

2019 RESEARCH WEEK PROPOSAL

Poster Proposal

Title: Democratization in the Middle East: Natural Resource Dependency & Islamic Exceptionalism

Program of Study: B.S Government: Public Administration & B.S Paralegal Studies

Presentation Type: Print Poster

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Abstract

After the Enlightenment Period in the late 1800s, philosophical thought and public opinion dramatically changed as people starting viewing government as deriving its power from its people instead of the previously assumed notion that government officials inherently held power due to their divine right from God. (This surprisingly was a fact that was very essential to many of the main fundamentals of Christianity as harsh dictators who did not follow God's teaching could not be continually supported because of his or her inherent power from God). This led to a rise of democratization within the Western World during the following century in what can now be known as one of the most impactful governmental transitions in recent world history. However, while the West welcomed an enlightened view of government, the Middle East never underwent such Enlightenment and is still largely undemocratic today.

This fact within comparative politics plagues even the greatest minds, as they try to discover not only why the Middle East never underwent an Enlightenment but also what steps, if any, countries within the Middle East will need to undergo to sustain a free democracy. These

issues primarily relate to the exceptionalism of Islam and Natural Resource Wealth Dependency, while not completely unique to the Middle East, hindering democratization.

According to political scientists, there are two main reasons that the majority of the Middle East has been hesitant to enact a sustainable democracy. The first and the most controversial, is that the country's engrained culture with fundamental Islam creates a dynamic in which people are highly resistant to governmental processes similar to democracy. The second and indeed a lot less controversial, is that the country's economic structures favor undemocratic principles due to the country's unique distribution of wealth.

Ultimately, this work intends to display why Islam is unique in its relationship to government and as a result, provides a great challenge for democratic revolutions. Additionally, this work will also examine the obstacles caused by natural resource dependency.