

WHY IS THERE NO DEMOCRACY IN THE MIDDLE EAST NORTH AFRICA (MENA)?



PUBLIC LECTURE BY

BO ROTHSTEIN

*August Röhss Chair in Political Science
University of Gothenburg, Sweden*

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 16, 1:30 P.M.

| NADOR U. 9, **GELLNER ROOM**

ABSTRACT | The absence of democracy in the Arab-Muslim world is a 'striking anomaly' for democratization scholars. This cannot be seen as caused by religion as such, as there are now several democratic Muslim-majority states. Popular explanations such as values, culture, economic development, natural resources, or colonial legacy have been refuted. Based on Ostrom's approach regarding local groups' ability to establish institutions for 'governing the commons', we present a novel explanation for this puzzle, based on historical variations in institutions for financing religion. In Northwestern Europe, religion and secular services managed by local religious institutions have been financed 'from below', creating local systems for semi-democratic representation, transparency, and accountability. In the Arab-Muslim region, religion and local secular services have been financed 'from above', by private foundations lacking systems for representation and accountability. It is thus not religion, but how religion has been financed, that explains the lack of democratization in the Arab-Muslim world.

BIO | Bo Rothstein holds the August Röhss Chair in Political Science and is head of the Quality of Government Institute at the Department of Political Science at the University of Gothenburg. His main publications include *Just Institutions Matter: The Moral and Political Logic of the Universal Welfare* and *Social Traps and the Problem of Trust*, both with Cambridge University Press, *The Quality of Government: The Political Logic of Corruption, Inequality and Social Trust* with University of Chicago Press (2011) and *Good Government: The Relevance of Political Science* (ed. with Sören Holmberg) was published by Edward Elgar Press (2013).

ORGANIZED BY THE DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE