Said bin Taimur, including the attempt made by his own military personnel in 1967 shows that the population resented the Sultan. And the evidence presented earlier in this section shows that the population resented the

¹⁸⁴ Ian Cobain, “Britain’s Secret Wars.”

¹⁸⁵ Ian Cobain, “Britain’s Secret Wars.”

¹⁸⁶ Ian Cobain, “Britain’s Secret Wars.”

United Kingdom. It would seem logical that resentment towards a regime's allies and resentment towards the regime would be concomitants but I am reluctant to make a claim without evidence that shows the degree to which the general population resented the regime for this relationship. There are other reasons for why the population could hold resentment towards the regime so it is not clear how influential this variable was during this period.

1970-2018

During this period, the Al Bu Said regime, under the leadership of Sultan Qaboos bin Said, distances itself from the United Kingdom. The Al Bu Said regime benefits from this distancing of relations in two ways. Managing diplomacy outside of London leads to an increase in Oman's allies and it gives rebels an incentive to defect in favor of the regime.

Ties with the United Kingdom also hurt the Al Bu Said regime by preventing the expansion of Oman's diplomatic relations. Prior to 1971, Oman had not established formal diplomatic relations with any state besides the United Kingdom.¹⁸⁷ Sultan Said bin Taimur had managed Oman's foreign affairs entirely through London.¹⁸⁸ After Sultan Qaboos started to distance Oman from the United Kingdom, the number of states with formal diplomatic relations with Oman increased from zero in 1970 to 117 in 1994.¹⁸⁹ As a result, other states in the Middle East eventually aid the Al Bu Said regime, with Iran being one example.¹⁹⁰ This allowed the regime to find multiple allies to aid them and those allies were less alienating to the Omani people than the United Kingdom. The benefit of more diplomatic relations suggests that the

¹⁸⁷ Joseph A. Kechichian, *Oman and the World*, 118-119.

¹⁸⁸ Joseph A. Kechichian, *Oman and the World*, 319-322.

¹⁸⁹ Joseph A. Kechichian, *Oman and the World*, 319-322.

¹⁹⁰ Ian Cobain, "Britain's Secret Wars."

regime's alliance with the United Kingdom was hurting them by preventing the regime from forging alliances with more states.

There is also evidence that suggests that the brutality used by the United Kingdom in the Dhofar region was a strategic error that created more animosity towards the British rather than scaring people into submission. The evidence suggesting this is Sultan Qaboos' alternative approach that coincides with dwindling support for the Dhofar insurgents. Sultan Qaboos shows mercy to a large number of Dhofari insurgents rather than using brutality. This is illustrated by his decision to pardon prisoners of war and groups of insurgents that surrender to the Al Bu Said.¹⁹¹ A decline in support for the Dhofar insurgents coincides with these reports of merciful treatment that are especially present from 1974-1975.¹⁹² This approach appears to have produced better results for the Al Bu Said regime in the war than the U.K.'s attempt to instill fear in the Dhofari population.

The data collected suggests that this hypothesis is not supported in the case of Oman. Political stability appears to increase as a result of the Al Bu Said family creating distance between themselves and their Western allies. It does appear that the absence of a dynasty makes it easier for a monarch to distance the regime from Western allies, but this ended up increasing stability. While Oman's alliance with the United Kingdom provided military assets to strengthen the regime's capacity to coerce, this relationship hurt the Sultan's legitimacy. And the increased resentment towards the regime appears to have exhausted the extra capacity to coerce and turned Omani military personnel against the Sultan.

¹⁹¹ Joseph A. Kechichian, *Oman and the World*, 57.

¹⁹² Joseph A. Kechichian, *Oman and the World*, 57.

Omitted Variables

Two variables that were not anticipated in the research design appear to be influencing the political stability of Oman and the persistence of the Al Bu Said dynasty. The variables discussed in this section are the erosion of the dynasty as a cause of increased stability, gender equality, slavery, and treatment of state enemies. After the conclusion of this section, all of the findings in the case of Oman will be used in a theoretical framework that lays out the process by which the erosion of the dynasty set up other variables (causal mechanisms) to increase political stability which ultimately ensures regime persistence.

Erosion as a Necessity:

In Oman, the erosion of dynastic institutions not only appeared to not decrease stability, it also appears to have been necessary for survival in the case of the Al Bu Said regime. This is due to the fact that radical reforms served as causal mechanisms in the process of Sultan Qaboos' rise to power leading to the restoration of stability for the first time in over a century. At the start of his tenure, Sultan Qaboos found himself governing a country nearly torn apart by his father. Insurgents connected with Yemen held much of Dhofar and the crown was having to wage a war within the borders of Oman to pursue reunification. Furthermore, the citizens of Oman were facing severe destitution with hardly any investment in infrastructure and human development.

The only way in which Sultan Qaboos could see the regime digging itself out of such a hole was through radical reforms. He managed to consolidate his power and stabilize Oman politically by drastically increasing investment in human development and infrastructure, by ending a foreign policy of dependence on the United Kingdom, and by making reforms that increased rights and opportunities for women. Such reforms within a few years of taking power

would have been next to impossible for Sultan Qaboos to make if he had family members with enough influence in decision-making to obstruct his agenda. This can be assumed because these reforms contradict the common beliefs in Oman and the Arabian Peninsula as a whole.

Gender Equality:

One area of reform that Sultan Qaboos could only achieved due to the erosion of dynastic power structures is gender equality. In a first-hand observation, Phillips says “In terms of personality, of economics, of politics and of civics, there are no women in Oman; women exist in number always greater than men, but their existence is domestic and servile only.”¹⁹³ And with gender issues being mixed into the series of radical reforms made by Sultan Qaboos, it raises gender issues as a new variable that may contribute to the persistence of monarchy.

Theoretically, it would stand to reason that reforms to promote gender equality would give women a stake in the survival of the regime promoting those reforms. However, no data was found comparing the difference in regime support among men and women. For right now, this study does provide evidence that this variable plays a role in determining monarchy persistence. The correlation between gender equality reforms and increasing political stability serves as support that this is an important variable.

Slavery

Another radical reform made by Sultan Qaboos after his ascension to power was the abolition of slavery in Oman. He abolished slavery immediately after ascending to the throne.¹⁹⁴

¹⁹³ Wendell Phillips, *Unknown Oman*, New York: David McKay Company, Inc. 1966.

¹⁹⁴ Ian Cobain, “Britain’s Secret Wars.”

So not only did Qaboos free Oman from its “enslavement” to the U.K., his move to abolish slavery gave the people of Oman another reason to view him as a liberator. People view Sultan Qaboos as a benevolent dictator.¹⁹⁵ His willingness to free his family’s slaves further reinforces his intent to promote the well-being of his people.

This is in stark contrast to Qaboos’ father who owned around 500 slaves when Qaboos overthrew him on July 23, 1970.¹⁹⁶ And this gave people another reason to hate Sultan Said bin Taimur. Since this abolishment of slavery was one of the reforms that Sultan Qaboos made to separate himself from his father, it may play a role as causal mechanism in the process of regime persistence in Oman. The legal status of slavery is a variable that should be examined in future research on monarchy stability.

Treatment of State Enemies

Sultan Qaboos approached enemies to the regime in a radically different way. He was skillful in his use of mercy towards enemies who surrendered or were captured.¹⁹⁷ And the section for hypothesis three discusses how this coincides with a weakening of support during the Dhofar War, though the effects of Qaboos’ merciful treatment remain uncertain even though it would make sense that more people would be willing to abandon the rebellion if they believed that they would be shown mercy if they submitted to the regime. Treatment of regime enemies is a variable that should be tested in future research on monarchy stability.

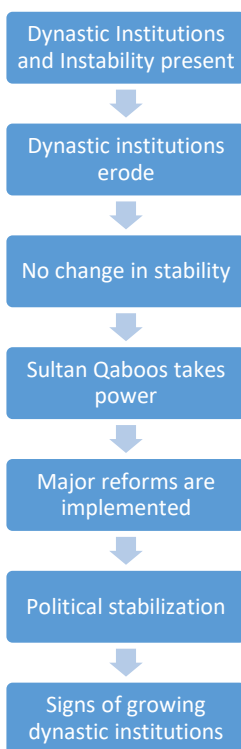
¹⁹⁵ Nicoll Fergus, “Oman.”

¹⁹⁶ “CIA: The World Factbook: Oman.” *CIA World Fact Book*

¹⁹⁷ Ian Cobain, “Britain’s Secret Wars.”

The Process of Monarchy Persistence

The process of political stability in Oman has implications for how dynastic institutions may affect political stability in the other monarchies that still exist today. The results of this study suggest that the erosion of the pre-1932 dynastic institutions actually helped increase political stability, raising questions about Herb's findings that dynastic institutions contribute to political stability. However, this study highlights a problem other dynastic monarchies may encounter after their political system endures a politically destabilizing shock. The following is a summary of the process we see in Oman:

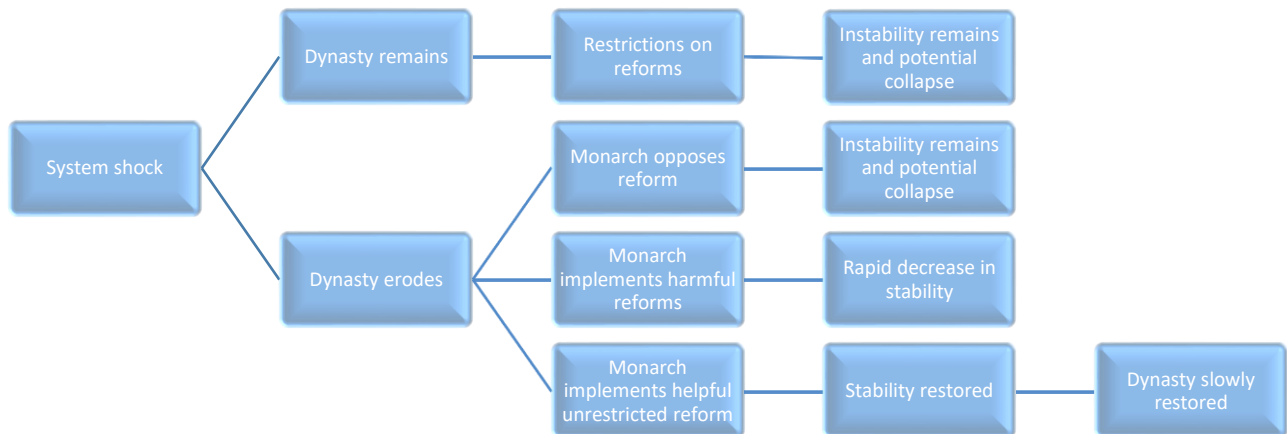


Initially the erosion of the dynasty in 1932 does not increase stability. Consistent instability is present during the reign of Said bin Taimur. He was an unpopular leader who did not make reforms beyond the expansion of the Sultan's absolute power and delegating more of the Sultan's governing power to British agents. This produces a similar degree of stability seen

during the reign of his predecessors. However, the erosion of the dynasty during the 1932-1970 period did open the door for a future Sultan

After his father’s failure to implement stabilizing reforms, Sultan Qaboos did eventually capitalize on the reduced restrictions on the Sultan’s ability to make policy reforms. When Sultan Qaboos took the throne, he was able to make radical reforms such as the abolition of slavery, socio-economic reform, and the expansion of gender equality. These reforms would have been hard to implement since they were very controversial.

Since this is a case-study, the results still need to be tested in other cases in order to determine whether or not they can be generalized. If the process of political stability in Oman can be generalized, here is what that process should look like in other monarchies:



This is not necessarily what the process of stability looks like in other monarchies. However, it can be used to form hypotheses to test in other cases.

Conclusion

This study examined the process of regime stability in monarchies. It focused on dynastic institutions as an initially independent variable, with economic development and alliance systems. The results suggest that the presence of dynastic institutions in Oman's Al Bu Said ruling family was accompanied with less political stability. This could mean that the dynastic monarchies examined in other scholarly articles may be experiencing more stability but they may be less suited than non-dynastic monarchies to adapt at the pace that is needed to avert regime collapse when an unlikely case of instability does occur. However, this study is limited by the fact that only one case was process traced. Future studies should focus on the timeline comparison in other Middle Eastern Monarchies to test the relationship between dynastic institutions and political stability.

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