

# Land Reform and Regime Survival in the Middle East and North Africa

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## **Abstract**

This paper examines the impact of land redistribution on authoritarian regime stability in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA). Following independence from colonialism, redistributive conflict tempted regimes across the region to dismantle their inherited rural order. While regimes often expropriated absentee landowners to increase their popular legitimacy and appease potential coalition partners, I find that land reform counter-intuitively expedited regime failure. Using new data on land reforms in the MENA region (1945 to 2010) and case comparisons of Jordan and Iraq, I show that while politically logical, the expropriation of absentee elites is likely to precipitate regime failure. I suggest that the effect of land reform is conditioned on a regime's state capacity. Lower levels state capacity could confound regimes' ability to project authority into the periphery post-reform.

The present government of Egypt has ideals but no ideology. No single intellectual influence has been predominant. It combines pure nationalists and revolutionaries, held together by Colonel Nasser in a tense union for action. Even at the outset it was not united, except on the issue of Land Reform.

—Doreen Warriner, *Land Reform and Development in the Near East (1962)*

## 1 Introduction

The independence of Middle Eastern and North African (MENA) states in the mid-twentieth century marked a critical shift in the region’s politics. Political consciousness, once focused on anti-colonial action, was channeled into building new, modern, and inclusive national settlements. At this moment of hope and liberation, new regimes tapped into support for modernization by launching state building projects through a variety of populist reforms designed to increase their legitimacy. As Doreen Warriner’s quote above suggests, land redistribution was one such policy. Land reform served the dual purpose of state building and shedding colonial legacies. Landed elites, favored with exclusive property rights under the old European administrations, became synonymous with colonial rule. While land reform is often seen as a low-risk strategy for regimes to increase legitimacy, regime survival seems lower for those that introduce redistributive land reform. Since Barrington Moore (1966: xi) examined “varied political roles” played by the landed gentry and peasantry in autocratic and democratic regimes, the literature on authoritarianism has cited landed elites as major players in determining regime outcomes. During the first half of the 20th century, the MENA region was primarily agrarian, and the landed class played a critical role in the politics of state building and governance. But what we know about patterns of rural authority and regime survival in the region is largely based on historical case studies, few of which are comparative.

This article examines the survival of regimes in 18 MENA states between 1945 and 2010. Identifying three major redistributive strategies - state resource consolidation, landed elite annihilation, and selectorate reward - I address the question: why did land reform fortify regimes against challenges in some cases and not in others? My answer proposes that colonial legacies of state-building and elite creation conditioned independent regimes’ ability to successfully implement and survive land reform.

Independent states inherited state institutions and landowning elites from the colonial period; these institutions and elites were created exogenously by colonial administrators interested in minimizing their own expenditure and maximizing colonial state control. To test the influence of these legacies on regime survival post-land reform, I present an original dataset on land redistribution in independent MENA states. My findings provide new insights into the relationship between regimes’ institutional constraints and regime longevity. Post-colonial politics were heated and uncertain, and in those moments regimes chose policies based on the premise that they would increase their likelihood of survival. The most credible threats to the regime appeared

to come from reformist professional classes - the *effendiyya* - calling for the removal of incumbent landed elites who monopolized political and economic power. If regimes enact these bureaucratically demanding reforms without sufficient state capacity, however, they run the risk of creating a host of new governance challenges that threaten regime survival.

This bureaucratic risk was especially profound in countries where large landowners, rather than the state, were the arbiters of rural order. Large, usually absentee, landowners established local dominion over agricultural production and the lives of their peasants. This high degree of local power precluded the spread of state institutions, as landowners typically interacted personally with the state on matters such as taxation. The disruptive potential of land reform, therefore, is determined by the degree to which it disrupts the inherited rural order. To capture this variation, I classified types of land reform by their disruptive potential. Regimes with better survival outcomes opted for land reforms that encouraged a stable local order by establishing state ownership over expropriated property (Type 1) or rewarding incumbent elites (Type 3). Land reform that had the intent of annihilating incumbent landed elites (Type 2), on the other hand, abruptly reduced regime power in the periphery by dismantling rural social, political and economic structures. These reforms created a control problem in the periphery by ripping holes in the political order.

In the remainder of this paper, I demonstrate the importance of considering land as a major factor in redistributive conflict and stable state-building in the MENA region. I introduce a new theoretical framework that unpacks why regimes implement land reform, and how redistribution can backfire when state capacity is low. My empirical analysis uses a cross-country quantitative analysis to test these suggested mechanisms on a full set of Middle Eastern regimes (1945 - 2010) using new data on land redistribution and colonial institutions. Finally, I illustrate these dynamics with two case studies: Jordan and Iraq. The juxtaposition of two regimes with similar initial conditions underscores how colonial legacies of state building conditioned regimes' abilities to survive land reform. The Iraqi regime pursued radical (Type 2) reform with the intention of annihilating the landed elite, whereas a powerful and locally rooted landed elite in Jordan reaped the rewards of pro-elite (Type 3) land redistribution.

## 2 Redistributive Conflict, Land, and Politics in MENA

The structure of elite coalitions is the unifying concept for the relationship between expropriation, redistribution and political stability.<sup>1</sup> The authoritarian policy-making literature focuses on elite interests as the determining factor in authoritarian politics. Some recent analyses of non-democratic politics note that factors beyond elite competition have profound impacts on regime type and durability, including the strength of national movements, cross-class support coalitions, and international interference in domestic affairs (Parks, 2012; Tudor, 2013; Pepinsky, 2009; Yom, 2015). These factors have significant explanatory value for elements of authoritarian rule

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<sup>1</sup>Albertus and Menaldo (2012) uses a coalitional approach to explain why expropriation extends leader tenure in Latin America.

like regime type and institutional quality, but give less analytical traction for explaining redistributive conflicts that take place within the selectorate. In the absence of broad-based mobilization in favor of land reform, we must look to elite dynamics to explain redistributive outcomes. Consequently, this study follows Svobik's (2012) conception of authoritarian politics in arguing that unlike in democracies, where politicians make economic policy decisions weighing votes as the litmus test of their support, authoritarian regimes make decisions in harmony with the interests of their ruling coalition. I follow much of the recent scholarship on authoritarian politics in arguing that the form of authoritarian politics depends upon the composition and interests of the regime's selectorate. The selectorate possesses the capacity to influence political developments the regime's key decision makers<sup>2</sup> and supporters are drawn from it.

Scholars stylize authoritarian rule as being a careful balancing act between the extremes of co-optation and coercion. Social conflict theorists, especially Acemoglu and Robinson (2005) and Boix (2003), predict political conflict arises from inequality between the masses and the elites. If this were true, then redistribution would be more likely to happen in democracies than autocracies. Yet, there is little empirical evidence that democracies and autocracies differ drastically in either their levels of inequality or redistributive tendencies (Ross 2006, Slater et al., 2010). Recent empirical evidence contradicts Boix's finding that democracies are more associated with redistribution.<sup>3</sup> One reason for these divergent findings might be the nature of redistribution under consideration. Much of the redistribution and social conflict literature focuses on redistribution of income rather than redistribution of assets. As Albertus (2015) observes, this focus muddles our understanding of redistribution in developing states where state capacity may be insufficiently developed to collect taxes and redistribute tax income. Developing autocracies tend to provide welfare and enact "distributive" policies funded by the state rents rather than taxpayers, including health, education or subsidy programs. Rather than income-based redistribution, redistributive reform is more common through bank expropriation or land redistribution (Albertus and Menaldo, 2012). The present study contributes to this emerging consensus on the frequency of authoritarian redistribution and adds a novel explanation as to why non-democratic regimes undertake redistributive reform.

Land assets behave differently from many other assets considered in extant models of redistribution. Land assets are fixed and illiquid, and thus cannot be moved abroad to escape the state's reach; social conflict theory predicts low likelihood of democratic transition when elites hold high-specificity assets like land for several reasons (Albertus, 2015). First, Piketty (2014) observes that the concentration of wealth in a society usually exceeds the concentration of income. Albertus (2015) notes that this means the redistribution of assets like land holds much more political consequence than does the redistribution of income. Beyond Albertus' explicit study of land reform and Ansell and Samuels (2014) treatment of rural inequality in democratic transitions, few studies econometrically account for disparities in fixed asset wealth. Second, unequal landholding increases elite

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<sup>2</sup>The key decision makers are termed the "winning coalition" by de Mesquita et al. (2003).

<sup>3</sup>See, for example, Albertus (2015), Iversen and Soskice (2009), and Mulligan (2004).

fears of expropriation and redistribution in societies where land rather than capital comprises a large proportion of elite wealth portfolios (Boix, 2003). Finally, Albertus and Menaldo (2012) show that in Latin America, leader tenure increases following quick elite expropriation. In theory, when elites have high-specificity assets, both the cost of elite defection by coup and of regime repression decrease relative to the elites' expected tax burden. This means that landed elites should, in theory, be easy to expropriate. Yet, as my empirical analysis shows, this is not the case and expropriation of landed elites results in regime instability. In building a new theoretical framework that account for local and national institutional constraints, I develop generalizable propositions about the relationship between land redistribution and regime durability.

Land as an asset was the cornerstone of the state-building process in MENA and particularly instrumental in the establishment of local order. The importance of agriculture to the MENA economy is often overlooked in favor of oil and foreign aid as income sources. While these are indeed important features of the regional political economy, Hertog (2011) and others have shown that pre-oil institutions inform how oil money is spent more than oil determines rentier states' politics. Until the mid-twentieth century, Middle Eastern economies were predominantly characterized as agrarian. As such, land was the primary asset critical to economic empowerment for elite classes (landed elites) and the rural poor. This re-orientation toward land moves the region beyond an exclusive focus on oil-driven rentierism and connects with the Middle East studies literature about the agrarian origins of social order.<sup>4</sup>

The redistributive tension in this study is therefore between incumbent landowners and ruling regimes. Since Barrington Moore's foundational work on the social origins of dictatorship and democracy (1966), landed elites have been cited as major players in determining regime outcomes. Due to their economic and political importance, the landed class in any agrarian society plays a critical role in the politics of state building and governance. Recent work in comparative politics has challenged the dominant view of land reform as populist, pro-poor policy. Albertus and Menaldo (2012), Albertus (2015), and Boone (2014) have used a broad spectrum of cases across Latin America, Africa and Asia to show that a regime's choice to redistribute land is better understood as a signal of commitment to the regime's selectorate. In this vein, it is possible to conceive of distinct land reform strategies at regimes' disposal when confronted with redistributive conflict.

### **3 The Motivation for Land Redistribution: Incumbent Landed Elites and the Rising Effendiyya**

When a new regime comes to power, it must cement its control by assembling a group of reliable allies into a stable ruling coalition. Threats are myriad in the early days of a newly established regime. In MENA, most states had to grapple with decades or more of being ruled by foreign powers. Landed elites often benefited

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<sup>4</sup>See particularly Baer (1982); Gerber (1987) and Hourani (2002).

from colonial rule, and were seen as complicit actors in the colonial project. A regime's survival calculus might logically arrive at the conclusion that longevity could be enhanced by disadvantaging this landed class to elevate new, more loyal elites. Regimes can also use land redistribution to balance elites within their own ruling coalition, or broaden and incorporate new classes into its support base by "Robin Hooding." In sum, authoritarian regimes have solid reasons to assume land redistribution will help their chances of consolidation and survival.

The class that stood to gain the most from land reform during the state-building period was the *effendiyya* class of educated, urban professionals. The *effendiyya* threatened incumbent landed elites through their dual strengths of education and numbers. This class began to take shape under colonial rule as public education began to expand. Although the education provided to MENA citizens under colonialism was by no means broad, it did produce an educated stratum that demanded a use for their modern professional skills as well as representation in government. While in school, many of these professionals were exposed to left-leaning ideologies like Arab nationalism, Ba'athism and communism. Highly educated, wealthy and sympathetic to leftist causes, the administrative bourgeoisie espoused leftist rhetoric regarding the importance of redistribution and the need to do away with the landed classes. This class includes lawyers, medical doctors, teachers, civil servants, journalists, and intelligentsia who were concentrated in urban areas.

After independence from colonial powers, these growing educated classes clamored for jobs in the civil service, for industrial expansion, and for the provision of public goods. Welfare networks based on kinship or local political economies were under strain as educated professionals relocated to cities. The educated stratum found itself in a unique position within the transforming socio-economic milieu. Rather than using traditional forms loci of resistance and collective action like the bazaar, guild, or mosque, these educated young men joined political parties, syndicates, or unions. These new groups launched strikes, demonstrations, boycotts and often allied with rural and urban working classes (Anderson, 2005). These groups were among the primary advocates of land redistribution across the MENA region.<sup>5</sup> This yields my first hypothesis, that:

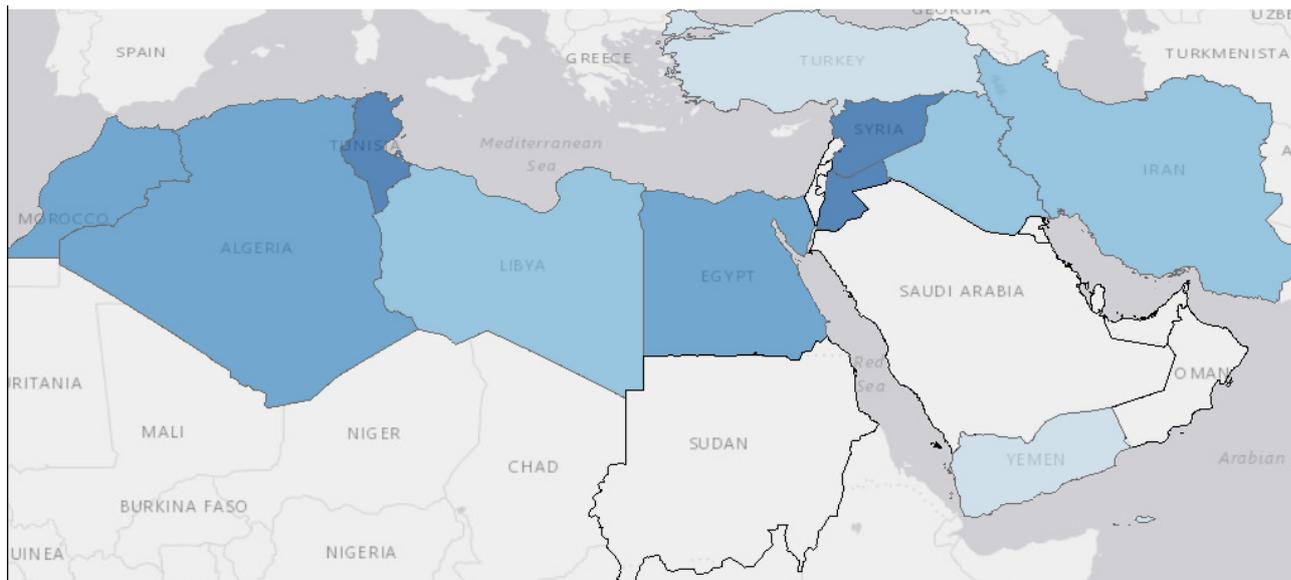
- H1: Demands for land reform will be higher as the size of the *effendiyya* class increases.

In response to these calls for land reform, regimes had to choose from among several options. Many MENA countries opted to enact land reform, and some more than once, as Figure 1 illustrates. Appendix 1 lists each land reform by country and date with a brief qualitative description of reform beneficiaries and policy implementation.<sup>6</sup> In surveying the strategic landscape, regimes must evaluate how risky expropriation of landed elites might be.

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<sup>5</sup>The MENA case diverges from other areas of the developing world in that merchants were often members of the landowning class. Baer (1982), Gerber (1987) and Hourani (2002) describe how merchants in MENA purchased land to diversify their investments in the late 18th and early 19th centuries. Consequently, the mercantile class has significant overlap with the landed elite.

<sup>6</sup>This table has been omitted from the public version of the paper.



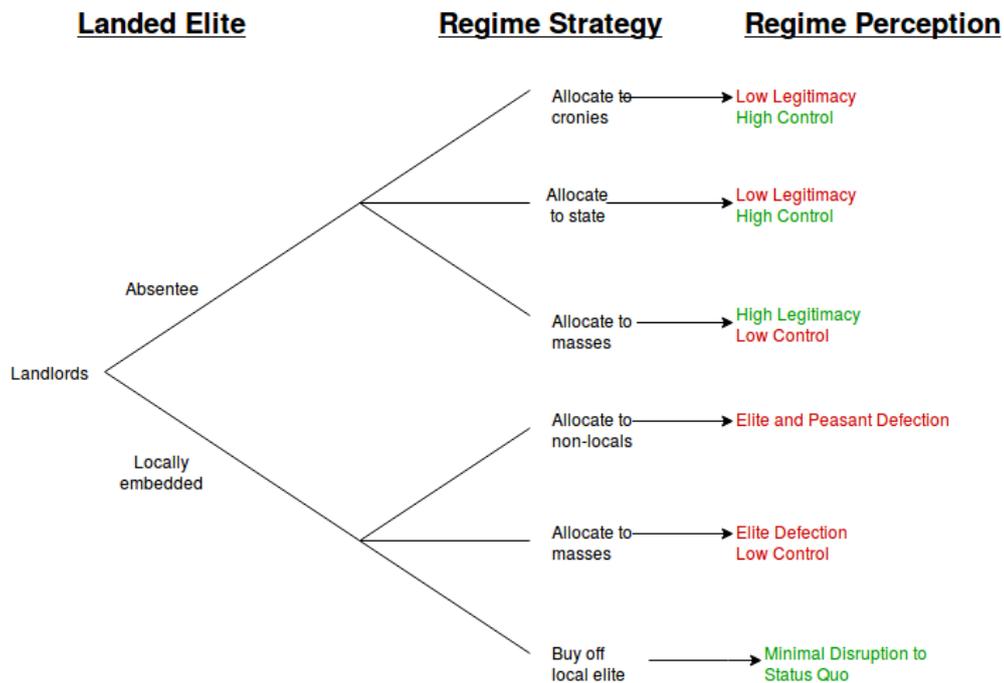
**Figure 1:** MENA Land Reform Events Since 1945

I adopt a historical understanding of the onset of redistributive conflict, and argue that the nature of the landed class conditioned regime’s selection of land reform strategy. Scholars have shown how early state institutions impact several economic and political variables related to redistribution, including human development, economic inequality, state capacity, and conflict (Nunn and Qian, 2011; Engerman and Sokoloff, 2005; Banerjee and Iyer, 2005; Wucherpfennig et al., 2015). The direct or indirect nature of colonial rule has been linked to the development of state capacity through financial resource allocation (Jones, 2013). Lange (2004) finds that British colonies ruled indirectly correlate negatively to long-run good governance indicators, while Banerjee and Iyer (2005) find that regions that were under British colonial power in the pre-independence period and those where agrarian power was concentrated in the hands of landlords have lower access to public goods.

The landed elite as a class were primarily inherited from the colonial period. British and French colonial used land registration and property rights reform to build new landed classes that were sympathetic to their cause. In some areas, colonial land titling resulted in an empowered but local landed elite, whereas in others it encouraged the growth of an absentee landed class. We might explain this variation by considering the colonial social landscape. In areas with no history of an urban absentee class, like Ottoman Jordan, local elites tended to dominate colonial landed class. Colonial powers found them useful as intermediaries and protectors of order in rural areas. Due to the paucity of land records in places where communal (*musha’a*) tenure was practiced, tribal sheikhs and village mayors (*mukhtars*) were often the only individuals named on land records. Consequently, colonizers registering notables “ownership” of the land. While these new local elites were still embedded in their communities local leaders, the colonial drive for property registration created a class of medium and large landholders that did not exist prior to colonial rule.

Absenteeism arose in colonial territories where the administration allocated irrigation and property rights to favorites, particularly in French Syria and Algeria, and British Iraq and Egypt. Colonial administrations gave selective property rights to new landowners rewarded for their collaboration with the occupying forces. The British National Archives attest to the British prioritizing political expediency and administrative economy as the guiding principles of colonial state building. Sluglett (1976) refers to this informal alliance between the Iraq Government and the *mallāk* resulted in the landowners being “left as far as possible to their own devices.” (Sluglett, 1976, 232). When the British attempted to enact conscription in the 1920s and 1930s, British intelligence attachés in the provinces asked their Iraqi counterparts (the qaimmaqaim or governor) how feasible it would be to conscript fellah or tribesmen. In areas dominated by large landowners, the response was an unequivocal “no.”<sup>7</sup> Many reports attest to the British using land as a reward for loyal sheikhs and merchant-landowners.<sup>8</sup> This class increased their influence over national politics in this period as the colonial state created new bureaucratic and legislative institutions. After independence, their continued dominance of national politics prevented the entry of new political actors and limited the regime’s ability to respond to rising opposition from the *effendiyya*.

Based on these landed elite types, Figure 2 depicts how independent regimes could view expropriation of absentee elites as a win-win strategy: the regime makes room for new coalition members from the *effendiyya* class, while neutralizing landed elites as political spoilers.



*Figure 2: Regime Perceptions of Land Reform Strategies*

<sup>7</sup> File AIR 23/120 at the British National Archive.

<sup>8</sup> AIR 40/1419, FO 838/12, and FO 624/201

In choosing between redistributive options, the regime must evaluate what is possible and least likely to threaten its position. Based on these assumptions, I disaggregate the types of land redistribution into three distinct archetypes (see Table 3). Type 1 land reform occurs when land is expropriated from landed elites and comes under state ownership, as in the neo-Ba’athist reforms in 1970s Syria. Type 1 reform increases state capacity and cultivates dependency relationships with the rural sector. By expropriating landlords and offering land users access without title, the state retains ultimate control over production and allocation of land wealth. This was a critical and often overlooked component of Nasser’s 1952 Law 178, which limited land holdings to 200 feddans per person, and granted smallholders rights as tenants, but not as land owners. De facto, land was considered to be state property and leased for “life” to small farmers.

**Table 1: Land Redistribution Typology and Logics**

Land Reform Type	Logic Description	Winners	Losers	Country-Years in Sample n=1035
<b>Type 1</b>	Consolidation of state power: land is expropriated from the landed elite and comes under state ownership. Land is made available either through leasing or usufruct, but not ownership.	Regime/State	Rural poor, landed elite	49 (4.7 per cent, 30 per cent of land reform country years)
<b>Type 2</b>	Annihilate elites: land is redistributed from elites to the rural poor with private title.	Rural Poor	Landed Elites	59 (5.7 per cent, 37 per cent of land reform country years)
<b>Type 3</b>	Reward loyalty: Land is expropriated from non-elite classes, not loyal landed elites, and made available with preferential treatment of ruling coalition members.	Ruling Coalition	Rural Poor	54 (5.2 per cent, 33 per cent of land reform country years)

Type 2 reforms are aimed at annihilating the landed class. In Type 2 cases, land is expropriated from landed elites and granted to the landless poor or smallholders under title. These reforms should, in theory, be the most threatening for regime survival and were indeed the kind undertaken by the Iraqi Qasim regime of 1958 and subsequent military regimes until the Ba’ath party, suffering regime failure (Haj, 1997). Under the Qasim regime, large privately owned and leased estates were expropriated, and anything in excess of the property ceiling was to be redistributed to peasant farmers. By one 1964 estimate, the total effected area amounted to 8-10 million dunums, or 2-2.5 million hectares. The chronically unstable Syrian regimes pre-Ba’ath also opted for this type of reform. The social implications of such reforms are enormous. If the landed elites’ only income is derived from their land wealth and agricultural production, Type 2 reform will hobble their economic power. Conversely, truly redistributive Type 2 reform will empower rural classes and can potentially give rise to a new, loyal landed elite in the long term. The danger to regimes is twofold. First, places dominated by absentee landlordism are less likely to have high penetration by the state. This means that public services and infrastructure would be more lacking than in a place where the state is socially and politically present. The

second is that the annihilation of the landed classes opens up a wide and potentially volatile political void that the regime has to fill with loyal supporters or else be faced with new competition from organized urban classes seeking access to power.

Type 3 reform occurs when land is expropriated from large landholders outside the ruling coalition or from non-elite classes and title is distributed to loyal elite coalition members. The Jordanian and Moroccan regimes opted for this strategy several times in the decades since independence. It is important to note that rural poor may still receive substantial land assets under Type 1 and Type 3 redistribution; however, the defining character of these reforms is to empower the state (Type 1) or the ruling elite (Type 3). A prime example is the Jordanian East Ghor Canal land reforms of the late 1950s and early 1960s. The Jordanian government amended an early redistributive law in 1960 to award non-resident (tribal and urban elite) landowners priority in redistribution, as opposed to local landowners and smallholders.

With these typologies in mind, my second testable hypothesis is that:

- H2: In the presence of *effendiyya* demand for reform, regimes will be more likely to opt for more extreme reform (Type 2) when landed elites are primarily absentee.

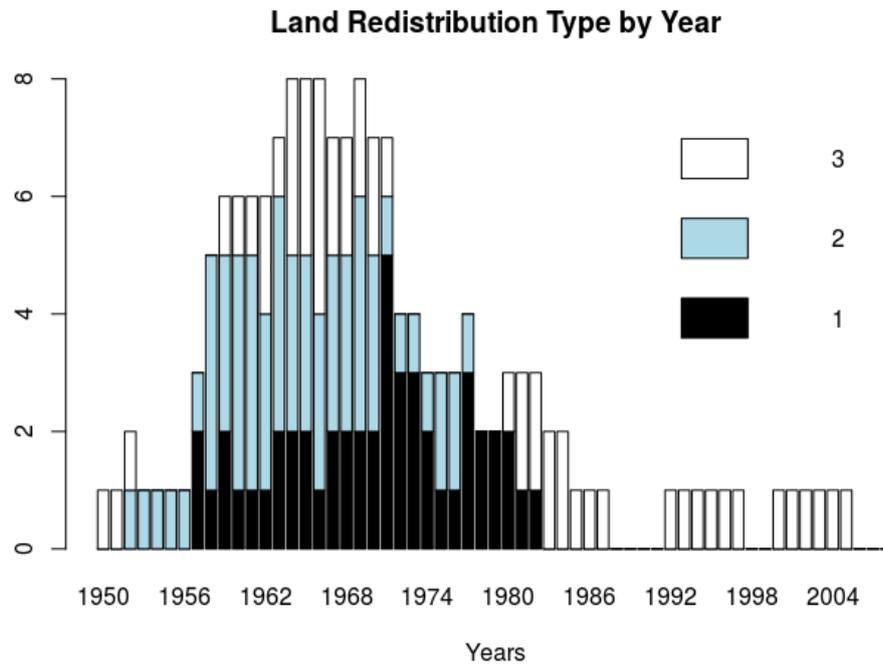
In the interest of space and maintaining this paper's focus on the relationship between land reform and regime survival, Appendices 3 and 4 present binary cross-sectional time series models testing H1 and H2. The main findings support my theory. The measure of *effendiyya* class strength<sup>9</sup> correlates positively across all models with my binary measure of all land reform, as well as with each type of land reform when coded as a categorical variable where zero/no land reform is the base category, and each type is coded as 1, 2, or 3. This finding lends support to H1 that the *effendiyya* class is a key factor in the onset of land reform. The results also show that absenteeism correlates with the implementation of Type 2 annihilative reform<sup>10</sup> Absenteeism is not a significant correlate of Types 1 and 3, indicating a difference in the incentive environments leading to each reform.

Most land redistribution events took place in MENA before 1975. Figure 3 indicates that Type 2 reforms were most likely to occur in the two decades following independence. The state's move to consolidate power

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<sup>9</sup>My measure includes several components. Based on the US Department of State Strength of World Communist Organizations annual report, British diplomatic cables in Kew and Ambassadorial Reports at St. Antony's College Middle East Centre Archive from 1950 to 1980, I constructed a weighted measure to capture when leftist urban elite classes *opposed* the regime. My main source, the World Communist Organizations annual report, underpinned this classification by providing an annual summary of global communist and leftist activities and their relationship to the state in each country. The base variable is a binary measure of whether the urban elite opposed the regime (1) or either neutral toward or included in the ruling coalition (0). I then multiplied the base binary variable by the proportion of the population residing in large cities, taken from the United Nations Population Division's World Urbanization Prospects (2009), and divide by the country's population in the capital (United Nations Population Division's World Urbanization Prospects 2009). city. The combination of an economically powerful and ideologically leftist professional class pushed regimes to redistribute land.

<sup>10</sup>A binary variable where absentee landlordism is equal to 1.



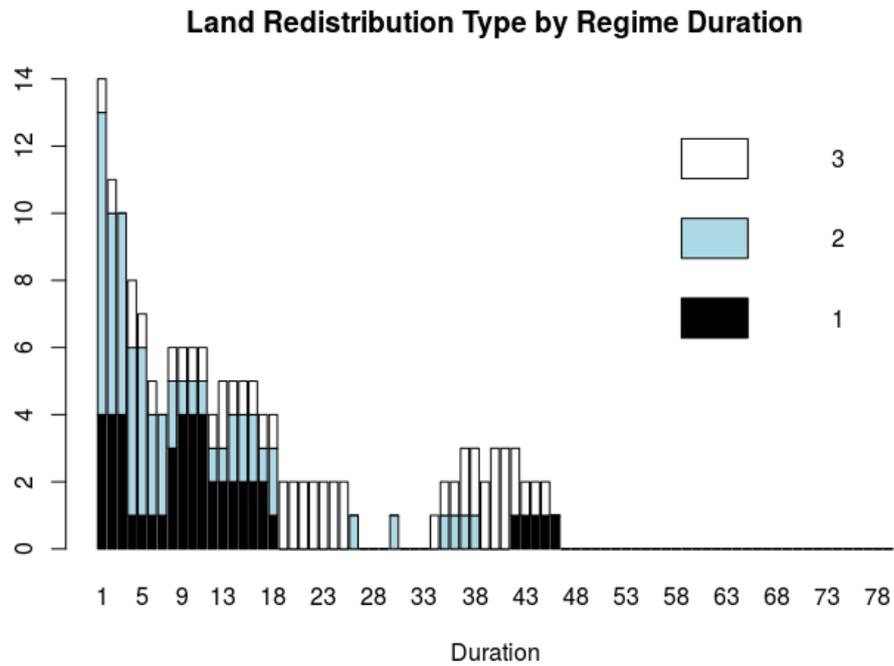
*Figure 3: Land Redistribution By Type Over Time*

in rural areas through Type 1 reform is concentrated between 1955 and 1980, reflecting other policies aimed at state consolidation like nationalization of industry that occurred during the same time period. Type 3 reforms rewarding elites are present across time periods and are the only reform type to survive the oil boom, the *infithah* economic liberalization, and structural adjustment periods of the 1980s and 1990s.

Figure 4 shows the frequency of reform types according to when they were enacted over the regime’s duration. Reforms that destroy the landed elite (Type 2) and move toward state consolidation of land (Type 1) concentrate in the early years of regime duration. Elite-reward strategies predominate after a regime is sufficiently entrenched (around 18 years).

### 3.0.1 The Mechanism: Land Reform, Local Order, and Regime Survival

The previous section outlined the prospective options and benefits of land reform for MENA regimes. Where this logic might fail, however, lies in the level of the regime’s state capacity to implement such reforms and establish local order. Local order is the distribution of political power and state capacity on a local level. Outside the level of national politics, states need to project power into the periphery through a combination of institutions and political networks. A useful frame in understanding the ramifications of state services like education and policing for state building is Migdal’s analysis of weak and strong states. Migdal (1988) argues that state social control, or the successful subordination of people’s own inclinations in favor of state rules, are

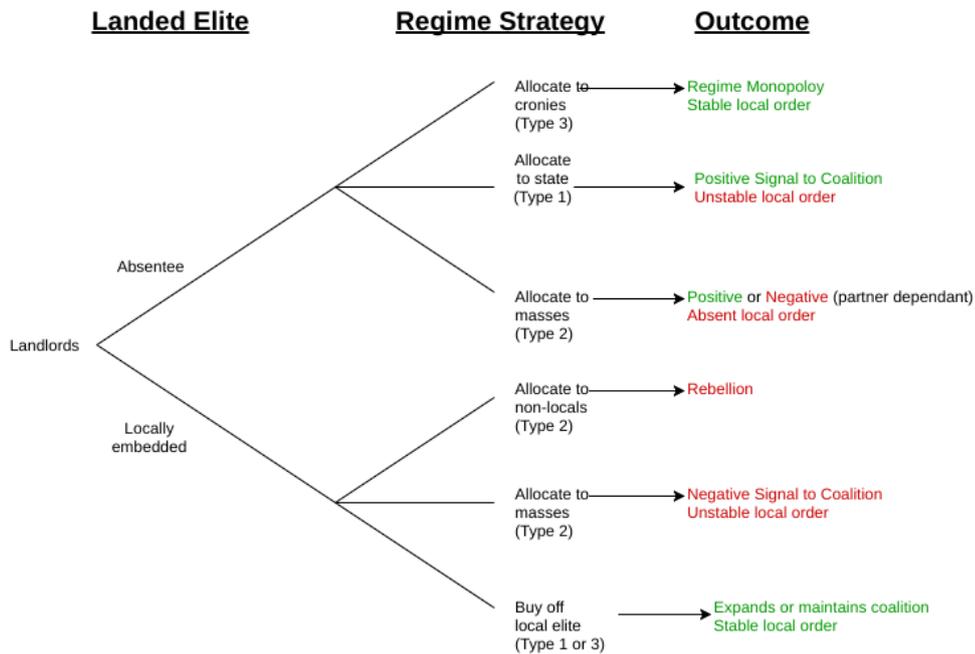


*Figure 4: Land Redistribution Type by Regime Duration*

critical for a strong state and consists of three elements. The first is compliance. Compliance is forced through institutions that impose sanctions on social actors. Such sanctions are exacted through some combination of force (local police, military) and Mann’s infrastructural power (courts, taxation), whereby societies interact with the state through legal and physical institutions. Participation, the second component, is when the population repeatedly and voluntarily uses state institutions such as cooperatives, state clinics, and education. Third and least tangible is legitimation, where people follow state rules on the basis of approval and acceptance of the state’s “symbolic configuration.” A strong state is one where citizens are compliant, active participants in a system they consider legitimate. Weak states, in contrast, jockey for social control with other sub-state groups that spoil the state’s monopoly over the state-building process.

In the context of my land reform typologies, Types 1 and 3 are expected to increase local order because local elites can be coaxed into collaborating with the regime; having a reliable network of local power brokers increases local order. Type 2, annihilative reform poses a greater challenge for local order. In cases where absentee landed elites predominate, large swaths of territory become illegible to the state and decrease state-society linkages. Absentee elites, therefore, create areas where state penetration is minimal. The regime would be tempted to remove such obstacles to their control, but run the risk of creating negative externalities for local order. Upon removing absentee landowners, regimes create a local power vacuum. If the state opted to choose local landed elites, they risk revolt due to the removal of socially embedded local leaders. Thus, land reform

presents a difficult challenge for a new regime which may or may not have the state capacity to fill the local void. Figure 5 summarizes the regime’s expectations for the risks and benefits of land reform.



*Figure 5: Expected Land Reform Outcomes*

Table 2 summarizes how I expect various land reform strategies impact local order, and concomitantly, regime survival. Following a land reform event, that regime allocates resources toward groups that it feels will best support their interests and continued rule. Land reforms that consolidate property rights under state control (Type 1) or reward elites (Type 3) give the regime allow the regime to distribute land to coalition members and to establish state institutions in newly reformed regions. In reforms targeted at elite annihilation and redistribution to smallholders (Type 2), however, the regime disrupts the extant local order. In the absence of a ready alternative, such as new local elites or a massive incursion of the state apparatus, the regime loses control of both land assets and local order.

New regimes face the delicate task of convincing other actors to join their coalition. At the outset of a new regime, allies and coalition partners are untested and usually distrustful; they need signals that the regime is loyal to their coalition. Land reform sends a powerful signal to those opposed to the economic and political monopoly of the landed elite. But this can be a double edged sword. In places where local landed elites are embedded in the fabric of rural society, expropriation would upend not only land holding patterns but also violate social hierarchies. In such cases, expropriation would be a risky strategy. In areas where absenteeism predominates, expropriation of a landed elite might be politically popular, but the execution creates negative externalities on the local level. Absentee owners often prevented the incursion of state institutions in their

*Table 2: Impact of Land Reform on Coalition Building, Local Order, and Regime Survival*

	Coalition Building	Local Order	Regime Survival
State Custodianship (Type 1)	+	+	+
Elite Annihilation (Type 2)	+ <b>or</b> -	-	-
Elite Reward (Type 3)	+	+	+

districts. Not only were these districts lagging developmentally, the oppressive social and economic conditions under absenteeism also precluded the development of alternative structures of authority. After expropriation, areas formerly owned by absentees were often left bereft of local order. Figure 5 summarizes these how these externalities might play out. My expectation for how state capacity conditions the state’s ability to implement and survive land reform is:

- H3: As state capacity increases, the likelihood of regime survival post-land reform increases.

The next section tests the relationship between different land reform strategies and regime survival. While land reform is not the only contributing factor to political unrest, I suggest that it has serious implications for state formation in agrarian, post-colonial contexts. In regions like MENA where agriculture was the dominant sector, redistributing the means of agricultural production impacts long-standing patterns of social, political, and economic organization. As the empirical and case study analyses show, dissolving these structures often reduces state control in peripheral regions.

### Empirical Analysis

The empirical analysis below examines the likelihood of regime failure as a function of land reform type. I base my coding of regime<sup>11</sup> types on the Geddes et al. (2014) (GWF) dataset. Regimes are coded as democratic if there are free and fair elections with multiple parties in a given country-year observation. Autocratic regimes are broken down by regime type into several categories.<sup>13</sup> Autocratic regimes differ from autocratic leaders in that regimes often live on long after a particular leader has exited. I consider the regime to be the body of rules

<sup>11</sup>Regime types coded in the Geddes et al. (2014) dataset are specifically geared toward typologies of autocracy.<sup>12</sup> Non-autocracies are coded as such, with non-independent, foreign-occupied, warlord and provisional governments falling under this category (Geddes et al., 2014, p.24).

<sup>13</sup>These regime types are: military, personalistic, party, monarchy and hybrid regimes that combine elements of these four core regime types. I do not compare regime types here, but other studies have shown that monarchies and party regimes tend to be more durable than military and personalistic regimes.

and relationships that govern political behavior in a country. Therefore, rather than measuring leader tenure, this study concerns itself with redistribution and its relationship to the stability of the “rules of the game” embodied by a sovereign autocratic regime. Regime Failure, the primary dependent variable in this paper, is a binary measure adopted from the Geddes et al. (2014) dataset. I recoded Regime Failure to contain only domestically-caused regime failure, i.e., elite defection<sup>14</sup> or mass uprisings<sup>15</sup>. Mass-uprisings, however, count for less than 3 percent of the observations, and therefore the measure is appropriate for assessing the elite-level argument presented above.

Summary statistics for the regime failures models are reported in Table 6 (Appendix 2). All models use an original cross-sectional time series dataset on Middle East land redistribution spanning the period from 1946 to 2008. All MENA state independence dates are accounted for by the data’s start date except for Iran, Turkey, Saudi Arabia, and Oman, which never officially experienced colonial rule.

### **Key Independent Variable: Land Reform Type**

I coded a binary measure of land redistribution to capture distinct types of land reform.<sup>16</sup> Every MENA country with the exception of Lebanon, Sudan and those on the Arabian peninsula<sup>17</sup> instituted redistributive land reform during the observation period. For each country-year observation in the dataset, I code an *AllReform* variable 0 if no land redistribution occurred, and 1 if it did. I also a categorical variable for distinct land reform types described in the previous section. Table 3 is repeated below to describe the frequency of each type of reform.

### **Explanatory and Control Variables**

I include a number of controls and alternative explanations that could impact regime survival. I control for the log of GDP per Capita<sup>18</sup>. In the land redistribution models, higher levels of wealth would likely lead to less urban elite demand for redistribution. When wealth is less scarce, the severity of intra elite redistributive conflict decreases. With regard to regime durability, modernization theory predicts that higher levels of wealth may lead to growing inter-class struggles or intra-elite conflict with greater potential for a transition to democracy. As the country gets wealthier, new rent streams are also at the regime’s disposal to co-opt new elites, as Hertog (2013) notes is a common phenomenon in the MENA private sector.

Rentier state theory explains regime durability via the mechanisms of either buying-off citizens with natural

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<sup>14</sup>Including the following reasons: regime insiders change rules of regime, incumbent loses elections, no incumbent runs in competitive election won by opponent, military coup, new autocratic leader selected, changes rules, and remains in power.

<sup>15</sup>Including the categories: popular uprising or insurgents, revolutionaries, or combatants fighting a civil war

<sup>16</sup>I should acknowledge that a methodological obstacle in analyzing land reform is its rarity. In a dataset with 1035 country-years, land redistribution only occurs in approximately 16 percent of observations. The results presented below establish correlations that need to be verified with alternative estimation techniques. I welcome comments on alternative approaches.

<sup>17</sup>Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Bahrain, Qatar, UAE, Oman, Yemen

<sup>18</sup>I use GDP per capita data from Haber and Menaldo (2011) for GDP per capita (real 2000 international dollars).

*Table 3: Land Redistribution Typology and Logics*

Land Reform Type	Logic Description	Winners	Losers	Country-Years in Sample n=1035
<b>Type 1</b>	Consolidation of state power: land is expropriated from the landed elite and comes under state ownership. Land is made available either through leasing or usufruct, but not ownership.	Regime/State	Rural poor, landed elite	49 (4.7 per cent, 30 per cent of land reform country years)
<b>Type 2</b>	Annihilate elites: land is redistributed from elites to the rural poor with private title.	Rural Poor	Landed Elites	59 (5.7 per cent, 37 per cent of land reform country years)
<b>Type 3</b>	Reward loyalty: Land is expropriated from non-elite classes, not loyal landed elites, and made available with preferential treatment of ruling coalition members.	Ruling Coalition	Rural Poor	54 (5.2 per cent, 33 per cent of land reform country years)

resource rent distribution or quashing opposition and dissent through resource-funded oppression.<sup>19</sup> I account for this by including the log of total fuel income per capita<sup>20</sup>.

Drawing on work by Wright (2008), I control for the log(population), ethnic fractionation and the proportion of the population that is Muslim<sup>21</sup> in all regime durability models.<sup>22</sup> Ethnic fractionalization<sup>23</sup> is thought to increase the likelihood of intrastate conflict, while Huntington (1991) argues that countries with predominantly Muslim citizens and Islamic institutions may be more prone to authoritarianism. Geographic factors have also been shown to impact political outcomes. I include the log of the country’s surface area) to control for the fact that small countries may have fewer potential sources of conflict that could impact regime durability (Haber and Menaldo, 2011; Menaldo, 2012).

Alternative explanations of regime durability include bureaucratic and repressive state capacity (Andersen et al., 2014), urban population density (Wallace, 2013), colonial heritage and regime type. A logged value of military expenditure as a proportion of GDP approximates the country’s repressive capability. Andersen et al. (2014) argue that repressive state capacity is more critical to authoritarian stability than bureaucratic. Scholars have also considered urban populations as threatening to authoritarians’ rule due to their numerical superiority to the selectorate. Wallace (2013) theorizes that larger cities have greater capacity for collective action and lobbying for redistribution. To account for this hypothesis, I use urban population data from the United Nations Population Division’s World Urbanization Prospects (2009) was collated to calculate the proportion of

<sup>19</sup>For discussion on oil and its relation to regime type, see Dunning (2008)

<sup>20</sup>In real 2007 dollars from Haber and Menaldo (2011).

<sup>21</sup>Ansell and Samuels (2014) also control for ethnic fractionation and Muslim majority populations in their models predicting autocratic durability, following Boix (2003) and Przeworski (2000).

<sup>22</sup>Menaldo (2012) follows Wright (2008) specifications in his models of monarchical persistence in the Middle East and North Africa.

<sup>23</sup>Taken from Fearon, James and Laitin (2003)

the population that live in the capital city. Regime type classifications were taken from Geddes et al. (2014) and colonial heritage was self-coded.

To capture state capacity, my proposed mechanism linking regime durability and land reform, I follow Beramendi and Rogers (2015) in using a measure of relative political extraction (RPE). RPE "approximates the ability of governments to appropriate portions of the national output to advance public goals" (Kugler and Tammen, 2012). RPE measures how much tax revenue a society collects given its economic structure. The value of this variable is calculated by estimating the expected size of a nation's economy using inputs (mining, exports, industry) and comparing its tax revenue to nations with similar economic inputs.

### 3.1 The Effect of Land Redistribution on Regime Durability

Tables 4 and 5 report the results of binary cross-sectional time series models (BCSTS). BCSTS methodology has been used in the literature to explain regime transitions from autocracy to democracy.<sup>24</sup> BCSTS data behaves like grouped duration data and addresses the concern that observations may be temporally related faced by ordinary logit and probit models. To test my hypotheses regarding the role of redistribution in authoritarian durability, I constructed a time-series cross-section dataset covering the years 1946 to 1980 and includes the MENA region's core countries: Saudi Arabia, Yemen, Kuwait, Bahrain, Qatar, the United Arab Emirates, Oman, Iran, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Turkey, Sudan, Egypt, Libya, Tunisia, Algeria and Morocco.<sup>25</sup> I cluster standard errors by country across the probit models in order to adjust estimated standard errors for any arbitrary patterns of correlations within countries.

Table 4 reports the results of my base models. Type 2 land redistribution shows a positive and significant correlation with regime failure. Both Type 1 and Type 3 do not have significant correlations with the onset of regime failure. This falls short of confirming that these types of land redistribution counteract the probability of regime failure.

Of the other explanatory variables, capital share inequality and military regime types are positively and significantly associated with regime failure. This supports the literature on regime types that postulates that repressive military regimes are more prone to coups and failure. This could be attributable in part due to the narrowness of military supporting coalitions. The relationship between inequality and regime survival is one fraught with disagreement in the literature, and the lack of consensus extends to these results. Rural inequality

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<sup>24</sup>BCSTS was developed by Beck et al. (1998) and adopted by Ansell and Samuels (2014) and Albertus (2015) to explain democratic transition and land reform, respectively.

<sup>25</sup>Although Turkey and Iran were not technically under the control of European colonialism, I include them because their landed classes are easily described by my typology. In addition, they were not free from European influence. The British played a heavy-handed role in the Shah's regime in Iran, and multiple European states contributed to the final demise of the Ottoman Empire by economic and military means. I exclude Israel from this analysis because of the unique and exceptional geopolitical involvement in the country's economic development and military support.

has no statistically significant effect in Models 3-5. Capital Share Inequality is significant in Models 3 and 4, but not in when taking regime type into account in Model 5.

**Table 4:** *Dynamic Probit Regression for Impact of Land Redistribution Type on Regime Failure*

DV: Regime Failure	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
LR Type 1	-0.0958 (0.223)	-0.0861 (0.302)	0.296 (0.340)	0.281 (0.302)	0.345 (0.376)
LR Type 2	0.749*** (0.217)	0.943*** (0.273)	1.107** (0.340)	1.092** (0.357)	1.173** (0.403)
LR Type 3	0.108 (0.429)	0.00103 (0.343)	0.230 (0.489)	0.299 (0.531)	0.392 (0.518)
Ln(GDP per Capita)		-0.119 (0.110)	-0.0528 (0.168)	-0.190 (0.198)	-0.0165 (0.188)
Ln(TFI)		-0.0540 (0.0330)	-0.0448 (0.0414)	-0.0340 (0.0426)	-0.0481 (0.0411)
Perc. Muslim		0.00415 (0.00703)	-0.000313 (0.00963)	-0.00274 (0.00889)	0.00421 (0.0103)
Civil War 10		0.523 (0.323)	0.481 (0.347)	0.609 (0.374)	0.473 (0.297)
Rural Inequality			0.00931 (0.00760)	0.0108 (0.00960)	0.0192 (0.0140)
Capital Share Inequality			0.0303** (0.0111)	0.0273* (0.0130)	0.0306 (0.0161)
British Colony				-0.366 (0.424)	
French Colony				-0.262 (0.609)	
Italian Colony				0.565 (0.818)	
Military					0.872** (0.320)
Monarchy					-0.673 (0.556)
Party					-0.228 (0.500)
Observations	877	842	617	568	617
Pseudo $R^2$	0.145	0.212	0.220	0.221	0.261
AIC	241.5	230.0	186.3	180.8	178.0
BIC	284.5	291.5	248.2	237.3	239.9

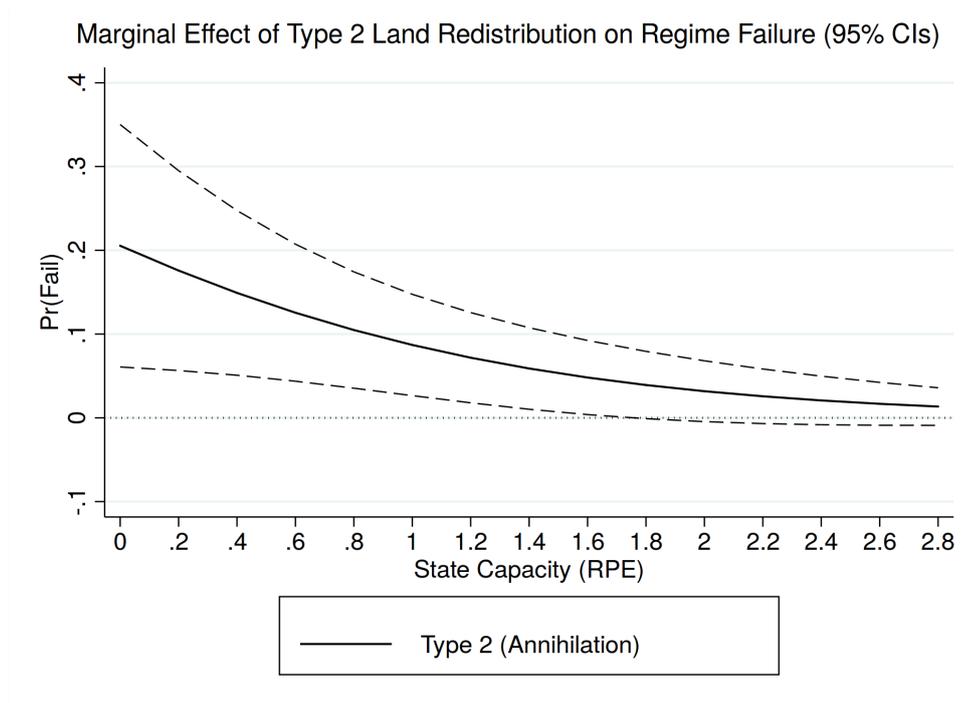
Standard errors in parentheses

\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*  $p < 0.01$ , \*\*\*  $p < 0.001$

Table 5 tests a series of theoretical drivers of authoritarian regime failure. The findings are robust; Type

2 land reform still correlates positively and significantly with failure across all models. Types 1 and 3 do not correlate to regime failure at conventional levels of statistical significance. Resource rents ( $\ln(\text{TFI})$ ) have a negative correlations with failure in all models, but are only significant in models 2 and 4 when the proportion of population in the capital and military expenditure are introduced. These results are likely picking up on the political economy features of the Arab Gulf states, which have no history of land reform, high resource rents, large populations in capital cities, and high military expenditure. Openness (Model 3) has have a negative and significant impact on regime failure, as one would expect. A more open regime enjoys more rent streams to distribute among loyal elites.

The introduction of state capacity in Table 5, Model 5 lends suggestive support to H3, linking state capacity to the implementation of land redistribution. The negative relationship between state capacity and regime failure may suggest that states with higher capacity may be more equipped to establish local order following land reform. States with higher state capacity, in theory, function more effectively at providing key services like welfare and public goods. The independent effect of Type 2 reform remains positive and significant. Figure 6 shows the predicted effect of Type 2 land reform on regime stability as state capacity (RPE) increases. As anticipated, the the effect of Type 2 reform in predicting regime failure decreases as state capacity increases. In other specifications, an interaction term between state capacity and land reform types was not significant. When regressed included in all models, state capacity remains a negative and significant correlate of regime failure; this lends supports H3's contention that land reform's disruption can only be mitigated in the presence more robust state institutions.



**Figure 6**

**Table 5:** *Dynamic Probit Regression for Impact of Land Redistribution Type on Regime Failure: Alternative Explanations*

DV: Regime Failure	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
	fail	fail	fail	fail	fail
LR Type 1	0.0137 (0.311)	0.00295 (0.321)	0.0839 (0.370)	0.398 (0.384)	0.151 (0.295)
LR Type 2	0.957*** (0.263)	0.983*** (0.245)	0.522** (0.189)	1.082** (0.342)	0.994*** (0.290)
LR Type 3	-0.0529 (0.380)	-0.00883 (0.379)	0.352 (0.516)	0.378 (0.571)	-0.00603 (0.369)
Ln(GDP per Capita)	-0.0995 (0.0957)	-0.0642 (0.101)	-0.208 (0.110)	0.167 (0.139)	-0.0807 (0.0943)
Ln(TFI)	-0.0580 (0.0304)	-0.0667* (0.0312)	-0.0453 (0.0401)	-0.0772* (0.0347)	-0.0602 (0.0311)
Perc. Muslim	0.00371 (0.00570)	-0.000758 (0.00658)	-0.00219 (0.00921)	-0.00185 (0.00641)	0.00391 (0.00629)
Ethnic Frac.	0.00999 (0.00574)	0.0110* (0.00519)	0.00778 (0.00551)	0.00948 (0.00550)	0.00759 (0.00646)
Prop. Population in Capital		-0.0108 (0.0117)			
Openness			-2.04e-08*** (4.78e-09)		
Military Expenditure				-0.118 (0.0643)	
State Capacity					-0.470** (0.177)
Observations	842	842	679	721	842

These models confirm the expectation that different land reform strategies will have variable repercussions for regime longevity. Across all models, regimes that opt to annihilate their landed elites (Type 2) that face the biggest threat of failure. Regimes that opt for more conciliatory measures by bringing land under state custodianship (Type 1) or by rewarding elites and cronies (Type 3) seem to be in less jeopardy from their strategic choices. The case studies of Jordan and Iraq highlight these distinct logics of reform by showing the ramifications of land reform for establishing local order.

## 4 Land Redistribution and Regime Durability in Jordan and Iraq

This section takes the argument above and applies it to the cases of Iraq and Jordan. Iraq and Jordan had similar beginnings. Ruled by the British post-World War I, both countries shared a colonizer as well as a ruling family, the Hashemites; the British installed two brothers, Abdullah and Faisal, to be the monarchs in Jordan and Iraq, respectively. The Jordanian Hashemite monarchy has proved remarkably resilient to both domestic turbulence and the problems of its rough neighborhood. In contrast, Iraq has weathered five regime changes since independence (Geddes et al., 2014). The juxtaposition of these cases qualitatively validates the ways in which different land reform strategies impact coalition formation and local order.

### Iraq

Post-revolutionary Iraq is a prime example of land expropriation intended to annihilate the absentee landed elite, followed by the regime's failure to extend state control over a new rural local order. The Free Officers, a military cadre led by Brigadier Abd al-Karim Qasim, violently overthrew the Hashemite monarchy on July 14, 1958, decapitating a regime that had been in power since the British installed Emir Faisal as regent in 1921. The monarchy's ruling coalition had rested on a bedrock of tribal and merchant landowning *iqta'i*, or feudal, families. These families, whose members made up a significant proportion of Iraq's ministers, parliamentarians, and economic elite, were among the first to be targeted by Qasim's new regime. Hoping to hobble the landed elite, the regime passed the Agrarian Land Reform Law Ninety days after taking power so as to "abolish feudal relations..."and emancipate the peasantry."

The wealth and power of *iqta'i* families were tainted with a deep colloquial association with British imperialism. Before the British occupation of Iraq, land had been held under traditional forms of tenure that recognized both communal and private property rights, although most land was held in state trust *miri* for share cropping or pastoral grazing. After the British occupation of Iraq during World War I, the colonial administration allocated selective private property rights, prime agricultural land, and irrigation technology to powerful tribal sheikhs in exchange for their quiescence and cooperation. The Iraqi landowning elite consisted of 49 families who owned 16.8 percent of private agricultural land (Batatu, 1978, p. 57). Sheikhs then leveraged

their economic power into political power with the introduction of a new parliament and increasingly consolidated their status as feudal lords while lesser members of the tribe became disenfranchised and landless. Rural areas became fragmented into isolated fiefdoms of *iqta'i* families, where landowner and labor remained cut off from most public services. Repressive labor conditions and an ossifying political order during the 1940s and 1950s prevented the spread of state institutions into agricultural regions as the connections between landowners and their local communities became more and more tenuous.

I argue that Iraq's post-revolutionary failure to thrive can be attributed to the regime's twin challenges of establishing local order and cementing a new ruling coalition. Political parties hailed Qasim's revolution as the dawn of an anti-colonial new order, and land reform was championed by party programs and the new regime as the cornerstone of a new economic and political foundation. The law imposed ceilings on individual landholdings<sup>26</sup>, and promised to distribute expropriated land among landless fellahin<sup>27</sup> in 20-40 acre plots. While the expropriation of land owners proceeded according to plan, very little of the expropriated land was ever distributed. But historian Samira Haj observes that while the revolution of 1958 succeeded in dismantling the power base of the oligarchic monarchy, it "failed to complete its historical mission of social reconstruction" (Haj, 1997, 136).

The land reform of 1958 decimated local political and economic order in Iraq. Areas previously under *iqta'i* control were under-provisioned with state institutions and services, such as infrastructure, education, and public health. Agricultural inputs, previously supplied by landlords, were no longer available and agricultural production plummeted to all-time lows after land reform was implemented. Fellahin could no longer afford their livelihoods, as the land reform law required distributed lands be purchased. Many peasants chose to migrate to urban shantytowns as unskilled workers, leaving a disordered agrarian sector with no clear economic or political leadership. Many scholars attribute Iraq's agricultural and rural degradation to the 1958 land reforms, all of which contributed to the regime's ultimate failure to establish local order.

The political class of tribal families became de-coupled from economic and political power overnight, leaving the hierarchy of rural elites in shambles without a ready alternative. Tribal and rural notables who retained some land post-reform were not able to rely on family-based local ties after decades of repressing their clansmen as sharecroppers. Disagreements over land reform fractured national politics at a critical moment of coalition formation for Qasim's regime. The regime's politicians and bureaucrats were drawn from monarchy-era opposition parties such as the National Democratic Party (NDP), the Ba'th Party, and the Iraqi Communist Party (ICP). The ICP favored land reform that enhanced the welfare of the fellahin and improved small-holder farming, whereas the regime sought to curry favor with mid-size landholders and former land managers. These political differences mapped on to local organization. Peasant societies that cropped up in the early days of the new regime were politically divided between Qasim's regime (1,310 societies) and the ICP (2,267 societies)(Haj,

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<sup>26</sup>618 acres in irrigated areas, 1,236 in rain-fed regions

<sup>27</sup>Peasants

1997, 124). The regime, formerly in coalition with the ICP, began an aggressive program of repression and purging. In the summer of 1959, the regime launched an offensive against all forms of organization associated with the ICP, including peasant societies, through imprisonment, banishment, and killing. In this fractious environment, the Qasim regime continued to attack its former allies and emboldened opponents in a climate of increasing alienation. In his drive to displace the old landed elite, Qasim failed to cement a stable ruling coalition.

Gen. Qasim was ousted by his colleague Abdul Salam 'Arif in a military coup in 1963. After a series of missteps in the international<sup>28</sup> and domestic<sup>29</sup> arenas, Qasim and his closest advisors were captured, given a farcical trial and summarily executed by Ba'athist coup plotters.

The regimes that followed were left to establish local order and reign in the chaos of national politics. Regime change followed in 1968 and in the 1970s under the de jure (and from 1979 de facto) rule of Saddam Hussein. Under the Ba'th party, new local orders were established through the extension of state institutions and by bringing all land under state control. New land reforms pooled all former land-related legislation and lowered the ceiling on private landownership in irrigated areas by 40 percent. Collective farms were legally established, and allowed for variation in soil quality, type of cropping and location in relation to market towns, and flexibility about minimum size of units to be redistributed to allow for more beneficiaries. By 1977, total redistribution was 1.92 million hectares to 218,000 households. By 1985, 2.4 million hectares was distributed to 262,000 agricultural households. According to one Ba'th era agricultural engineer, these reforms enhanced the penetration of Saddam's surveillance state as he began to allocate property and water rights to his cronies as well as to military officers. Under Saddam, the re-organization of the rural order became a key component of his grip on Iraqi society.

## **Jordan**

Jordanian landowners in the state building period never achieved the expansive and feudalistic landownership of their Iraqi counterparts, but they were powerful members of the Jordanian political elite who helped forge continuity between the old local order and the new. British property rights reforms (1933 to 1946) during the Mandate had a decisive impact on the corridors of power between rural hinterland and the regime. Mandate officials were quick to hail the Transjordanian land settlement program as "the best thing Her Majesty's Government has ever done for that country" (Fischbach, 2000, p. 124). But as Fischbach (2000) shows, what started as a policy intended to protect peasant land access resulted in the growth of a new landed elite. While some Ottoman-era large landowners existed in Mandate Transjordan, they were few and primarily located in the remote Jordan Valley. The registration system reinforced pre-existing estate ownership in for the small number of Ottoman-era landlords. At the same time, the British land tenure regime created new landed elites under

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<sup>28</sup>Most notably the 1961 annexation of Kuwait

<sup>29</sup>Attacking his support base, the Iraqi Communist Party

the auspices of private property protection. The British prized Ottoman title deeds as the deciding factor in property disputes. In the case of most communal holdings, Ottoman registers only reflected the name of the village mayor or tribal sheikh. In those instances, courts and land settlement boards often ruled in favor of the local elite, granting them new land in private title and entrance to the landed class. These new elites, including Palestinian and Syrian merchants who purchased land during the Mandate land tenure registration, that became the bedrock of the Hashemite regime's ruling coalition. Landowners in the early state were primarily local and typically lived on or near their property. Being locally embedded, these landowners continued to fill local political function as well as a burgeoning national role. In addition, the systematic and universal nature of the British property reforms in Jordan - as opposed to Iraq - paved the way for more reliable and efficient taxation, which in turn brought other state institutions like roads, post offices, and schools to more remote areas (Alon, 2007).

These locally-embedded landed elites brought legitimacy to local order in Jordan. Landed elites remained locally powerful arbiters of disputes. The regime could build on its landed elites' local legitimacy to project infrastructural power outside of Amman. Thus, local orders were upheld by the property system as sheikhs and mukhtars continued to play important roles in local politics. Furthermore, the new landed elites' stake in the new central government was high, cemented by a universal, centralized tenure system, unlike Iraq where property rights were more contingent upon good relations with the British. The British system in Jordan resulted in the broad "buy in" of multiple segments of society through the extension of private property rights.

Although the Jordanian regime's reputation is one of exceptional stability, the Jordanian regime did face an existential crises in its inaugural decades. Conflicts with Israel and cold relations with other Arab states isolated the young state from most regional allies. The most difficult problem facing Jordanians was demographic. Palestinian refugees flooded into Jordan in 1948, such that the capital Amman when from 30,000 to almost 100,000 souls overnight. Public services, meager before 1948, became overburdened. Amidst the turmoil, Jordan's first king, Abdullah, was assassinated by a Palestinian nationalist in 1951.

Political pressure multiplied as the population sky-rocketed, and Jordan's first decades post-independence were fraught with tension between urban and rural interests. Large landowners began to face ideological and political pressure from urban communist, Pan-Arabist, and Ba'athist parties under the banner of the Jordanian National Movement (JNM) challenged the monarchy's legitimacy. After Jordan's independence from Britain in 1946, the JNM targeted the Hashemite monarchical regime for revolutionary reform. The JNM resembled the Iraqi Communists in their calls for socioeconomic justice and political reform, although JNM's Arab nationalist and return of Palestine platforms more greatly resembled Ba'athist and Nasserite ideals than Communist. Like the Iraqi left, the 1950s JNM was primarily composed of urban elites - educated professionals and lower ranking army officers bitter that the British held high posts in the military (Anderson, 2005, p. 119). Despite this professional character of Jordan's opposition, most of the population still worked in agriculture

and unemployment rates were high. Landlessness was increasing because of population growth and shrinking land parcel sizes fragmented by inheritance.

The JNM pushed for greater political representation for themselves and for more inclusive redistributive policies for Jordan's peasants and refugees. In the October 1956 elections, only 32.5 per cent of *nawwab* (representatives) in Parliament were landowners, compared with 60 per cent hailing from the urban professional class. Amid the increasing urban political mobilization, the young King Hussein, passed an Anti-Communist law that limited party competition in 1953, undercutting a prime organizing force that had allowed the Iraqi urban classes to oppose the regime and landed elites (Anderson, 2005). An attempted military coup against the Jordanian monarchy was diffused on 13 April 1957 through careful control of both the rank and file military as well as the leftist urban opposition in Parliament. Following the coup, Parliament was dissolved and did not operate regularly again until 1989. Unrest continued after the Prime Minister, Hazza' al-Majali was assassinated by a bomb planted in his office. In this political climate, as the regime was imprisoning many opposition leaders, it also enacted land redistribution in the Jordan Valley.

Thus, land redistribution undertaken by the Hashemite regime, starting in 1959, responded to similar qualitative challenges as the Qasim's regime in Iraq. The regime faced a series of redistributive and ideological conflicts, and it met them by sending a positive signal to the ruling coalition that the Hashemites were prepared to honor commitments to their domestic allies. In doing so, the regime enacted that land reform that showed commitment to their coalition and restructured local order in the project area in concert with those commitments.

In the press and in policy, land redistribution was billed as an economic development project that could potentially resettle thousands of Palestinian refugee peasants and help the ailing Jordanian peasant class.<sup>30</sup> In practice, the land redistribution program was implemented in a concentrated area and had limited impact on the peasants it was designed to help. Land redistribution was concentrated within the confines of the Jordan Valley, a thin strip of arable land stretching along the board with Israel from Lake Tiberius in the north to the Red Sea in the south. Under the auspices of the East Ghor Canal Project (1959-1967), the regime introduced property caps and redistribution with the stated goal of (1) increasing agricultural output and (2) raising the standard of living of families residing in the project area. Prior to the reforms, a 1955 UNRWA survey of the Jordan Valley revealed a high concentration of land ownership. While owners of less than 100 dunums represented 84 per cent of all owners, they held only 21 per cent of the land. At the opposite extreme, 54 owners with holdings in excess of 1,000 dunums and representing only a little over 1 per cent of all owners, held over 152,000 dunums - 35 per cent of the total area. Post-reform, holders of less than 90 dunums constituted 85 per cent of all landowners and 44 per cent of the total area, while holders of units in excess of 1,000 dunums represented less than 0.3 per cent of all owners and only 9.5 per cent of the total area (Hazleton, 1979). Despite

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<sup>30</sup>See Government of Jordan Official Gazette, 1959.

this change in the range of land ownership, anthropologist Mohamed Tarawneh found that that the structure of the laws benefited highland landowners looking to speculate newly irrigated land, or established tribal elites in the Jordan Valley who were able to spread their previous holdings among their family members (Tarawneh, 2014). Sharecropping actually increased in the post-reform period, signaling that that the pro-peasant reform was actually benefiting larger landholders. In the long term, however, the redistribution of Jordan Valley land worked to the benefit of regime loyalists and "old guards."

Prior to the reforms, the presence of the state in the Jordan Valley was minimal. With high rates of malaria and a reputation for lawlessness, one farmer who remembered days before the East Ghor Canal Project as being "like the Wild West." With the redistribution of land and the construction of the irrigation canal came paved roads, schools, hospitals, and utilities. The state constructed its an umbrella organization, the Jordan Valley Authority, that while run by landed elites was responsible for managing land, water, and development in the Valley. When I asked a founding official of the Jordan Valley Authority<sup>31</sup> why Jordanian land reforms were so much more peaceful than in Iraq and Syria, his candid response was that "we respected our elites." Local elites who "won" financially also provided their constituents with higher levels of public goods. In the case of Jordan, the reforms of the 1960s, and later in the 1970s and 1980s in other parts of the Valley, solidified the commitment to the ruling coalition while bolstering local order.

## 5 Conclusion

This study develops a novel theoretical framework about the emergence of stable authoritarian regimes in MENA. I argue that the relationship between redistributive policies and regime survival in MENA regimes follows a systematic, potentially generalizable pattern. New regimes face two primary challenges when they assume control: cementing their coalition and establishing local order. Regimes must send positive signals to their ruling partners to prevent spoilers from defecting and fragmenting the coalition. The regime must also establish control through the extension of state institutions and political networks in to the periphery. Using new data on land reforms in the MENA region (1945 to 2010), I show that expropriations of landowners are likely to precipitate regime failure, and that absentee landowners are more likely than local landed elites to be expropriated. Using the cases of Iraq and Jordan, I show how the regime's decision to redistribute is conditioned on the nature of their landed class, and that while politically expedient, the expropriation of absentee elites creates negative externalities for state capacity and local order.

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<sup>31</sup>Interview, Amman, November 2016. Name redacted per interviewee request.

**Table 6:** *Regime Failure Summary Statistics*

<b>Variable</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Std. Dev.</b>	<b>Min.</b>	<b>Max.</b>	<b>N</b>
Regime Failure	0.037	0.19	0	1	910
Land Redist. Types (1,2,3)	0.318	0.8	0	3	1016
Rural Inequality	37.118	15.181	2.2	74.52	639
Capital Share	66.522	9.138	38.776	90.509	918
Colonizer ID	166.317	95.688	0	325	976
Military Regime	0.043	0.203	0	1	910
Monarchy	0.427	0.495	0	1	911
Party Regime	0.241	0.428	0	1	910
Proportion of Population in Capital	33.847	18.766	5.3	91.100	1035
Openness	149780.517	3908648.463	0.039	102000000	681
Ln(Military Expenditure)	5.527	10.683	0	210.747	826
State Capacity	1	0.479	0.101	2.85	1035
Ln(GDP per Capita)	8.52	1.226	5.932	11.854	911
Log(TFI)	3.401	5.805	-6.908	11.304	911
Percent Muslim	87.085	23.93	0.78	99.900	874
Civil War 10	0.214	0.41	0	1	1035
Ln(Population)	0.153	0.175	0.001	0.757	952
Ln(Area)	814643.059	844702.875	690	2505810	912

## Appendix 1: Land Reforms in MENA

This table summarizes my original qualitative land reform dataset built using the Official Gazettes (in Arabic) of all 18 countries in my data set, as well as an extensive secondary literature review. Breaking down reforms by country, I describe the nature of each reform, indicate the number of previous land reforms that occurred, the dates of reform implementation, and finally its coded type (1, 2, or 3). The table has been redacted for this working paper, and is available upon request.

## Appendix 2: Summary Statistics

### Appendix 3: Explaining the Push Land Reform in MENA States

My theoretical framework asserts that the nature of colonial rule limited post-independence states' strategic options for dealing with redistributive conflict through a legacy of **absenteeism**. Landed elite political power is qualitatively linked with colonial land tenure reform in several historical studies (Gerber, 1987; Baer, 1982; Fischbach, 2000). Under colonial rule, absentee landed elites had less traditional power in the communities where they owned land. Consequently, while wealthy land owners may have been well situated to gain political power under colonial rule, it was often at the expense of traditional legitimacy in their communities.

Regimes are pressured to redistribute when administrative elites demand greater access to the economic and political resources of the state. Urban elites are in theoretical opposition to incumbent landed elites when trade is restricted, public services limited or labour imperiled by conservative landed interests. Urban elite antagonism may be purely economic, but archival and interview research combined with an extensive secondary literature review indicates that one of the prime political concerns facing autocrats in the 1950s and 1960s Middle East was containing economically powerful urban leftist interests. Land redistribution would be an expedient strategy by the regime to appease a reform-minded urban elite interested in socioeconomic justice and redressing the inequalities of imperialism. Based on the US Department of State Strength of World Communist Organizations annual report, British diplomatic cables in Kew and Ambassadorial Reports at St. Antony's College Middle East Centre Archive from 1950 to 1980, I constructed a weighted measure to capture when leftist urban elite classes *opposed* the regime. My main source, the World Communist Organizations annual report, underpinned this classification by providing an annual summary of global communist and leftist activities and their relationship to the state in each country. The base variable is a binary measure of whether the urban elite opposed the regime (1) or either neutral toward or included in the ruling coalition (0).

I then multiplied the base binary variable by the proportion of the population residing in large cities, taken from the United Nations Population Division's World Urbanization Prospects (2009). and divide by the country's population in the capital<sup>32</sup> city. The combination of an economically powerful and ideologically leftist professional class pushed regimes to redistribute land.

I begin investigating the link between types of land redistribution on one hand and landed elite absenteeism and urban elite demands on in a series of logit models. Following Carter and Signorino (2010), I include a cubic approximation of the hazard in all models. I also include controls for population and area, as well as a regional dummy variable for North Africa, the Levant, and the Persian Gulf. Table 7 presents the results.

Model 1 shows the relationship between All Land Redistribution and landed elite type and urban opposition. As expected, absenteeism and urban elite strength have a positive effect on the likelihood of land redistribution. Revolution has a positive impact on the likelihood of all reform, but this effect is not significant when disaggregated by land reform type in the other models. The effects of GDP per capita, Rural Pressure and Previous

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<sup>32</sup>Capital population taken from the United Nations Population Division's World Urbanization Prospects (2009) data.

Land Reform are negative, but not significant above the  $p < 0.1$  level. Model 2 regresses the explanatory variables on Type 1 land redistribution. In this case, the absentee effect is negative, but not significant. Urban opposition is a significant predictor of Type 1 reform ( $p < 0.001$ ). This could reflect that faced with a choice to either consolidate state power or reward rising elites, regimes that perceive the urban administrative class as threatening may choose to increase the power of the state and narrow the breadth of the regime rather than taking their urban elite into the ruling coalition. Such measures were adopted in 1960's Egypt under Nasser, the Neo-Ba'athist regime of Hafez Al-Assad in Syria, and the Ba'athist regime in Iraq. Previous land reform also positively correlates to Type 1 reform. State consolidation would make sense if a regime beset by competition and confusion following elite expropriation sought to reassert control.

*Table 7: Drivers of Land Redistribution Types in MENA*

	<i>Dependent variable:</i>			
	All LR	Type 1	Type 2	Type 3
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Absentee	1.308** (0.382, 2.234)	-0.163 (-1.539, 1.213)	4.148*** (2.037, 6.259)	-0.067 (-1.334, 1.201)
Urban Opp. Strength	0.016*** (0.011, 0.021)	0.017*** (0.009, 0.025)	0.009** (0.002, 0.016)	0.010*** (0.004, 0.016)
GDP per Capita	-0.056 (-0.552, 0.439)	0.119 (-0.887, 1.125)	-0.302 (-1.133, 0.529)	0.602 (-0.183, 1.388)
Revolution	0.464* (0.003, 0.925)	-0.679 (-1.998, 0.641)	0.322 (-0.215, 0.859)	0.445 (-0.177, 1.066)
Rural Pressure	-2.002 (-4.320, 0.316)	-4.684 (-10.649, 1.280)	-0.109 (-3.424, 3.206)	-1.291 (-4.098, 1.515)
Previous LR	-0.656 (-2.638, 1.326)	6.507** (1.674, 11.339)	-1.794 (-4.901, 1.313)	-1.125 (-3.789, 1.538)
Regional FE	Y	Y	Y	Y
Time Trends	Y	Y	Y	Y
Observations	796	796	796	796
Akaike Inf. Crit.	284.587	152.896	155.825	211.458

\*p<0.1; \*\*p<0.05; \*\*\*p<0.01

Type 2 reform is a different matter. Aimed at annihilating the landed elite, this reform has the most transformative potential of the three types of reform. According to the argument, Type 2 should be the most likely scenario in the case of an absentee landed elite and a rising urban professional class. Model 2 confirms these correlations. Absenteeism is a positive and highly significant predictor of Type 2 redistribution. An Urban Opposition is similarly positive and statistically significant at conventional thresholds. A strong urban class lobbied for the expropriation and redistribution of absentee landowners' estates. Previous land reform, rural pressure and revolution are all negative and not significant correlates of Type 2 reform. This would seem to suggest that the rural poor, despite their numerical superiority, do not meaningfully influence the onset of truly redistributive reform. This conforms to the Syrian and Iraqi cases of Type 2 redistribution.

Type 3 reform correlates with urban opposition but not with absenteeism. This resonates with the Jordanian case, as a regime with a history of integrating local landed elites might be more inclined to keep them happy with favorable redistribution policies. Additionally, regimes redistributing private land could use it as a co-optation tool to reward incumbent elites or reward new ones, including the up and coming urban bourgeoisie. Rural pressure correlates to a decrease in the likelihood of Type 3 reform, suggesting that this again a policy decided on the level of elite politics. This type of reform happened early on in Jordan and Morocco where land was used as a method of rewarding loyal elites. Regimes with a colonial legacy of absenteeism are more likely to enact Type 2 land redistribution. The regression results also confirm that Types 1 and 3 land redistribution do not correlate with absenteeism.

A rising urban class correlates to Type 3 reform, meaning that in situations where landed elites are local, regimes will chose a strategy that strengthens their support coalition - namely, redistributing land to their elites. In addition to absenteeism prompting elite-targeted land redistribution (Type 2), a stronger urban class also correlates to radical redistribution.

As a robustness check to the previous results, Table 5 in Appendix 4 considers several prominent alternative explanations for land redistribution, including leftist government, resource rents, trade openness, foreign aid and capital share inequality. For Type 1 reform, none of the alternative explanations are statistically significant and absenteeism and urban class strength remain insignificant. In the models for Type 2, both independent variables remain positive, where absenteeism is consistently significant to three sigma and the urban opposition is significant across all models. The alternative explanations of resource rents, openness, foreign aid and capital share inequality all decrease the likelihood of Type 2 reform at a one sigma level. Left wing governance has no effect. Finally, urban strength retains its positive correlation with Type 3 reform at a statistically significant level, while none of the alternative explanations have significant coefficients.

Type 2 land redistribution is more likely in countries where landed elite absenteeism is high and in the presence of a strong administrative elite. These results conform to theoretical expectations that an absentee landed elite, disconnected from local power structures and enjoying disproportionate political influence, would

be a likely target for expropriation under a new regime under pressure from educated classes seeking jobs and benefits. Types 1 and 3 operate by different logics. Type 1 reform appears to be discretionary, as neither absenteeism nor urbanite opposition predict its occurrence. The predicted probability of Type 3 reforms is positively correlated to a larger urban opposition.

## Appendix 4: Alternative Explanations of Land Reform

DV: LR Type	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
<b>LR Type 1</b>					
Absenteeism	-0.983 (1.467)	0.195 (0.707)	0.246 (0.665)	0.173 (0.832)	0.511 (0.622)
Urban Opp.	0.00628 (0.0135)	0.00819 (0.00943)	0.00885 (0.0117)	0.0101 (0.0148)	0.0107 (0.0113)
Left-Wing Gov.	-0.159 (0.544)				
Ln(TFI)		-0.00560 (0.0392)			
Openness			-0.0122 (0.0110)		
Foreign Aid				0.124 (0.0816)	
Capital Share Ineq.					-0.0784 (0.0421)
<b>LR Type 2</b>					
Absenteeism	3.754*** (0.603)	3.267*** (0.804)	2.769*** (0.717)	4.022*** (0.807)	3.063*** (0.782)
Urban Opp.	0.0577*** (0.0132)	0.0295* (0.0127)	0.0293* (0.0130)	0.0576*** (0.0145)	0.0314* (0.0137)
Left-Wing Gov.	0.502 (0.557)				
Ln(TFI)		-0.100* (0.0401)			
Openness			-0.0217* (0.00947)		
Foreign Aid				0.140** (0.0540)	

Capital Share Ineq.					-0.0833*
					(0.0338)
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LR Type 3					
Absenteeism	0.304	0.409	0.0552	0.697	0.123
	(0.667)	(0.400)	(0.545)	(0.481)	(0.600)
Urban Opp.	0.0235***	0.0157*	0.0154*	0.0258***	0.0148*
	(0.00621)	(0.00743)	(0.00712)	(0.00593)	(0.00618)
Left-Wing Gov.	0.0546				
	(0.614)				
Ln(TFI)		-0.0808			
		(0.0522)			
Openness			-0.0101		
			(0.00555)		
Foreign Aid				0.0865	
				(0.0849)	
Capital Share Ineq.					-0.0187
					(0.0306)
<hr/>					
Observations	486	878	843	522	856
Pseudo $R^2$					
<i>AIC</i>	724.8	1058.8	1037.6	739.2	989.5
<i>BIC</i>	779.3	1140.1	1118.1	803.1	1070.3

Standard errors in parentheses

\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*  $p < 0.01$ , \*\*\*  $p < 0.001$

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