X. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This study aims at explaining the durability of Arab authoritarian regimes and their ability to resist the third wave of democratic transformation that hit the world since the last quarter of the twentieth century. It urges that the main reason behind the successes of low efficient unpopular regimes to survive is the successful strategies they use to consolidate their reign and to manipulate their political rivals. To do so, this study explores the internal political developments in the Arab World since early 1990s in a quest to decide their intentionality and authenticity. Though the external role has always been a key factor affecting internal Arab developments, this study is dedicated to regime-opposition interactive relation and its dynamics. Further, two case studies are presented (Egypt and Morocco). The two cases are particularly interesting for they represent two major countries in the Arab World with diverse political societies and a long history of regime-opposition interaction. Such diversity serves as an incubator of dissent both within political elite and political opposition. Both Egypt and Morocco are considered as examples of "liberalized autocracies" that provide interesting models of regime-opposition relationship. Still, the case studies provide two contrasting political types (monarchy vs. republic). This provides rich data to compare and contrast the strategies each of the two regimes use. The study uses the comparative approach as a tool of research.

The major conclusions of the study can be summed up as follows:

o The Arab World has witnessed an active political arena since 1990s; top-down political reforms and liberalization attempts were introduced. However, such openings were restricted, interrupted, and didn't approach democratization. They intended to consolidate rather than transform authoritarian regimes.

o Arab regimes seized the wide constitutional authorities they enjoy and the weakness of the opposition groups to introduce successful strategies that enable them to completely dominate the domestic political arena.

o The Islamists groups are the most serious potential threat to authoritarian regimes. They are very popular, well structured, and less corrupted. Nonetheless, most of these groups have chosen to restrict their electoral successes and not to challenge the regimes in order to avoid oppression (Egypt) or to enjoy the privileges of co-optation (Morocco).

o Arab political situation is special but not exceptional. Arab Exceptionalism as well as Islamic Exceptionalism didn't prove evident.

o The international factor failed to prove vital to democratic transformation in the Arab World. The prominent policy makers in the international community prefer pro-west stable, though authoritarian, regimes to the uncertain outcome of a democratic process.

o Regimes' strategies might differ from one case to another because of circumstantial conditions or because of polities' genre (monarchy vs. republic). Still they, most of the time, proved successful.