# Democracy in the Middle East: a Goal or an Impossibility?

## A Monograph

by

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    Since September 11, democracy has come to dominate the discourse as authoritarian Middle East regimes, even if they are friendly to Western interests, are perceived to be at the root of the existing international state of insecurity. This monograph examines whether democracy is feasible in the Middle East and explores possible recommendations in terms of support to the democratization process in the region. Considering that the limited development of democracy in the Middle East can compare with other developing countries such as in Africa and that some Muslim countries in Asia have achieved democracy, we have to look at a variety of factors that hinder the development of democracy in the region. Factors such as the influence of Islam, modernization, rentier state status, stagnant economies, colonization, the Arab-Israeli conflict and Cold War rivalries constitute internal and external factors affecting successful democratic processes. Based on the evidence presented, seven guiding principles to support democratization in the Middle East were made: manage the expectations and adapt the intervention, rebalance the U.S. foreign policy towards Israel, focus on economic reforms, engage in a dialogue with the Islamic parties, expect a long term commitment, use the position of strength cautiously and design a complementary U.S.-European approach. In conclusion, the contention that the Middle East is ill suited for democracy was not supported by the analysis conducted in this document and therefore belongs in the realm of possibility.

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# Abstract

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Since September 11, democracy has come to dominate the discourse as authoritarian Middle East regimes, even if they are friendly to Western interests, are perceived to be at the root of the existing international state of insecurity. Promoting democracy has been placed at the forefront of Western foreign policies and the debate over which approach to take is very tense. This monograph examines whether democracy is feasible in the Middle East and explores possible recommendations in terms of support to the democratization process in the region.

First, in order to study this question, the difficulty in establishing a universal concept of democracy is illustrated through the examination of different definitions by various scholars. To add to the complexity, the Western and Middle Eastern views of democracy are different in the sense that the West has been strongly influenced by the work of its philosophers who came to the conclusion within their cultural context that democracy must be secular. The Islamic world in contrast, never came to this conclusion; in the end, it seems that whether democracy is or is not compatible with Islamic thinking remains strictly theoretical. The experience of Muslims with democracy would be more related to their environment.

Considering that the limited development of democracy in the Middle East can compare with other developing countries such as in Africa and that some Muslim countries in Asia have achieved democracy, we have to look at other factors that hinder the development of democracy that are common to other states. Factors such as modernization, rentier state status, stagnant economies, colonization, the Arab-Israeli conflict and Cold War rivalries constitute internal and external factors affecting successful democratic processes. The interconnections between these factors inhibit the establishment and maintenance of democracy in the Middle East as both sets of variables feed off each other.

Socio-economic conditions, the choice of institutional design and civic cultures are often cited as necessary prerequisites for democracy. However, it was found that the discussions on this subject were inconclusive as democracy sometimes survives when few of these conditions are fulfilled and it sometimes fails in countries where many of the preconditions are met.

Based on the evidence and analysis presented in this study, seven guiding principles to support democratization in the Middle East were made: manage the expectations and adapt the intervention, rebalance the U.S. foreign policy towards Israel, focus on economic reforms, engage in a dialogue with the Islamic parties, expect a long term commitment, use the position of strength cautiously and design a complementary U.S.-European approach.

Finally, the expectation that democracy could sweep through the Middle East quickly is not supported by the analysis conducted in this paper nor is the contention that the Middle East is ill suited for democracy. It is certainly possible that democratic change will spread in the region over the next twenty years but at the same time there is no guarantee that it will happen everywhere. Democracy promotion is difficult in the Middle East due to a combination of factors that varies from country to country. Considering the complexity of the situation, outside actors will not be the primary determinants of change but they can make positive contributions. They will be able to do so only if they can come up with measures that are adapted to the realities of the problems and challenges of particular countries rather than imposing a template approach to all.

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# INTRODUCTION – Why Democracy for the Middle East?

Decades ago, Western policymakers advocated modernization and development as the answer to the Middle East afflictions. Now, and especially since September 11, democracy has come to dominate the discourse as authoritarian Middle East regimes, even if they are friendly to Western interests, are perceived to be at the root of the existing insecurity. Promoting democracy has therefore been placed at the forefront of western foreign policies and the debate over which approach to take is extremely fierce. Can democracy take root in the Middle East? Some enthusiastically say yes; others suggest that democracy promoters whether they are foreign governments or non-governmental organizations (NGO), should stay out of this issue and restrict themselves to adopting policies more to the region's liking. However, the issue is not that simple. At one extreme, the war in Iraq held the promise that a wave of democracy would be unleashed in the Middle East. The other extreme held the view that the Middle East is really not fit for democracy to take root.

With few exceptions, western-style democratic institutions have failed to make significant progress within Middle Eastern societies as Western-style democracy is extremely difficult to export. The reason being that the road of democracy is always difficult and takes a long time to be achieved. In England, it took centuries. The period between the French Revolution and the real institution of actual democracy in France took one hundred years and Russia took a 70-year detour through totalitarian communism. In light of these experiences, it is essential that we evaluate whether democracies can flourish in the Middle East and explore possible recommendations in terms of support to the democratization process in the region.

This monograph will examine the feasibility of democracy taking root in the Middle East. As an introduction to the subject, the reasons for the need of democratization in that region will be exposed. Why would democracy be necessary in the Middle East? How can democracy improve international peace, stability and security as well as the lives of Middle Easterners? The

basic knowledge required to address these questions relates to first, understanding what is meant by democracy. Various definitions of this term exist and as a starting point to assess the feasibility of democracy in this region, understanding what it entails is critical in situating the problem. Democracy in Middle Eastern countries might not be a carbon copy of Western democracy and expecting democratic institutions as we know them in the West may also be unrealistic. Second, an assessment of the Middle Eastern context will give an appreciation of the challenges and complexities of the problem. A variety of factors will be evaluated so as to get an accurate picture of the current situation. For example, considering the role of Islam in this region, one would expect religion to influence greatly politics in the Middle East and therefore democracy should be evaluated in the context of Islam. In addition, other factors such as culture, sociology and economics have a tendency to affect any nations' political scene and will also be considered. Lastly, once factors having an influence on the democratization of the Middle East have been studied, it becomes possible to examine the relevance of required pre-conditions that would have to exist in the Middle East before democracy has any chance of emerging. The argument that the conditions for democracy do not exist in the Middle East will be analyzed. Finally, possible guiding principles in terms of support to the democratization efforts in the Middle East will be elaborated in light of the study conducted.

Why democracy for the Middle East? A broad range of ways exists in which democratization can affect the regional international system in the Middle East as well as each country's internal situation. Regional stability, development and well being of the people are all perceived as possible achievements in a democratic Middle East. Each of these possibilities will be discussed in this part of the document.

**The positive effects of democracy on regional stability**

In the post-World War II period, the Middle East has been the site of some of the most visible international rivalries. Between 1946 and 1992, nine out of a total of twenty-one interstate

wars occurred among Middle East States. More importantly, four of the five international wars that broke out in the 1980s and 1990s took place in the Middle East.[1] The tumultuous and frustrating escalation of violence between Israelis and Palestinians particularly since 1989, Iraq's sectarian conflict, the continuing violence in Algeria, Somalia and Sudan as well as high level of violence committed by authoritarian governments in practically all states of the region are constant reminders that the Middle East is far from a condition of stable peace. Given the way the international system evolved with the expansion of globalization and the disappearance of superpower rivalries in the late eighties, the Middle East has emerged as a region of international concern. Conflict, violence and repression, particularly in this era of globalization, produce economic and social stagnation that marginalize these countries and causes immense human suffering. Peace and political stability are the basic conditions for economic competitiveness in the global economy.[2] Liberalization of political and economical systems throughout the region could support domestic peace and by extension strengthen regional peace and stability.

There are many reasons for the region's political instability, economic plight, and human suffering. However, the lack of open political systems and heavy-handed authoritarian rule by autocratic governments are limiting these societies' potential for human, economic and social development.[3] A growing body of international relations research indicates that democracies, almost never go to war against each other. "The absence of war between democracies comes as close as anything we have to an empirical law in international relations."[4] Two scholars in international relations, Maoz and Abdolali, generated persuasive evidence that the link between democracy and peace is relevant as they examined the correlation between regime types and

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[1] Zeev Maoz, "Domestic Political Violence, Structural Constraints, and Enduring Rivalries in the Middle East, 1948-1988," in Graham and Tessler, eds, *Democracy, War and Peace in the Middle East,* (Bloomington : Indiana University Press, 1995), 170.

[2] Albrecht Schnabel, "A Rough Journey: Nascent Democratization in the Middle East," in Amin Saikal & Albrecht Schnabel, eds, *Democratization in the Middle East: Experiences, Struggles, Challenges.* (Tokyo; New York : United Nation University Press, 2003), 1.

[3] Ibid, 1.

[4] Ibid, 9.

international conflicts between 1816 and 1976.[5]  In fact, their work provided a theoretical

proposition that conflicts between democratic states are unlikely to lead to international war.  As

such, the direct accountability of democratic leaders to their citizens limits the use of force in

international relations for two reasons.  First, because civilian populations bear the cost of war,

they are normally expected to resist armed conflict between states.  Second, since public support

is imperative to a democratic regime, its leaders will similarly be disinclined to initiate war.  For

these reasons, democratic leaders may be more reluctant to assume the risks of war than the

leaders of states whose citizens have no institutional mechanisms for registering dissent and

holding government accountable.  Hence, according to the logic of this theory, the reported

absence of warfare between democratic states and the possible pacifying effects of democracy

would seem therefore to suggest some hope for resolutions to the Middle East turmoil and its

people.

## The positive effects of democracy on human development

Life expectancy, education and the levels of income are indicators suggesting that

countries with democratic institutions score higher in these areas then authoritarian states,[6] and as

a result provide a fair measure of development.  The poor state of development in the Middle

Eastern states therefore provides ample reasons to encourage democratization. Appendices I, II

and III provides an indication of the Middle Eastern afflictions through measures of the level of

development, per capita income and level of literacy.

The high dependence on the depletion of raw materials, chiefly oil and reliance on

external rents entices these societies to import expertise from outside and hire foreign workers

because it is quick and easy.  However, this rentier economic pattern ends up weakening local

demand for knowledge and kills opportunities for producing locally.  Only a few oil producers in

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[5] Zeev Maoz and Nasrin Abdolali, *Regime Types and International Conflict, 1816-1976*, (Journal of Conflict Resolution 33, March 1989), pp 3-35.

the area – Iran, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Qatar and the Emirates – have enjoyed substantial oil surpluses in the post-1973 period.[7]  The rest remain capital-hungry and with large populations, are plagued by poverty with an income per capita below the US$ 3,000 (Appendix I and II). The rate of illiteracy for all countries of the Middle East except Israel is staggering (Appendix III). The number of scientists and engineers working in research and development in Arab countries is not more than 371 per million citizens.  This is much lower than the global rate of 979 per million.  Approximately 25% of 300,000 first degree graduates from Arab universities in 1995/96 emigrated.  Between 1998 and 2000 more than 15,000 Arab doctors moved abroad.[8]  In addition, experiments with transfer and adoption of technology have neither achieved the desired technological advancement nor yielded attractive return on investments.  The two biggest gaps accounting for this failure have been the absence of effective innovations in knowledge production systems and the lack of rational policies that support an institutional framework and a knowledge based society favorable to development.[9]  At the same time, Middle Eastern countries have not succeeded in becoming important poles of attraction for foreign direct investment (FDI). None of them figure at the top ten FDI-attracting countries in the developing world[10].  Except for Qatar, U.A.E., Bahrain and Kuwait - representing only a minority in the Middle East - and four other countries, all other 48 countries figuring in the high human development group of the United Nations Human Development Report are democracies.[11]  The report shows clearly that in general, for democracies, the life expectancy, education and GDP per capita is significantly higher then in non democratic countries.

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[6] United Nations Human Development Index, http://hdr.undp.org/statistics/data/
[7] Fred Halliday,  Islam *and the Myth of Confrontation: Religion and Politics in the Middle East*. (New York: I.B. Tauris & Co Ltd, 2003), 34.
[8] United Nations Development Program, *Arab Human Development Report 2003: Building a Knowledge Society.* (Amman, Jordan: National Press, 2003), 4.
[9] Ibid, 5.
[10] Ibid, 6.
[11] United Nations Human Development Index.

Finally, according to the Arab Human Development Report 2003, "Political instability and fierce struggles for access to political positions in the absence of an established rule for the peaceful rotation of power – in short, democracy – impede the growth of knowledge in Arab soil."[12]  The overall impact of this is that political loyalties takes precedence over efficiency, knowledge, development, societal needs and well-being of the people.  The race for power shackles active minds and extinguishes any hope for innovation keeping Middle Eastern countries in an endless loop of authoritarian regimes, poverty, corruption and violence.  Without peaceful and effective political channels for dealing with injustices at the country, regional and global levels, various movements identifying themselves as religious have resorted to restrictive interpretations, violence and terrorism as means of political activism.  Democracy could provide the people with another alternative in the form of a voice into the governance of their future.

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[12] United Nations Development Program, 11.

# CHAPTER 1 - Democracy: The Difficulty in Establishing a Universal Concept

In order to situate the problem in its context, this chapter examines the term "democracy" as it is a classic example of contested concepts and there are profound disagreements amongst the experts about a universal definition. For the purpose of this work, it is therefore important to understand the diversity of approaches. In turn, this variety of approaches taken to evaluate the progress made in the region toward democratization, explains why some contributors are more optimistic while others are less optimistic about the region's future for both democratization and peace.

"Democracy seems especially difficult to define because it is not a given or a thing in itself but rather a form of government and a process of governance that changes and adapts in response to circumstances."[13] There is a significant disparity among conceptual frameworks about whether democracy is simply an institutional arrangement for choosing rulers or an end in itself, about how to measure and evaluate democracy and democratic behavior, and about the importance of prerequisites for democracy. Seeking a universally acceptable meaning under these circumstances is probably futile since the disagreements appear to be irreconcilable. Any universal definition is likely to ignore differences in detail or to need constant redefinition and adjustment. Moreover, "since all democracies are more or less imperfect, finding a single definition that indicates precisely where "more or less" becomes "either/or" (a democracy or not a democracy) seems impossible."[14]

Recognizing that there are differences in concepts and accepting the fact that there is more than one "ideal" model for democracy is critical in understanding the complexity of a democratization process and measuring its effectiveness. This is also key to peaceful relations

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[13] Rothstein, in Graham and Tessler, eds, 66.

[14] Kenneth A. Bollen, *Political Democracy: Conceptual and Measurement Traps,* (Studies in Comparative International Development 25, no.1, Spring) pp 7-24.

among emerging democracies and to relations between them and established democracies. According to Albrecht Schnabel, an eminent political scientist who has worked extensively on peacekeeping and peacemaking issues with the United Nations and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, "…given the positive connotation which the term democracy has acquired, each country tends to claim that the way its institutions and rules are structured is the most democratic…while the others, especially one's enemy's and competitors, are accused of having some inferior type of democracy or another kind of regime altogether."[15] Such arrogance breeds resentment, which in the long run breeds violence and resistance towards Western attempts to bring democracy to the Middle East.[16] Regimes such as Syria, Iran, Libya or Iraq's Muqtada Al-Sadr and Afghanistan's Talibans tend to gather the support of their people by blaming the West for their afflictions and by attributing imperialistic motives behind the promotion of democracy. For example, the current attempts in Afghanistan and Iraq to bring democracy have been more difficult then initially expected. The Coalition military forces entering these countries for global security reasons and liberate the population from tyranny, although well received at the start of the invasion, have since then, met countless challenges to bring peace, security and lay the foundations for democracy.

When assessing whether a country is a democracy or not is therefore highly dependent on the meanings and expectations of what constitute democracy. In other words, democracies have different forms, structures and philosophical bases which they inherited from their history, culture and political and ideological systems. Middle Eastern intellectuals may see democracy as a means to achieve equality. The citizens may see it as a means to end repression and facilitate prosperity. The ruling elites and upper class may see it as a threat to economic growth and their control over the population. Western scholars may see it as the most effective way to resolve internal dispute peacefully and the policy-makers community may see it as means to end

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[15] Schnabel, in Saikal & Schnabel, eds, 5.

international wars or to increase the numbers of "like-minded" states in the international system. Each interpretation could be true in different circumstances and different policy choices may result from the different meanings, types or structures democracy can take.

Tom Najem, a scholar in Middle East politics and presently the President of the Canadian Committee of the Middle East Studies Association, described democratization as a movement "from less accountable to more accountable government, from less competitive (or non-existent) elections to freer and fairer competitive elections; from severely restricted to better protected civil and political rights, and from weak (or non-existent) autonomous associations in civil society to more autonomous and more numerous associations."[17]  In summary, he defined a process of democratization as one of progress in four areas: accountability, elections, civil and political rights and autonomous associations.  This definition represents in fact a minimalist definition of democracy which would correspond to a country in which nearly everyone can vote, elections are freely contested, the chief executive is chosen by popular vote and civil rights and liberties are substantially guaranteed.

For Kamel Abu Jaber a Jordanian scholar of political science, author of numerous papers and publications and ex-foreign minister of Jordan, universal suffrage and free elections are only rudimentary components of democracy.[18]  These must be enhanced by constitutional limitations on the government, the rule of law and the protection of human rights as some forms of popular representation and electoral legitimacy are far from sufficient to proclaim democratic governance and are often used to practice a concealed authoritarianism.  According to Amid Saikal, a renowned Middle East scholar and head of the Centre for Middle Eastern and Central Asian Studies at the Australian National University in Canberra, only when supplemented with constitutionally enshrined separation of powers, political pluralism, and individual rights and

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[16] Ibid, 5.
[17] Najem, Ibid, 185.
[18] Jaber, Ibid, 127.

freedoms can a minimalist concept serve as the basis for the development of a liberal, pluralist, tolerant and stable society.[19]

Etel Solingen, a scholar in international politics from the University of California, used the more inclusive concept of "polyarchy" with the following seven pillars: elected officials; free and fair elections; inclusive suffrage; right to run for office; freedom of expression; alternative information protected by law; and associational autonomy.[20] This definition is still very limited and focuses mainly on structures. In addition, these requirements are relatively easy to meet even without significant loss of power for the political leaders.

Majid Tehranian, a professor of international relations at the University of Hawaii specializing in the Middle East studies, had a much more advanced and comprehensive concept of democracy. He pointed to four main elements: political, economic, social and cultural democracy. First, he argued that political democracy consists of popular sovereignty; universal suffrage; protection of life, liberty, and pursuit of happiness; majority rule and minority rights; fair representation and periodic elections; peaceful succession; and direct voting (referenda) on critical issues. Second, he asserted that economic democracy features protection of property; free markets; free competition; government regulation of trade and investment to ensure absence of monopolies, presence of fair trade standards, competition, health and environment. Thirdly, he posited that social democracy means social security for the unemployed, the retired, pregnant women and children; and provision of public health, education and welfare. Finally, he claimed that cultural democracy requires universal education; access to means of communication; freedom of identity, speech, assembly, religion, language, privacy and lifestyle.[21] This is a very comprehensive array of key components to achieve democracy but it is also very demanding.

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[19] Saikal, Ibid, 167.
[20] Solingen, Ibid, 45.
[21] Tehranian, Ibid, 100.

If one were to adopt a minimalist definition, it could be argued that Iran, Egypt, Jordan and Kuwait have already made some progress towards democracy. They have succeeded in establishing electoral and representative process of popular legitimation where citizens are given the opportunity to participate. Meanwhile, closed regime such as Syria and Libya, have also adopted these processes although as a façade, to justify their claim to power and authority. A minimalist definition of democracy must therefore be the beginning, not the end, of a democratization process. This form of democracy can be utilized to either lay the foundation for building a healthy democracy or to construct and sustain authoritarian systems. In the Middle East, the latter have been most prevalent.

It is important to keep in mind that all serious attempts at democratizing politics and society in most Middle Eastern states whether Egypt or Iran or Algeria, have ended up, at best, as concealed authoritarianism since they have not ventured beyond the minimalist position. Therefore, universal suffrage and free elections supplemented with constitutionally enshrined separation of powers, political pluralism, and individual rights and freedoms would be the next evolutionary step towards democracy. Once this has been achieved, it becomes then possible to venture further into the much more comprehensive system described by Tehranian. "Democratization is a journey, a process; it is not a condition. Each society's journey is, and should be, unique to its own historical, cultural, economic and political environment."[22] A universal concept of democracy applicable to the Middle East is therefore impossible to define as there is a wide range of disparity between its societies. The democratic system suitable for each of these societies will have to be developed in accordance with their own historical, cultural, economic and political environment.

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[22] Schnabel, Ibid, 2.

# CHAPTER 2 – Islam and Democracy: Contradictory or Compatible Concepts?

There are discussions and often disagreements about the compatibility of democracy with Islam.  Although stereotypes are sometimes advanced, questions about the influence of religion are very relevant to the study of democracy in the Middle East.  There is a strong historic connection between religion, religious movements and politics in that region reflecting Islam's character as a religion of laws pertaining to societal organization as well as individual morality.  Mecca had come under Muslim control through military conquest under the leadership of Prophet Mohammed.  As a result, in Islam, politics and religion were merged at its origin.  Currently, major tensions within societies and in international relations are created by different understandings of the threats and possibilities of democratic participation by religious movements.  Leaders and policy makers, who support democracy in principle, often fear that the actual operation of democratic process could result in authoritarian rule by an elected majority, in other words by an Islamic regime.  The Islamic Revolution in Iran in 1979, the electoral victories of the "Front Islamique du Salut" (FIS) in Algeria in 1990-91 and by the Hamas in 2006 are good examples of this.  Implicit to these fears from the West is the assumption that an Islamic state, even if democratically established, would be transformed into an undemocratic theocracy.  This chapter examines the compatibility of Islam with democracy.

## From "fundamentalism" to political Islam, the various forms Islamism can take

If we are to appreciate Islam's changing role and manifestations in Middle East politics, it is essential to understand what is meant by the term "Islamism."  The task should be relatively easy as there has been a considerable amount of academic and policy-oriented literature published since the 1970s.  However, the public debate thus far has been trapped into a fraction of that

expertise.[23]  There has been very little appreciation for the fact that terms such as "Islamic

fundamentalists" or "Islamic radicals" are artificial constructs usually elaborated by outsiders and

have been thrown around lightly, often without the understanding of their connotations and

limitations.

Broadly defined, "an Islamist is anyone who believes that the *Quran* and the *Hadith*

(traditions of the Prophet's life, actions, and word) contain important principles about Muslim

governance and society, and who tries to implement these principles in some way."[24]  This

definition includes radical and moderate, violent and peaceful, traditional and modern, democratic

and antidemocratic.  As a result, there is a wide range of Islamic movements which differ in

various degrees on social make-up, structure, ideology and programs. At one extreme, it includes

Osama bin Laden and Al Qaeda; on the other, the ruling moderate Justice and Development Party

(AKP) in Turkey, which seeks membership with the European Union and cooperate with

Washington on various issues.  In fact, Islamism can embrace both the political Islam view who

believes that Islamic tenets are compatible with the modern values of democracy and freedom and

the fundamentalist view that have had a historical monopoly over the right to interpret Islam and

its tenets.[25]

Although Islamism also includes the *fundamentalist* view, it does not equate to it.  There

has been much confusion over the term "fundamentalism" which implies a return to the past in

recapturing the root of Islamic religion.  There is also the implication that other readings of Islam

are illegitimate since they supposedly neglect traditionally accepted concepts for innovations that

are often imports from non-Islamic societies.  Finally, fundamentalism generally urges passive

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[23] Guilain Denoeux, *The Forgotten Swamp: Navigating Political Islam.* (Journal of Middle East Policy Council, Vol IX, June 2002, No.2), 1.

[24] Graham Fuller, "Islamists and Democracy," in Carothers and Ottaway, eds, *Uncharted Journey: Promoting Democracy in the Middle East.* (Washington D.C.: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace: Brooking Institution Press, 2005), 38.

[25] Ali R. Abootalebi, *Islam, Islamists, and Democracy* (Middle East Review of International Affairs, Vol 3, No 1, Mar 1999), 1.

adherence to literal reading of scriptures and does not advocate changes in social order.[26]

However the use of the expression *Islamic fundamentalism* may be inadequate since the word

*fundamentalism* originated from American Protestantism at the beginning of the twentieth

century, a cultural context very removed from Islam. The term comes with certain connotations

that may be misleading when applied to Islam. For instance, what was supposed to set Protestant

fundamentalists apart from Protestants was their convictions that the Bible was the true word of

God and that it should be understood literally. [27] All believing Muslims, however, are expected to

regard the *Quran* as the literal, infallible Word of God as it is a tenet at the core of Islam. In that

respect, therefore, all Muslims are *fundamentalists*. And yet, most Muslims are hardly

fundamentalists in the sense of believing that their behavior should be guided exclusively by

religious scriptures. Nor do they assume that these scriptures should be understood literally or

open to one interpretation. In this respect, the concept of *fundamentalism* when applied to Islam

confuses more than it explains.

To bring more complexity to the issue of Islamic fundamentalism, one must consider that

there is no single monolithic fundamentalist movement. In fact, nowhere more so than in the

Middle East is fundamentalist thought so diverse and its modes of expression so extremely

varied.[28] In addition, Islamic fundamentalists do not necessarily claim to have a political project

and therefore do not necessarily enter the political arena. So the word *fundamentalist* is not well

suited to analyze the projects that use Islam to wage political battles. It thus becomes important

to introduce the words Salafism, Wahhabism and Islamism (or Political Islam) to bring more

clarity to the discourse.

Salafism or *Al-Salafiyya* in Arabic, is a current of thought which emerged during the

second half of the nineteenth century. Salafism urged believers to return to the pure,

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[26] Ibid, 1.
[27] Denoeux, 2.
[28] Ibid, 3.

unadulterated form of Islam practiced by Mohammed and his companions. It rejected any

practice, belief or behavior not directly supported by the Quran or for which there was no

precedent in Mohammed's acts and sayings.[29] Salafi thinkers also refused the idea that Muslims

should accept blindly the interpretations of religious texts developed by theologians over the

centuries. Instead they insisted on the individual believer's right to interpret those texts for

himself through the practice of *ijtihad* (independent reasoning).[30] Salafism then developed as a

broad philosophy and to this day there is no single Salafi ideology or organization. It has

expressed itself in multiple movements that have reflected specific historical circumstances and

local conditions. Most have been primarily intellectual-cultural undertakings that generally have

escaped the political arena.[31] However, in the past 20 years, one particular brand of Salafi

ideology, the Saudi variant known as Wahhabism has known particular success.

Wahhabism was named after the eighteenth- century religious reformer Mohammed Ibn

Abd al-Wahhab (1703-1791) who preached in central Arabia. Abd al-Wahhab was incensed by

what he saw as the laxity and moral corruption of the society in which he lived. In his view, that

society had turned its back on Islam. Idolatry, superstitions, the cult of saints and even the

veneration of trees and stones were ascendant in Arabia at the time and Abd al-Wahhab was

determined to fight such heresies. Consequently he strove to eradicate from Islam anything that

was not consistent with a strict, literal interpretation of the *Quran* and the *Sunna*.[32] What

eventually emerged was a particularly puritan and ultra-orthodox interpretation of Islam obsessed

with the need for purity.

But according to Guilain Denoeux, a scholar in Middle Eastern studies, Wahhabism

would likely have remained a marginal doctrine within the Islamic thought had it not been for the

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[29] Ibid, 5.
[30] Olivier Roy, *The Failure of Political Islam.* (Cambridge, Massachusetts : Harvard University Press, 1994), 33.
[31] Denoeux, 6.
[32] Ibid, 5.

alliance that Abd al-Wahhab struck with the house of Saud in 1745.  When Abd al-Azziz Ibn

Saud succeeded in unifying the tribes of Arabia under his control into what became the Kingdom

of Saudi Arabia in 1932, Wahhabism became the country's state-sanctioned ideology and code of

behavior.  For 40 years, Wahhabism remained for the most part confined to Saudi Arabia.  But

that situation changed following the 1973 oil boom.   With this great source of income, the Saudi

regime engaged in a major effort to spread Wahhabi ideology overseas partly by conviction and

partly to counter ideologies that it perceived a threat to its national security.

Interestingly, a phenomenon which was initially confined within a particular society, was

developing external aspirations.  Saudi money was instrumental in the building of thousands of

Mosques, Islamic centers and *madrassas* (religious schools) from Lahore to London and Morocco

to Malaysia.  Following the Iranian revolution in 1979, the Saudi authorities started to promote

Wahhabism as a counter-weight to the new Iranian regime's stated goal of exporting Shiite

revolution overseas.  At the end of the same year, the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan provided

new unprecedented opportunities for Saudi Arabia to spread Wahhabi views especially in

Pakistan.  Again, according to Denoeux, the Taliban phenomenon, which owes much to Saudi

support was born out of this process.

Although the label " Islamism" is relatively recent,  the origins of today's Islamist

thought and organizations can be traced back to the Society of the Muslim Brotherhood, created

by the schoolteacher Hasan al-Banna in Egypt in 1928 and the Jamaat-I Islami of Pakistan,

established by Abul-Ala Maududi in 1941.[33]   In Egypt, Sayyid Qutb and Hasan al-Banna, fought

for the educational, moral, and social reform of Egyptian society.  In India, Maududi opposed

both secular and religious nationalism and argued for the Islamization of society as an alternative

to nationalism.  During the 1970s, the rise of movements and ideologies drawing on terms,

symbols, and events from the Islamic tradition gave birth to movements with views to articulate a

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[33] Roy, 35.

distinctive political agenda; hence the expression "political Islam" which is usually seen as synonymous with Islamism.

Today's Islamists preach a return to the *Quran*, the *Sunna* and the *sharia* and three points clearly differentiate them from the fundamentalists: the place of politics, the *sharia* and the issue of women. They consider that the society will be Islamized only through social and political actions: it is therefore necessary to leave the mosque. Contrary to the fundamentalist view, the Islamists perceive economy and social relationships not as subordinate activities that grow out from pious acts or the *sharia*, but are considered as key areas. Except in Iran, the Islamists movements are not led by clerics but by young secular intellectuals who claim to be the successors to a class of *ulamas* who have compromised themselves by serving the powers in place and accepting modernity which the Islamists categorically reject.

The two other issues dividing Islamists and fundamentalists are the roles of the *Sharia* and women. Islamists generally tend to favor the education of women and their participation in social and political life: Islamists women militate, study, and have the right to work but while wearing the chador. For example, the Iranian constitution recognizes the right to vote for women without provoking much debate among constituents.[34] Islamist movements insist less on the application of the *sharia*, than do the fundamentalists. For Islamists, Islam is more than the simple application of the *sharia*, it is an all encompassing ideology that must first transform society in order that the *sharia* be established almost automatically. The Islamic nature of the society is more important than the strict application of the *sharia*. It is also accepted that a society may move beyond its application even to the point of innovation.

These three elements, the place of politics, women and *sharia*, are good criteria for distinguishing Islamists (Muslim Brotherhood, Imam Khomeini) from fundamentalists (Saudi Arabia, Taliban, the Algerian FIS). In addition, the fundamentalist thought and power are usually

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[34] Ibid, 38.

closely tied to the political authorities and consequently ill-disposed toward the "subversive" ideas of Islamists. For example, the religious establishment in both Saudi Arabia and Egypt has been used by these countries respective governments to rebut the arguments of the Islamists on religious grounds.[35] On the other end, Islamists perceive themselves as a sociopolitical movement, founded on an Islam defined as much in terms of a political ideology as in terms of a religion.

Not surprisingly, the recent decades have therefore witnessed a strong Islamic resurgence in response to deteriorating economic conditions and a loss of faith in the idea that the existing regimes would improve conditions and act fairly. As a result, this has generated massive frustration and discontent among the people. In some places, this discontent has manifested itself as a demand for fundamentalism, in other places as a demand for democracy, and in others as a mixture of the two. The Islamic governments of Iran and Sudan, for example, remain somewhat isolated in the international community and face tremendous domestic problems that have led to popular discontent and even uprisings. Saudi Arabia, a self-proclaimed Islamic state, while the monarchy claims legitimacy through fundamentalist Wahhabi Islam, denies the population fundamental political and civil rights that are respected in Islam.[36] In addition, the dissatisfaction has been aggravated by the humiliating Arab defeats at the hands of the Israelis, the "modern democratic Jewish" state supported by Western powers. Israel has hence become a symbol of Arab defeats and the explanation of too many failures in the Middle East. Given their significantly different conditions, Middle Eastern societies have experienced the Islamic resurgence in different ways. However, the common variable is the fact that this dissatisfaction has not been able to express itself in the political arena due to the repressive nature of the regimes in place.

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[35] Denoeux, 6.
[36] Abootalebi, 3.

Much of this activism has found a voice in Political Islam or Islamic movements. As the lower strata of the society (young and religious) gained access to the cities, literacy and the media, their Islamists leaders have succeeded in best articulating their political aspirations. After all, Islamists are more likely to be engineers, physicians or agronomists than clerics. Unlike clerics, they did not go through formal religious training. As Islamists have assumed the role of the major opposition movement in most of the region, the greater becomes the attraction to democracy that would likely grant them a dominant voice in initial elections. Interestingly, mainstream Islamists in the twentieth century were the first to widely break with the clerical concept that "oppression is better than anarchy" and to demand that rulers must indeed be just and good Muslims, free of corruption or misrule. In this view, if rulers failed to deliver justice, they could and should be legitimately overthrown. As a result, Islamists have developed new regard for some aspects of Western democratic practice that include check and balances and instrumentalities for getting rid of unwanted and illegitimate rulers.[37]

Would Islamists still embrace democratization if they did not see themselves as the primary beneficiaries? Islamists in power in the Middle East – Sudan, Iran, Palestinian territories and former Taliban's Afghanistan- have not shown serious commitment to democracy. Although Iran has shown encouraging progress in holding honest elections, they restricted the candidates permitted to run. In these cases, Islamists behaved like most regimes across the region: they are reluctant to give up power. However, in all three of these cases, Islamists came into power through revolution, military coup and civil war. Any party that gains power by these means is unlikely to open up the system to greater democracy. The real test of Islamist commitment towards democracy will come when they win power through democratic elections. The democratically elected government of Hamas in Palestine is not fairing well presently due to its violent agenda and international pressure on the regime. In addition, it came into power due to

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[37] Fuller, in Carothers and Ottaway, eds, 43.

the Fatah's failure to represent the Palestinians' interests and corruption within the party.  It will be interesting to observe how the next elections and transition between governments proceed if other elections there is.

The debate among Islamists themselves be it in Iran, the Sudan, Egypt, Algeria, Saudi Arabia or elsewhere remains over the old question: how to reconcile the tenets of Islam with the modern notions of democracy, liberty, justice and gender equality.

## Western view of democracy: the necessity of secularism

The Western perception of democracy is deeply rooted in the works of Western philosophers over the past 2,500 years.  Understanding the way Western thoughts have evolved over the years is critical in realizing how the West perceives democracy and how difficult it becomes to accept other forms of democracy which might be based on a totally different philosophical foundation.

The philosophical debate in the West over the efficiency of democracy as a political system can be traced back to the times of Athens, Plato and Aristotle.  Although qualifying Athens as a democracy is questionable, Aristotle's idea was that "the ideal city is a community in which all citizens participate as equals, each having received from the city the same education, and all sharing a single conception of well-being."[38]  In examining the various forms of political system, Aristotle was convinced that the correct forms of government were kingship, aristocracy and politeia (republic) while their corresponding defective regimes were tyranny, oligarchy and democracy.  However, he remained deeply aware of the way in which the mutual hatred of rich and poor corrupts public life.  His assumption that democracy is inherently corrupt rests on his allegation that in cities like Athens, the poor develop a class consciousness that undermines their capacity to treat the wealthy in a fair way and vice versa.  In the end, he remained pessimistic

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[38] Steven M. Cahn, *Classics of Political and Moral Philosophy*.  (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 181.

about the chances of achieving any of the three correct political systems. Political systems must therefore make the best out of bad materials: they must learn to make oligarchies and democracies less uniformly oligarchical or democratic.[39]

The English philosopher, Thomas Hobbes (1588-1679) who had a significant influence on Western European thoughts, argued for absolute sovereignty. In his views, human beings are predominantly self-interested and would inevitably come into conflict with one another. In order to remedy to such chaos, Hobbes asserted that a government run by a sovereign holding absolute power would ensure stability for the nation. Although in his view, a nation did not require that sovereignty be held only by an absolute monarchy, he conceded that sovereignty could be invested in a small number of people, constituting an oligarchy or in all people, constituting a democracy. Hobbes is also known as a highly controversial figure in his time for his views on free will and religion which were perceived by the larger population as atheistic and heretical.

The place of religion in relation to politics was further developed by another English philosopher, John Locke (1632-1704) where in his view, religion is each individual's business like finance, health and family life are. These private matters are beyond society's rightful reach and have no real impact on the process of securing our rights. Therefore, according to Locke, religion does not fall within the scope of government authority.[40]

The very influential French philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778), developed the notion of a society based on the concept of general will. He argued that the parties to the social compact treat each other as equals, both in the institution of equal citizenship and in the regulating of conduct for the common good. To institutionalize and sustain the supremacy of general will, Rousseau proposed a democratic system. Citizens themselves are to assemble regularly to reaffirm their social bonds, evaluate the performance of their executive and choose the fundamental laws that will best advance their common good. Rousseau however remained

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[39] Kraut, Ibid, 181.

very aware of the risks with such a concept: "There is no Government so subject to civil wars and internal agitations as the Democracy because there is non which tends so strongly and continually to change its form nor demands more vigilance and courage in order to be maintained in its own form."[41]  As for secularism, Rousseau was adamant, "whatever destroys social unity is worthless. All institutions which place man in contradiction with himself are worthless."[42]  According to him, this precludes the presence of a national religion and one should tolerate all those which tolerate the others, so far as their dogmas have nothing contrary to the duties of the citizen. Religion therefore remains a personnel matter separate from the State.

In Western European experience, secularism became a fundamental and necessary component of democracy.  Although the Christian church had been a distinct institution before its association with the political authority of the Roman Empire in the fourth century, and while it continued to dominate sociopolitical life for many years after the decline of the empire, secular rulers generally challenged and reduced the church's influence because of the oppressive coercive authorities the church had supported.  "What we called struggles between state and church were often purely political conflicts between two states, an old clerical state and a secular state."[43]  For both practical and theological reasons, the result in Western Europe was therefore a separation of church and state whereas the church deals with individual and spiritual matters and the state looks after politics and public affairs.

## Islam: can it absorb democratic practice?

In Islamic history, however, no such separation was ever experienced.  At the beginning of his career, Mohammed had been a private individual struggling first against indifference and then the hostility of the rulers.  During his exile in Medina, he himself became a ruler, wielding

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[40] Simmons, Ibid, 460.
[41] Rousseau, Ibid, 549.
[42] Ibid, 562.
[43] Al-Suwaidi, in Garnham and Tessler, eds., 86.

political and military as well as religious authority. After an eight-year struggle against the pagan rulers of Mecca, he crowned his career by conquering Mecca and establishing the Islamic faith in place.[44] Religion and politics were ultimately bound together. Historically, secularism and the privatization of religion are therefore alien to Muslim conception. They have continued to assume that only a religious leader can provide good government for the Muslim community and that the main function of an Islamic government is to ensure obedience to God's law as explained in the *Quran* and the *Hadith* (the sayings and doings of the Prophet Mohammed).[45] "A politically developed Islamic society is a lawful society. Rulers and the ruled alike are governed by the s*haria*, as interpreted and applied by the learned scholars of Islam, the *ulama*, and the *fuqaha* (the jurists)."[46] Consequently, the religious sphere is clearly political and the political sphere is deeply religious.

It is therefore essential that, when referring to developing democracy in the Middle East, the approach include the recognition that Muslims do not consider religion to be a private activity and the issue of secularism becomes predominant in the debate. This is probably the main distinction between Western and Muslim conceptions of democracy. According to Egyptian-American legal scholar Kahled Abou El Fadl, "the Islamist arguments against secular democracy turn on the question of sovereignty."[47] Democratic government or human laws replaces divine sovereignty or the *sharia*(divine law) and therefore cannot be considered consistent with Islam. According to him, such argument is faulty. It is used by people who want to distinguish themselves from the West; if Western government is based on popular sovereignty, then many Islamists insist that Islamic government cannot be. Although the notion of divine sovereignty is unassailable in Islam, it is critical to distinguish between God's eternal and immutable will and

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[44] Lewis, Bernard, *The Middle East: A Brief History of the Last 2,000 years*. (New York: Touchstone), 53.
[45] Al-Suwaidi, 86.
[46] Ibid, 86.

human efforts to articulate that will into practical political structure and representation. In other words, "Democracy… offers the greatest potential for promoting justice and protecting human dignity, without making God responsible for human injustice or the degradation of human beings by another."[48] By recognizing the human responsibility for managing the government, divine sovereignty remains intact. Peter Berger, one of the most important proponents of secularization theory in the 1960s, recently concluded that "the whole body of literature by historians and social scientists loosely labeled "secularization theory" is essentially mistaken."[49] Furthermore, the concept of *shura* (consultation) could be interpreted as a democratic foundation for democracy in the Middle East since it demands open debate among both the *ulema* and the community at large on issues that concern the public.[50]

As for pluralism, it is rooted in the *Quran*'s explicit acceptance of religious' diversity: "For each of you [religious communities: Jews, Christians, Muslims] we have appointed a law and a ritual. If God had willed it, he could have made you all one religious community. But [he has not] so that he may test you in what he has given you. So compete with one another in good works."[51] The Sunna, established by Prophet Muhammed also confirms this acceptance of pluralism. When the newly formed Muslim community moved from Mecca to Medina to escape religious persecution, the Prophet dictated a constitution to guide relations between the different religious communities. "The Jews… are a community along with the believers. To the Jews their religion and to the Muslim theirs."[52] The constitution confirms the diversity of tribes and each group were free to practice their own religion.

Based on the *Quran* and the example of the Prophet, Islamic legal scholars institutionalized religious freedom. This was conceived through a contract between Muslim and

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[47] Tamara Sonn, "Islam and Modernity", in Hunter and Malik, eds, *Modernization, Democracy and Islam*. (Westport, Conn : Preager Publishers, 2005), 77.
[48] Ibid, 79.
[49] Voll, in Hunter and Malik, eds, 89.
[50] Abootalebi, 3.

non-Muslim communities (*dhimmis*).  The basis of this contract was the recognition by the *dhimmis* of the supremacy of Islam and the dominance of the Muslim state.  Their acceptance of this contract was symbolized by certain social restrictions and the payment of a tax in return for security of life and property, protection against external enemies, freedom of worship and a very large autonomy in the conduct of their affairs.[53]  Social restrictions included that they could not testify before Muslim courts, they were not free to marry Muslim women, though Muslim men could marry Christian or Jewish women, they were subject to restrictions on their dress on which they were required to wear distinguishing signs and they could repair old places of worship but not build new ones.  Although these restrictions were not always strictly enforced and Islam maintained a certain form of pluralism.

According to Islamic thinkers Al-Ghannouchi, Schumpeter and Khatami, democracy means popular sovereignty, political equality, representative government and majority rule.  None of these entails absolute secularism, skepticism, materialism or utilitarianism.  Hence there is no necessity, from an Islamic point of view, to reject democracy.  Democracy is simply a method of making political decisions.  "It does not dictate the content of the decision."[54]  If a Muslim society elects to live in an Islamic way, then competition, opposition and debate will take place within specified limits established by a national consensus on the essentials of the Islamic regime, so that no threat to the integrity of the Islamic society will be posed by these political processes and procedures.  Once the binding Islamic constitutional framework is established, political activities can proceed in the familiar democratic manner, allowing for pluralism, opposition and power contestation.  Yet, it is important to point out that these scholars represent a very liberal Islamist view and base their arguments on interpretations that are very difficult for

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[51] Sonn, in Hunter and Malik, eds, 74.

[52] Ibid, 74.

[53] Lewis, *The Middle East: A Brief History of the Last 2,000 years*, 210.

[54] Raja Bahlul, "Democracy without Secularism?" in John Bunzl, eds, *Islam, Judaism and the Political role of Religions in the Middle East*. (Gainsville: University Press of Florida, 2004), 102.

the commoner to grasp. Moreover, many conclude that the core values that these liberals attribute to Islam come from the West. The result is that this outlook represents only minorities in the Middle East.

An empirical study conducted in Algeria and Morocco examined the influence of Islam on attitudes toward democracy through the analysis of public opinion data.[55] The study drew upon a cross-national opinion survey carried out in Morocco and Algeria in late 1995 and early 1996 and was based on random samples of 1,000 households representatives of large heterogeneous populations. The research team included 15 social scientists of three different academic disciplines, from Tunisia, Algeria, Morocco and the United States. The group met regularly over a period of three years to develop and refine the methodology and later to exchange on the analysis. Finally, extensive care was taken in training the interviewers. The evidence presented in the study suggests that Islam is not the obstacle to democratization. Further, it suggests that it may be economic concerns that discourage support for democracy, rather than the broad application of Islamic codes to public affairs. The analysis seemed to indicate that this is because democracy is perceived to include an economic opening that will increase inequality and is therefore less attractive to those whose economic concerns are more pronounced.

To conclude, there must be an attempt to distinguish democracy from secularism and all other ideological items which have become entangled to the extreme in Western practice. Many contemporary Muslim scholars such as Rachid Ghannoushi, Hasan Turabi, Khurshid Ahmad, Fathi Osman, Khaled Abou el-Fadl, Ziauddin Sardar and Shaikh Yusuf al-Qaradawi believe that a government does not have to be secular to protect religious pluralism, but it has to be pluralist to be Islamic[56]. They are convinced that Islam and democracy are not just compatible; rather, their association is inevitable because an Islamic political system is based on the *shura*. Further, they

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[55] Tessler, in Saikal & Schnabel, eds, 104.

propose a mode of democracy without or beyond secularism. Freed from secularism, democracy becomes available as a means for Muslim societies to manage their political life. Finally, analysis of the study performed in Morocco and Algeria demonstrated that Islam in itself is not an obstacle to democratization. Indeed, a democratic, civic and participant political culture may be necessary for a mature democracy to take root but nothing in the study's finding suggested that the emergence of such political culture is discouraged by the attachments of Middle Easterners to Islam.

## Comparing arguments: is Islam compatible with democracy?

So far as democracy is concerned, both Muslim and non-Muslim observers assert that democracy is and is not compatible with Islam. Western scholars such as Mark Tessler, Samuel Huntington, Bernard Lewis and Elie Kedourie, assert that democracy and Islam are incompatible. These scholars examine the *Quran*, the Islamic law and tradition to textually demonstrate that Islam is not compatible with democracy. They show that whereas democracy requires openness, competition, pluralism and tolerance of diversity, Islam, they argue, encourages intellectual conformity, and uncritical acceptance of authority.[57] Islam is also said to be anti-democratic because it vests sovereignty in God, who has revealed clear principles of what is to be encouraged and what is to be proscribed. Human desire then and man-made laws have no place in tampering with these prescriptions and prohibitions. According to Lewis this means that Islam "has to be ultimately embodied in a totalitarian state."[58]

Ironically, this view is strengthened by Muslim *fundamentalists* who similarly argue the incompatibility of Islam and democracy. Iranian born journalist Amir Taheri remarked that contemporary fundamentalist Muslim theoreticians such as Yussuf al-Ayyeri (Al-Qaeda's

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[56] Graham E. Fuller, *The Future of Political Islam*. (Foreign Affairs, Mar-Apr, 2002), pp 48-60.
[57] Tessler, in Saikal & Schnabel, eds, 108.
[58] Bernard Lewis, *The shaping of the Modern Middle East*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), pp 54-56.

ideologist) and Saudi theologian Sheik Muhammad bin Ibrahim al-Jubair warned Muslims against the coming of democracy. The goal of democracy, according to Al-Ayyeri, is to "make Muslims love this world, forget the next world and abandon *jihad*. If established in any Muslim country for a reasonably long time, democracy could lead to economic prosperity, which, in turn, would make Muslims "reluctant to die in martyrdom" in defense of their faith."[59] Al-Jubair for his part refers to the issue of divine sovereignty. "Only one ambition is worthy of Islam. The ambition to save the world from the curse of democracy: to teach men that they cannot rule themselves on the manmade laws. Mankind has strayed from the path of God; we must return to that path or face certain annihilation."[60]

As examined previously in this study, many Muslim scholars (Rachid Ghannoushi, Hasan Turabi, Khurshid Ahmad, Fathi Osman, Khaled Abou el-Fadl, Ziauddin Sardar and Shaikh Yusuf al-Qaradawi) reject the suggestion that Islam is incompatible with democracy. They point out that Islam has many angles and tendencies making an all encompassing characterization of the religion highly unreliable.[61] Shukri Abed reports that there is considerable variation in the interpretations of religious law advanced by Muslim scholars and theologians and that among these are expressions of support for democracy.[62] For his part, Tunisian-born scholar Mohamed Elhachmi Hamdi insists that openness, tolerance and progressive innovation are well represented among traditions associated with the religion, and are therefore entirely compatible with Islam.[63] After all, Protestantism, Catholicism and Confucianism have all in turn been categorized as antidemocratic; currently however, it is widely accepted that they are hospitable to democracy. So the question may not only be about Islam, but about whether any religion is compatible with democracy: "All major religions have authoritarian bases, are patriarchal, have no democratic

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[59] Amir Taheri, *Islam is Incompatible with Democracy*, www.benadorassociates.com/article/4462
[60] Ibid.
[61] Halliday, 116.
[62] Abed, in Graham and Tessler, eds, pp 127-128.

foundation, are dogmatic about what constitutes the truth and do not emphasize reason as a path to God."[64]  But states in the West where Catholicism and/or Protestantism are practiced have evolved in practice, beyond the theoretical framework of the religions.  A certain compromise was stricken between the ideology and the practice and made possible through a social contract between the clergy, the political authority and the public.

The same should apply to Islam since we are not talking about what Islam is, but what Muslims want.  Should Muslim elect to live under a democracy, then this reality will define the relationship between Islam and Democracy.  As Graham Fuller asserts, it becomes possible here to agree that although sovereignty derives from God, "Islam does not specify in any way what form the state should take."[65]

As this discussion suggests, one can find both elements that are and are not compatible with democracy.  This in turns seems to prove that the influence of religion depends on how and by whom it is interpreted.  There is no single or accepted interpretation on many issues.  In addition, serious doubts have been expressed about the motivation of some religious authorities.  As Jamal Al-Suwaidi, an Arab scholar mentions:

"There are numerous examples of *ulama* manipulating Islamic teachings to the advantage of political leaders.  Indeed, the religion has been dominated by the state since its inception and the *ulama* has often played a role that sometimes also has been played by Christian clergy: motivated by political rather than religious considerations, they have offered doctrinal interpretations that are deliberately designed to justify the behavior of political leaders."[66]

For instance, the close ties of the religious establishments of Saudi Arabia and Egypt are using their respective governments as a source of power while repressing the population.  In Iran,

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[63] Mohamed Elhachmi Hamdi, "Islam and Democracy: The Limits of the Western Model."
*Journal of Democracy*, vol. 7, April 1996.
[64] Fuller, in Carothers and Ottaway, eds, 39.
[65] Ibid, 40.
[66] Al-Suwaidi, in Garnham and Tessler, eds, pp 87-88.

in a famous statement issued in 1989, Khomeini noted that in case of conflict between "the logic of the revolution" and strict respect for the sharia, the former should take precedence over the latter. That was his way of manipulating Islamic teachings to his advantage.[67]

Consequently, the debate becomes circular because the conclusion depends more on the context and the perceived meaning of democracy than on analysis. The starting point is therefore the recognition that both democracy and Islam are not easily defined in monolithic terms and the conclusion drawn from those debates are inconclusive.

## Conclusion

Muslim and non-Muslim observers and scholars see no inherent or essential aspect of Islam that would make it incompatible with democracy if the political elites learn to protect and pursue their interests by the rules of the democratic game.[68] Western and Islamic experiences of pluralism have diverged in critical ways. Unlike premodern Western law, classical Islamic law protected pluralism. As a result, the West's modernity stresses the separation of religion and politics, while modern Islam find that separation unnecessary. While pluralism is considered essential to the modern Islamic thought, secularism is not. In the end, it seems that what is and what is not compatible with Islamic thinking are strictly theoretical and very dependent on the context and that the supposed contradictions are more linked to the experience of Muslims with democracy and facts on the ground related to their environment.

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[67] Denoeux, 6.
[68] Voll, in Hunter and Malik, eds, 90.

# Chapter 4 – The Middle East Context: a Complex Interaction of Factors

To date, with the exceptions of Lebanon, Israel and Turkey, no state in the Middle East qualifies as democratic. Nearly all the states in the region possess pro forma parliaments, but few of them wield any significant power or are able to overturn decisions by an unelected executive. While some states such as Jordan, Morocco, Kuwait and Yemen are moving in encouraging directions, others, like Saudi Arabia, challenge the appropriateness of democracy for Muslims, dismiss it as non-Islamic and claim that its own system is based on the *Quran.* Genuine political representation is generally absent and/or severely constrained by the state. As long as they do not challenge the ruling party, selected parties are permitted to exist to affect only a very limited representation.

Why is democracy so weak in the Middle East? This reality brings non-Muslim observers for the most part, to offer the simplistic explanation "Islam is authoritarian" and therefore hostile to the emergence of democratic societies. As seen in the previous chapter, such generalization is inconclusive in explaining the lack of democracy in the Middle East. Considering that the limited development of democracy in the Middle East can compare with other developing countries such as in Africa and that Muslim countries in Asia have achieved democracy, we have to look at other factors that hinder the development of democracy and that are common to other states. This chapter will examine the factors related to the context of the Middle East which rank high in influencing the establishment and maintenance of democracy in the region.

## The impact of modernization on Middle Eastern political systems

After the conclusion of World War I, there have been considerable efforts at modernization in the Middle East. Although limited, a certain level of modernization has been achieved in the region but democratization still has been unsuccessful. According to the

modernization theory, "throughout the world, democratization occurs in the context of continuing modernization and is viewed by many as a vital part of the whole structure of modernity."[69]  In other words, the more modernized a country, the more promising its prospect for the establishment and maintenance of democracy.  However, this line of analysis reflects a very monolithic definition of "modernization/modernity" and "democracy."  It tends to define democracy as practiced in modern Western states which entails that perceive modernity is the end state of modernization.  According to Shmuel Eisenstadt, the resurgence of Islam imposes a reassessment of this theory.  In his view the resurgence of Islam is as much the product of modernization as it is a response to it.[70]

The assumption, in the modernization theory, that democracy is part of the modernity package must therefore be reviewed.  Just as we concluded that secularization is not necessary to democracy, it may also be that modernization may not be an essential element of democracy.  In fact, it may pose a barrier instead of facilitating it.  Nazi Germany, Communist Russia and Japan, although qualified as technologically modern societies, were not democracies.  In the Middle East, the initial modernization programs after the World War I were aimed at creating effective administration structures, modern military capabilities and centralized communication systems.[71] "The cumulative effect of reform and modernization was, paradoxically, not to increase freedom but to reinforce autocracy."[72]  In short, the modern secular state that emerged from the Middle East in the 1960s was not a democracy.  It was a centralized, authoritarian political system even if the political elite framed their policies in democratic terms and rhetoric.

The colonial institutions of France and Britain therefore reinforced the authoritarian habits of political modernization throughout the region.  Moreover, they assumed that a period of

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[69] Ibid, 87.
[70] Shmuel N. Eisenstadt, "The resconstruction of Religious Arenas in the Framework of Multiple Modernities," *Millenium: Journal of International Studies* 29, no 3, 2000, 592.
[71] Lewis, *The Middle East: A Brief History of the Last 2,000 years*, 286.

political stability and economic development was necessary before the democratic institutions could be fully established reinforcing even more the authoritarian regimes in place. As it stands now, authoritarian regimes with a democratic façade such as Syria, Egypt and Saddam Hussein's Iraq have been in power for almost 50 years; the source of their authority coming from the power given to the state and the instruments of modernization.

## The rentier state status as a means to maintain authoritarianism

"The essence of the rentier state is that it is financed by the oil rent rather than supported by the society through taxation."[73] The collection of this "rent" from abroad enables the state and those controlling it to amass enormous sums of money without engaging in any forms of production. The state generously distributes the oil revenues to the public and in return the same public will have only very limited demands towards their political leaders. [74] In other words, society is partly supported by the state, but the state is financially independent from society. This had the effect of generating major social tensions: growing income inequalities, corruption, grandiose development projects, and neglect of productive activities and skills. In rentier states where falling revenues (from oil and immigrants remittance) are forcing the states to concede democratic freedoms to their civil societies (Iran, Jordan, Algeria) prospects for democracy seem more encouraging. But even if the benefits have decreased progressively since 1985, there are still very few mechanisms for proper taxation in place and states continue to behave as rentier.[75]

Thus, the rentier state being financially independent from society is also politically autonomous. When public taxation provides the basis for the maintenance of governance, people usually quickly demand a voice. Historically, demands for political representation rose out of the attempt by the ruler to impose new taxes. However, we must also consider that rentier states also

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[72] Bernard Lewis, *What went wrong? Western Impact and Middle Eastern Response.* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 53.
[73] Luciani, in Hunter and Malik, eds, 147.
[74] Fuller, in Carothers and Ottaway, eds, 41.

inherit a political system from history. Rentier states such as Norway and Venezuela were democracies before gaining access to external rent and have remained democracies. Middle Eastern oil producers were authoritarian regimes before the rent came. The new rent only helped consolidate the regime.

## Stagnant economies: an obstacle to democracy

Out of the 30 Middle Eastern countries considered in this study, nine are in the category of Least Developed countries (App 1) and twenty-one have per capita income of less than $4,000 (App 2). The economies of most of the Middle Eastern states are not diversified and the levels of industrialization and the share of industry as percentage GDP, as well as the share of imports, remain low.[76] "All Arab countries combined have less economic productivity than Spain and less access to the Internet than the people of sub-Saharan Africa."[77] While urbanization has increased, it has been largely the result of the impoverished rural population moving to the cities rather than the consequence of large-scale industrialization.[78] In terms of socioeconomic indicators, the region presents an equally depressing picture. The level of illiteracy is staggering (App 3).

Studies of democratization, illustrated by Middle Eastern scholar Marina Ottaway's work, have explored the links between democratization and economic development. Her conclusions can be summarized as follows. First, income levels have an impact on democratization, with richer countries being more likely to become democratic and remain democratic. Second, economic growth also has a positive effect: countries with growing economies are more likely to become and stay democratic.[79] A possible explanation for why low-income and stagnant economies favor authoritarian regimes suggests that "democracy is the

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[75] Luciani, in Hunter and Malik, eds, 148.
[76] Hunter, in Hunter and Malik, eds, 1.
[77] Rubin, *The Long War for Freedom,* 33.
[78] Ibid, 3.

result of very deep and complex processes of social and economic transformation, and in particular of the changes in the relations among social classes that result from economic changes."[80]

The existence of a middle class is crucial for transforming political systems into democracies. Yet, in the Middle East the middle class is weak because the state dominates the economy and the governed can only exert very limited pressure on the government. For example, in Turkey where a strong middle class has developed, the prospects for democracy were greater.[81] In contrast with the middle class in the West who had to struggle against aristocracy and monarchy to protect its economic power and promote its social and political status, the middle class of the Middle East was never engaged in such a struggle. Rather, this class was supported by the state and given a privileged position in the economy and therefore buying their silence in terms of capability to criticize the government.

Finally, another factor affecting the development of a strong middle class is the lack of associational life. The existence of active unions, professional associations and other economic and political associations tend to undermine authoritarian regimes and they are effectively severely constrained or simply banned. For groups to be effective politically and economically, they must be able to associate in order to produce pressures on governmental accountability.

## The negative impact of colonization on Middle Eastern regional stability

The largely arbitrarily drawn borders of the modern Middle East by the colonial powers at the end of World War I has tended to diminish the legitimacy and sovereignty of the individual state. Political boundaries drawn for the purposes of administrative convenience or as a result of territorial trade-offs among France and Britain cut across ethnic, tribal, religious and linguistic ties. As a result, states such as Lebanon and Iraq were formed in combining hostile ethnic groups

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[79] Ottaway, *Democracy Challenged,* 164.
[80] Ibid, 165.

while others that were previously homogenous were divided into two or more states - Kurdistan. This applied a great deal of stress on an already fragile ethnic equilibrium and resulted in an increase polarization between groups along ethnic and religious lines. In Iraq for example, ethnic and religious polarization was held in check by Saddam Hussein's brutal repression policies. However, following his downfall in 2003, it did not take long for the principal groups (Shia, Sunni, Kurds) to enter in a struggle for power.

In addition, the involvement at different level by contiguous states in each other's affairs has aggravated the ethnic struggles. Shared and often disputed borders, with overlapping populations has meant that internal conflicts have spilled over state boundaries causing interstate tensions and sometimes war.[82] Consequently, the Middle East region has suffered from instability which is a condition that has worked against democratic governance and to the advantages of military dictators.

Between the two World Wars when the British and the French divided the Ottoman Empire they created artificial states and did so in spite of assurances they had given the Arab leaders during World War I. In addition, the promotion of the migration of European Jews by the British following the Holocaust changed the demography of the mandated territories, which caused even more instability in the region and to a situation already volatile. The Arab revolts of 1936-39 in response to the settlements of massive Jewish populations laid the foundation for the Arab-Israeli conflict that has plagued the Middle East since then.

## The Arab-Israeli conflict: an excuse to restrict political liberties

The Arab-Israeli conflict constitutes another factor influencing the democratization process in the Middle East. It has been a convenient excuse for Arab regimes to restrict the political liberties of their people. In the 1960s, Syria, Egypt, Iraq and Jordan claimed that the

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[81] Al-Suwaidi, in Garnham and Tessler, eds, 90.

state of war with Israel necessitated the commitment of all resources to confront this emergency and that it was not the right time for possible political dissension. Although Egypt has signed a peace agreement with Israel in 1979 and Jordan in 1994, a peace accord with Syria still has not been signed.

Obviously, political decision-making in the Middle East would be very different than it is at present if the region was democratic. One could argue that it would lead to at least some diminution in the states' belligerent attitude toward Israel. At the level of international relations, these changes would have an important impact on Israeli perceptions and reduce the security concerns that play such an important role in the formation of Israeli foreign and defense policy. Greater democratization might also lead to a significant reduction in military budgets and expenditures for arms purchase by Arab and Middle Eastern governments which could as well contribute to a change in Israeli perceptions of the threat. Middle Eastern government accountable to their people would certainly be under pressure to allocate a larger share of the state resources to domestic development rather than to the armed forces. However, the region still finds itself in the "chicken or the egg" situation: no democracy without first the settlement of the conflict or no settlement of the conflict without first achieving a certain level of democracy. A possible solution to this impasse would be that both changes occur gradually simultaneously in order to achieve a long lasting peace in that region.

Shortly after the First World War, in the early 1920s, Egypt, Syria, Iraq and Lebanon were all in the process of undertaking certain democratic experiments in their governance. These experiences were aborted partly due to the outcome of the first Palestine war in 1947 and the subsequent humiliating defeats at the hands of the Israelis. This had a great impact on the

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[82] Mohammed Ayoob, *The Third World Security Predicament: State Making, Regional Conflict, and the International System.* (Boulder, CO: Lynn Reiner, 1995), Chap 3.

surrounding countries' delicate domestic political balance causing a radicalization of their policies.[83]

Finally, considering the gains that have been made in the Israeli-Egyptian and Israeli-Jordanian relations, even if Egypt and Jordan cannot be considered as democracies, it seems to demonstrate that the more Arab states move towards democracy, the more they are inclined to make peace. Hence one could assume that a more moderate government in Jerusalem combined with the democratization in the Arab states surrounding Israel could raise the possibility not only that the likelihood of Arab-Israeli conflicts will diminish, but also that meaningful progress toward resolving the issue can be made.

## The impact of Cold War rivalries on the democratization process

Great power policies had a profound effect on the process and prospect of democratization in the Middle East. During the Cold War, not only did the U.S.S.R. and the United States export their rivalries to the third world, the Middle East became the arena where competition for supremacy was played out. For example, when one superpower was involved in a military conflict as in Vietnam or Afghanistan, the other superpower abstained from direct military confrontation and conducted covert operations through proxies.[84]

As a result of this strategy, interstate and intrastate conflicts were exacerbated; sophisticated weapons supplied by the major powers added tremendously to the intensity and scale of destruction. Regional conflicts in the Middle East became linked to the Cold War rivalries and resulted in the militarization of the states, diverted resources away from social priorities and justified domestic repression in the name of national unity against an external enemy.

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[83] Ibid, 194.
[84] Roger E. Kanet and Edward A. Kolodziej, eds., *The Cold War Cooperation* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1991).

In terms of democratization, superpower involvement was more often an inhibitor as they covertly or overtly supported regimes that suited their national interests while acting against democratically elected government as illustrated by the example of Mohammad Mossadegh in Iran in 1953.

External support therefore reduced the need for regimes to enter into social contracts with their people. Such contracts are essential to instill democratic ethos as it requires from the rulers to increase the participation by the ruled in the affairs of the state. In the absence of such contract, the regimes become isolated from the population and increasingly predatory in their behaviors.[85] The habit and culture of dependence on external powers accompanied by the predatory behavior paved the way for state failure by delegitimizing regimes that had not invested in building the basis for social support. The process was accelerated after the Cold War with the withdrawal of superpower support from many client regimes that no longer were necessary in supporting their national interests. This resulted in the sudden collapse of states such as Afghanistan and Somalia. Democracy was the last thing on the minds of "conflict entrepreneurs" who benefited greatly from state collapse and did their best to prevent state regeneration.[86]

Finally, the regimes supported by superpowers that had succeeded in establishing strong authoritarian regimes continue to exist despite the end of the Cold War and the withdrawal of external support. Some regimes such as Egypt, Saudi Arabia and Jordan continue to receive substantial economic and military support from the United States for strategic reasons unrelated to the Cold War. In other cases such as the Gulf States, the regimes continue to receive military support because they control strategically important energy resources. Tunisia, Morocco and Algeria receive considerable help from Europe without any pressure to democratize. Furthermore, the increasing emergence of Islamist movements over the past few decades as the

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[85] Nunnenkamp, in Hunter and Malik, eds.
[86] David Keen, *The Economic Functions of Violence in Civil Wars.* Adelphi Paper 320, (Oxford: Oxford University Press for International Institute of Strategic Studies, 1998).

primary opposition to Middle East autocracy has further discouraged the West from pressing the democratic agenda. The dictators facing rising opposition from their own people regularly spread the fear of Islamists victories to discourage support for democracy among the Western powers. Therefore, external pressures for democratization that helped many countries in other regions to move towards democracy have remained marginal if not irrelevant for the Middle East.

## Conclusion

We can conclude from this chapter that to look for a common denominator or single cause for the weakness of democracy in the Middle East would be futile. The societies themselves are too diverse, their distinct political characters and state formations too different to permit any all encompassing explanation. As seen in the previous chapter, Islam cannot be called upon as the overriding factor affecting the process of democratization in that region. Equally simplistic would be to put the responsibility on the workings of the colonial power or the Cold War rivalries. External domination, formal or informal, certainly played a part, whether it is considered as historic legacy of colonial rule or superpower involvement with all its disruptive impact or as the subsequent exercise of Western power in the region. The external factors must definitely be part of the explanation but domestic causes arose equally from forces within these societies themselves. The interconnections between external and domestic factors inhibit the establishment and maintenance of democracy in the Middle East as both sets of variables feed off each other.

## CHAPTER 4 – Are Preconditions Necessary for Democracy to Emerge in the Middle East?

One of the most problematic aspects of democracy in the Middle East concerns the preconditions necessary for its emergence.  The argument that the conditions for democracy do not exist in all countries has been used in the past in demeaning and condescending ways.  Colonial powers argued that colonized people were not ready for democracy when they denied them the right to vote.  Similar arguments were used to keep African Americans from voting in the United States.  "The concept of readiness for democracy implied a certain intellectual and emotional immaturity or even inferiority to those 'not ready', and deserved discarding."[87]

Since the late 1950s and early 1960s, a large body of literature on the prerequisites of democracy emerged among political sociologist scholars such as S.M. Lipset[88], A. Lijphart[89], G. Almond and S. Verba[90].  The common denominator of this literature was the acceptance that democracy was the best political regime and therefore there was a need to study the preconditions on which it could flourish.[91]  This chapter will examine the issue of prerequisites for democracy to emerge in the Middle East.  Are there certain preconditions that must exist within Middle Eastern societies before democracy has any chance of succeeding in making progress?  Are efforts in democratization doomed to fail if these preconditions are not met? As such, these preconditions can be divided into three lines of thought: socio-economic, institutional design and civic culture conditions.  Each one of them will be explored in relation to the Middle East context.

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[87] Ottaway, *Democracy Challenged,* 163.

[88] Seymour Martin Lipset, "Some Social Requisites of Democracy: Economic Development and Political Legitimacy". (*American Political Science Review,* 53), pp. 69-105.

[89] Arend Lijphart, *The Politics of Accomodation: Pluralism and Democracy in the Netherlands,* 2nd Edition. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1975)

[90] Gabriel Almond and Sidney Verba, *The Civic Culture* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1967)

[91] Shahin, Bican, *Democracy with an Adjective: Liberal Democracy in a Muslim Society.* http://www.islam-democracy.org/documents/pdf/6th_Annual_Conference-BicanShahin.pdf

## Socio-economic development: an essential prerequisite for democracy?

The core of the socio-economic argument is that without a certain level of economic and social development it is hard to establish and maintain a democratic regime. This conclusion is based on the positive correlation between socio-economic modernization and democracy that was obtained through cross-national statistical analysis.[92] Based on the observations made in the previous chapter on the existing barriers to democracy, it would seem to support the premise that the chances for democracy are probably higher in countries that have high levels of economic development. Yet, it is difficult to conclude whether socio-economic development is a precondition or an outcome of democracy.

Somit and Peterson in *The Failure of Democracy,* argue that humans are social primates with an innate tendency for hierarchical, authoritarian social and political structures and that democracy requires very special enabling conditions before it can be supported by a state.[93] In this line of thought, viable democracies require the combination of economic and social preconditions. As the relative rarity of democracies and the overwhelming predominance of authoritarian governments throughout history testify, that combination happens infrequently. In short, authoritarianism is the default option. Combining this with the very human tendency to dominance and submission behaviors, this is why democracies require special conditions, why even today they are a minority among governments, why they are so hard to establish and why they tend to be fragile. However Somit and Peterson's argument is too general and does not take into consideration the specificity of the various different societies. In sum, it is too simplistic and pessimistic about the human behavior.

Must there be a strong socio-economic base in Middle Eastern countries before having any hope that democracy may flourish? The combination of a healthy economy and social fabric

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[92] Ibid.

[93] Albert Somit & Steven A. Peterson, *The Failure of Democratic Nation Building: Ideology meets Evolution*. (Palgrave MacMillan, 2005).

in a state is certainly a facilitator in achieving and maintaining a democratic system.  But

according to political scientist Bican Shahin, it is not the single and only factor making it

possible.[94]  Middle Eastern states and societies are complex systems affected by their respective

history, culture and context into which many variables are at play.  To assert that socio-economic

development is a precondition that must be met for democracy to succeed is oversimplifying the

issue.  As stated by political philosopher John Rawls, "…a well-ordered society need not be a

wealthy society."[95]   He defines a well-ordered society as being liberal and decent peoples who

honor human rights and are allowed a meaningful role in making political decisions.[96]  Rentier

states such as Saudi Arabia, Kuwait or Oman are very good examples of wealthy states having a

great potential for developing a strong socio-economic base.  In their case, as discussed earlier,

their wealth has been an impediment rather than a facilitator.  Democracy is primarily about

people and what people want.  Socio-economic development might end up being, in the case of

the Middle East, an outcome rather than a precondition to a democratic system.

## Institutional design:  the need for an adapted form

In this line of thinking, what matters most in establishing and maintaining a democratic

regime is the form the democratic institutions take.  In short, a sound democracy can only flourish

on sound democratic institutions.  But which one is the best?  Is there a "one-size-fits-all" system

that would be suitable for the whole Middle East or is there a need for adapted systems for each

of the Arab, Persian or Jewish Middle Eastern states?

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[94] Shahin, 1.

[95] John Rawls, *The Law of Peoples.* (Cambridge Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1999), 106.

[96] Ibid, 4.

The debate among political scientists over institutional design has taken place over the past two decades and was initiated by Juan Linz.[97] He argued that political instability in Latin America was due to the fact that many of the democracies there were presidential rather than parliamentary, based on the American model and did not work well in other contexts. Linz's critique of presidentialism was then critiqued by Lijphart, Horowitz, Shugart and Carey.[98] They asserted that parliamentary systems could be as weak and illegitimate as presidential ones. Parliamentary systems required strong political parties and these parties could be formed or fragmented based on religious, ethnic, class and geographical structure of the society. Presidentialism by contrast had certain advantages: voters knew whom they were electing and that official remained directly accountable to voters, in contrast to parliamentary systems where parties or coalitions of parties could remove chief executives without any change in popular mandate.[99]

In addition, a balance must be achieved in a political system between decisiveness and legitimacy. The extreme decisive political system would be the autocracy where all decisions are made by one individual and therefore while the decision are fast, they have the least legitimacy since the citizens are not involved in the process. The extreme legitimate system on the other hand, would have excessive checks and balances and would drastically slow down decision-making if not prevent any decision from being made. A high degree of legitimacy could be maintained in the case of decisions made because of the process of consultation and the involvement of the citizens. But the downside to this could be the disillusionment of the population over time that "nothing gets done." In the end, institutions are only enabling devices; those that facilitate decisive political decision-making are only as good as the policies being

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[97] Francis Fukuyama, *Development and the Limits of Institutional Design,* http://www.gdnet.org/pdf2/gdn_library/annual_conferences/seventh_annual_conference/Fukuyama_plenary1.pdf
[98] Ibid, 13.
[99] Ibid, 14.

pursued.  What inhibits the ambitions of a liberalizing reformer also checks the power of a would-be dictator.

Based on the writings of various institutional design scholars, Fukuyama concludes that there is no optimal political system since the system design will depend on a host of contextual factors specific to a particular society.  They include historical traditions, political culture, external environment and economic conditions.[100]  For example, the United States and Britain are among the world's oldest and best established democracies and yet they have completely different political systems arising from different historical experiences.  The largely unchecked Westminster system is a high-risk institutional arrangement that has worked well in the English-speaking world where it was implemented.  Margaret Thatcher's reforms of the late 1970s could not have been carried out but for the parliamentary majority held by the Conservative Party.  In contrast, Chancellor Angela Merkel under Germany's far less decisive institutional rules, which have forced her into a coalition, will sharply limit the policies she will be able to put into place.  It would be easy to generalize and assert that the Westminster system would likely produce disastrous results if implemented in a country with a different social and political structure, for example, in an ethnically fragmented society with a dominant group.  However, the Canadian experience with the dominant English-speaking majority over the French-speaking minority suggests that adapted to the context and situation, the Westminster system can also work in this situation.

In terms of finding the institutional design best adapted to the Middle East, we can conclude that each country in the region will have to develop their own.  The societies are too diverse to apply one model for all.  The Middle East multi-ethnic and multi-religious societies may best lend themselves to constitutional regimes that allow freedom and autonomy for the various religious communities.  The Lebanese confessional system best typifies such a regime.

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[100] Ibid, 17.

Still, a very large number of combinations of design features exists or can be assembled to create new ones.

## Democratic culture: a prerequisite or a result of democracy?

Key to the discussion of preconditions to democracy is whether a civic culture, that's one that values compromise and tolerance, is necessary to establish democracy or whether it results from the practice of democratic processes. In fact, the argument entails that in order for democracy to work in a given society, there must be a cultural background that is suitable for democracy to emerge. The question to answer, in the case of the Middle East, is whether its culture is a decisive factor in the democratization of its states.

This line of thought can be traced back to Alexis De Tocqueville in 1840 who argued that democracy worked in America due to the eagerness of the Americans to take part in their government. In other words, people were concerned about pubic matters and were devoted to the public cause.[101] Later, others such as Almond and Verba suggested that a political culture, with a mixture of both participative and deferential components would offer a more suitable climate for democracy. In contrast, solely participative or subject-oriented cultures would be less suitable to democracy.[102] Finally, Putnam argues that the essential prerequisite for democracy is a civic culture based on mutual trust and cooperation among the people.[103]

Applied to the Middle East, these theories could imply that its states do not have the cultural background to absorb the democratic process. Non-Muslim Middle Eastern scholars such as Samuel Huntington and Bernard Lewis, take the pessimistic view that historically the Middle East has been under non-democratic rules for nearly fourteen centuries, going back to the

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[101] Bican Shahin, *Democracy with an Adjective: Liberal Democracy in a Muslim Society.* http://www.islam-democracy.org/documents/pdf/6th_Annual_Conference-BicanShahin.pdf
[102] Almond and Varba, 14.
[103] R. Putnam, *Making Democracy Work: Civic Tradition in Modern Italy.* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993).

period that ended with the Rightly Guided Caliphs.[104]  Therefore a democratic culture has not

been internally in existence among the states of the Middle East.

In contradiction with this view, Schmitter and Karl reject the notion that democracy must

initially be based upon a supportive civic culture.  They assert that rules of prudence make it

possible for democratic values to "emerge from the interaction between antagonistic and mutually

suspicious actors."[105]  Two major factors interplay in this line of thought.  First, the manner in

which winners and losers will behave in the political game and how citizens will accept

governmental decisions.  Second, a certain level of consistency and predictability should remain

between administrations.  The success of new democracies and the gradual development of

democratic values depend on establishing these norms which are products rather than producers

of democracy.  This argument would seem to do away with the need to analyze prerequisites or

enabling conditions for democracy in the Middle East.  As asserted by Schmitter and Karl,

democracy is possible without a democratic culture but is more likely to succeed if some

elements of that culture can be developed quickly; and one could argue that the Prophet's

political society, the process of *shura* (consultation) and *ijma* (consensus building) can be

interpreted as the foundation of a democratic culture.  According to Dr Yazdi, a university

professor and political activist who served as deputy prime minister under Ayatollah Khomeini,

"Many Islamists have come to the conclusion that general elections and a parliament properly

serve the concept of the *shura.*"[106]

The relationship between civic culture and democracy is difficult to establish with

certainty in the case of the Middle East since many other factors such as socio-economic

developments, institutional design, history, culture, political context and level of education of the

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[104] Mohammed Omar Farooq, *Islam and Democracy: Perception and Misconception*, http://globalwebpost.com/farooqm/writings/islamic/democracy.htm

[105] Philippe C. Schmitter & Terry Lynn Karl, *What Democracy is…and is not.* (Journal of Democracy, 1991, no.2), 83.

[106] Ibrahim Yazdi, "A Seminar with Ibrahim Yazdi," (*Middle East Policy* 3, no.4, April 1995), 18.

electorate can affect the effectiveness of its emergence.  There are also divergent opinions and different values even within the same culture.  For example, the political culture of the Weimar Republic and Nazi Germany were strikingly different, even though both emerged from the same history and culture.  Similarly, opinions and values differ widely among Middle Eastern culture.  In the words of international relations scholar Robert Rothstein,  "Culture is rarely a determinative variable."[107]

## Conclusion

Discussions of prerequisites for democracy are often inconclusive.[108]  It is not clear if any of these conditions is necessary and certainly none by itself is sufficient for the democratization process to improve throughout the Middle East states.  Democracy sometimes survives when few of these conditions are fulfilled and it sometimes fails in countries where many of the preconditions are met.  The same rules do not produce the same results when inserted into different social structures.  "All political actors may be equally capable of taking rational decisions individually and even collectively, but they do so only in different historical context with different memories of the past, dilemmas of the present and hopes for the future."[109]

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[107] Rothstein, in Garnham and Tessler, eds, 72.

[108] Giuseppe Di Palma, *To Craft Democracies: An essay on Democratic Transitions.* (Berkeley: University of Californis Press, 1990).

[109] Philippe C. Schmitter, *Federalism & Democracy: Tocquevile Inverted or Perverted?* http://www.iue.it/SPS/People/Faculty/CurrentProfessors/PDFFiles/SchmitterPDFfiles/Tocqueville4.pdf

# CHAPTER 5 – Guiding Principles to Support the Democratization Process in the Middle East

Support to the democratization process in the Middle East could be considered as one of the factors influencing the rise of democracy and based on the discussion above, is probably not the most important. Most countries that are democratic today have become so because of domestic processes often provoked by the dissatisfaction of the people and without the benefit of outside assistance. France, Russia and the United Kingdom are good examples of this phenomenon, whereas democracy was an evolutionary process which took place over decades and even centuries.

In terms of nation building, the historical record suggests that state formation has never been a democratic process.[110] States have been formed and enlarged through conquest, international treaties that imposed settlements on the defeated and colonial undertakings and the experience of the European states is a good illustration of this point. States have never been formed peacefully by democratic leaders through the process of consultation. Even in the United States where the spread of democracy and the process of state building overlapped closely, the States and the Union were built ultimately through war and conquests: the Revolutionary War, the Indian Wars, the Mexican Wars and the Civil War. The concept of democratic state formation is an idea of the 1990s, without a historical precedent. But according to Ottaway, this does not prove conclusively that states cannot be formed through democratic processes. It only helps to explain and put the rise of authoritarianism into perspective.[111]

Still, democratic reforms have rapidly emerged as the center of gravity around which most of the discussions revolves in terms of foreign policy in the Middle East. But political leaders and civil society activists must perceive the promotion of democracy in the Middle East as an unprecedented opportunity for the West and the Middle East to work together towards goals

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[110] Ottaway, *Democracy Challenged,* 172.

they share, to redress problems they both suffer from and to achieve results that will benefit them all.  In other words, this entails that any foreign policy must embrace a <u>positive</u> outcome for the good of all instead of reaching strictly after national interests.

According to Georgetown University professor Michael Hudson, who also heads the university's Center for Contemporary Arab studies, "the weaknesses of the Arab democratic reform movements are largely due to four factors: the strength of the authoritarian modern Arab security state, the fear of Islamists taking over political space that is opened up, the impact of economic stresses and imbalances and the distorting effect of regional conflict."[112]  These areas will therefore be addressed in this section through seven guiding principles to support the democratization efforts in the Middle East.  These guiding principles are to be taken as a basis to form an adapted foreign policy towards individual countries of the Middle East.

## Manage the expectations and adapt the intervention

Democracy, because of its association with prosperity and peace may cause Middle Easterners' expectations to be high.   Consequently they may quickly become disillusioned when the going gets tough.  To manage expectations, the peoples of the Middle East must therefore be convinced that democracy is preferable to the alternatives.  This is not easily accomplished. Insufficient resources often block the most enlighten policies and developing countries often lack sufficient autonomy to implement policies that would generate public support.  This is where donors can come into play.  A respectful support – taking into account the ways of life and the fact that everything will not be perfect at the start - based on an honest association with Middle Eastern countries can help in supporting these policies.  This means much more than simply signing a check with no strings attached or worst, getting deeply involved into the internal affairs

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[111] Ibid, 172.
[112] Rami G. Khouri, "Is the U.S. retarding Arab reform?," *Lebanon Daily Star*, May 18, 2005.

of the assisted country.  It means developing a strong and respectful relationship with the people

and the government based on <u>partnership</u> versus a patriarchal attitude, which requires time and

intense diplomatic efforts.  To quote Rawls, "the well-ordered societies giving assistance must

not act paternalistically, but in measured ways that do not conflict with the final aim of

assistance: freedom and equality for the burdened societies."[113]  This concept applied to the

Middle East entails a "target of assistance" which means that once an assisted country in the

Middle East can manage its own affairs reasonably and rationally, further assistance is not

required.

No recipe or template assistance suitable for all Middle Eastern states could be generated

following the analysis.  Each country has specificities of its own given the cultural, social and

historical factors that set them distinctively apart.  Therefore, support to democracy must be

adapted to the situation and the particular country.  In some cases, democracy supporters whether

they are foreign governments or non-governmental organizations (NGO) will have to take small

steps and observe the impact of these endeavors on the system.   They must be able to see and

seize opportunities as they present themselves and accept that the results may not be what they

want or what they expected.  In the words of social scientist Michael Walzer, "Democracy has to

be reached through a political process that in its nature, can produce different results."[114]

## Rebalance the U.S. foreign policy towards Israel

As discussed previously, the Arab-Israeli conflict has a major impact on the possibility

for democracy in the Middle East.  The state of distrust between Arabs and Israelis has reached a

summit in the past few years due to the Arab perception that no matter what their actions are or

the situation, the Israelis are favored by the U.S.   In order for Israel and the U.S. to gain

credibility amongst its Arab neighbors, it is imperative that Israel be perceived as receiving the

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[113] Rawls, 111.

same support from the U.S. as everybody else.  This means that the U.S. and Israel cannot set their own rules on issues related to security or weapons of mass destruction proliferation, and expect the rest of the world to accept lower standards of security or national rights.  A credible democratic culture requires that all citizens within a state as well as all countries in the world abide by common legal norms.  The impasse into which the peace process of the Arab-Israeli conflict has found itself can only be resolved if the strong opens a door by making concessions.  The U.S. is in very good position to pressure both Israel into making the first steps towards peace and its Arab neighbors to endeavor into political reforms.  In some cases, this might result in diminishing the influence of certain Islamic militant parties such as Hezbollah and Hamas by removing the cause for which they fight.

## Focus on economic instead of political reforms

Although not a guarantee for success, we have seen earlier that a strong economy can act as a catalyst for positive political change.  In addition, this approach has the advantage of being less confrontational to friendly Middle Eastern regimes since it does not intervene at the political level directly.  Progress on the economic plan would help a truly private sector to immerge which in turn would foster a more independent civil society and media.  Greater wealth would also produce a larger middle class with more access to travel and education and a wider range of political ideas.  The prescribed economic reforms could take the form of more privatization, fiscal reform, banking reform, tax reform, investment liberalization, etc depending on the country and on the situation.

This point is critical as nation-states have lost some decision making autonomy as a result of an integrated world economy.  Developing countries are increasingly governed by global economic trends, international agencies and major powers.  This undermines the essential principle of democratic governance: rule by the people.  If decisions made democratically can be

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[114] Michael Walzer, *Arguing about War.* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004), 184.

sidetracked by external factors, democratic governance in the Middle East may appear difficult. Consequently, economic reforms must be undertaken gradually and be well adapted to each country's situation.

Yet this approach has several limitations. The U.S. has already been pressing many Middle Eastern governments for decades (Egypt) to carry out market reforms with only very limited success. Even if the regions' governments did get serious about market reforms the positive political payoff might be decades away. In East Asia, the link between economic success and political change took twenty to thirty years to develop. Western powers willing to get involved in this strategy must therefore be willing to commit over the long term as results will not be achieved overnight.

## Engage the dialogue with the Islamic parties

The idea of democracy has not always proven a good rallying point for the development of social movements and political parties. In the Middle East, the democratic ideology has not competed successfully with ideologies with immediate popular appeal such as nationalism, socialism or religious ideals. However, democratic breakthrough can take place when parties or movements with large constituencies accept democracy as a means to gain access to power. The acceptance of democratic means by socialist parties initially for purely instrumental reasons rather than out of conviction was crucial to the democratization of some European countries. So was the rise of Christian Democratic parties in some Catholic countries.

In the Middle East, the organizations with the largest popular constituencies are Islamists; and it is difficult for outsiders to engage in a dialogue, as many of these groups are hostile. All of them however, include some moderate elements that may see some utility in working with democratic systems. But they also include radical elements that will never accept democracy. Furthermore, there is the risk that these organizations take advantage of the victory that democracy might offer them and resort to undemocratic means. Although Western powers have

supported secularization they have often stood in the way of democratization by supporting client

dictatorial regimes.  As a result, this recommendation entails greater risks as the long impacts of

Islamic parties coming into power cannot be predicted and would not necessarily be the same for

all countries in the region.

But there is a greater risk in ignoring them or worst, in cooperating with authoritarian

governments in repressing them.  The outcome is the perpetuation of authoritarianism such as in

Egypt or violent confrontation such as in Algeria.  The only strategy that may lead to democracy

is the one that will bring organizations with mass followings into the democratic process, no

matter how undemocratic these organizations goals' seem to be.   According to Marina Ottaway,

"Islamist organizations - that is, organizations that appeal to the religious values and social

conservatism of the Arab public in their call for political reform – are key to democratization in

the Arab world."[115]  In her view, to further encourage democratization in the Middle East,

democracy assistance efforts will have to cultivate the Islamists.[116]  Not only would engaging in a

dialogue with Islamists allow the West to influence the democratic changes, it would also allow

the Islamic parties to understand better Western intentions.  Finally, we must not neglect the fact

that in a democratic process, the people can choose poorly.

## Expect a long term commitment

Democracy promoters often feel under great pressure to demonstrate that they are

accomplishing rapid results.  Consequently, they have a tendency to focus on what are often

superficial political changes such as whether a country holds elections, rather than the actual

degree of political competition that the election should truly entail.  For example, the decision by

many Gulf countries to hold elections has been greatly emphasized as a breakthrough by the

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[115] Marina Ottaway, "Islamists and Democracy: Keep the Faith," *The New Republic,* June 05.
[116] Ibid.

West, although a closer look suggests that they are learning to open political space without allowing challenges to the status quo and to hold elections the opposition cannot possibly win.

Obviously, it is difficult for external actors to encourage determined governments to open up their political systems to real competition. To do so requires an artful combination of sustained, nuanced diplomatic pressure and strategically designed aid interventions that take advantage of existing small openings that help create other opportunities that can in turn be pursued. However, this takes time and patience. Democracy promoters should therefore be prepared for a long and uncertain journey. In the words of John Rawls, "there is no recipe, certainly no easy recipe, for well-ordered peoples to help a burdened society to change its political and social culture."[117]

## Use the position of strength cautiously

The U.S. willingness to speak up and threaten has forced certain Middle Eastern countries to respond. Internal pressure combined with the fear by many regimes that the status quo would not last, has led to many reforms ranging from modest to the purely cosmetic.

However, there are downsides to this position of strength. When the U.S. relies on threat of military force it becomes very hard or almost impossible for Middle Easterner reformers to associate themselves with the U.S. agenda. The U.S. ends up losing the chance of close partnership with the people and organizations with which it could potentially cooperate. In addition, high profile initiatives cannot be sustained indefinitely. Even the U.S. with the immense resources at its disposal cannot solve all the problems. Consequently, it has been willing to accept cosmetic reforms as genuine steps towards democracy. When Bahrain becomes a poster child of reform and even Saudi Arabia gets high marks for talking about the possibility of some kind of local election in an indefinite future, it is difficult for the other countries not to conclude that the U.S. will be satisfied with little.

## Design a complementary U.S.- European approach

Presently in the Middle East, the roles of the U.S. and European countries are not interchangeable as they relate differently to the region's countries. The United States is distrusted, but also perceived as the country that holds the key to the solution of the Arab-Israeli conflict. European countries are seen as more sympathetic to the Arab view of the Palestinian issue and more willing to engage over the long run, but also less influential. The U.S. is inclined to loud rhetoric and high profile initiatives but also quick to change course. European countries are more willing to engage over the long run and to act quietly away from the spotlight, but also timid when it comes to pushing Middle Eastern governments to reform.

These differences and the Middle Easterners' contrasting perceptions of the U.S and European countries could turn into an advantage if Western democracy promoters accept the idea of allowing the two sides to play to their own strength. As it stands now, there is much similarities in the Western donor programs but also much overlap and duplication in assistance programs. Donor coordination could also achieve much in raising the level of efficiency of democracy promotion. According to Rami Khouri, the editor of the Beirut-based Daily Star newspaper, "We (Arabs), Americans and Europeans need a better analytical and political approach to devise an efficacious strategy of working together for Arab reform and democracy goals that are jointly identified, and thus mutually legitimate."[118]

The U.S. strength is its power and willingness to use the bully approach to force political reforms. On the other hand, it has difficulty to engage over the long term due in part to the mixture of discontinuities in U.S. policy resulting from the four-year cycle election and the partisan politicization of foreign policy. European countries can. They have done so for over ten years and will more than likely continue to do so. The continuity of the European policy is ensured by the fact that engagement is not a matter of choice, but of necessity for Europe as the

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[117] Rawls, 108.

immediate neighbors of the Middle East.  While European countries have been engaged in

economic dialogue and cultural exchange they have not addressed the more critical political

issues.  By forcing the issue of political reform into the public debate, the U.S. may have opened

the door to more effective European policy.

While the U.S. and the European countries are unlikely to agree on many issues in the

Middle East, a coordinated approach to leverage each other's strength would be greatly beneficial

to support democratization in the region.  This would require that both design strategies that have

a complementary effect and recognizes the value of the other doing so.

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[118] Khouri.

# CONCLUSION

The intent of this paper was to examine the feasibility of democracy taking root in the Middle East and to propose possible recommendations to support the democratization process in the region. At one extreme, we had the predictions that the war in Iraq would unleash a wave of democracy in the Middle East and at the other, the view that the Middle East is really not fit for democracy to take root. The issue of Middle Eastern democratic reforms was largely an academic debate for most of modern history after World War II.[119] Yet, this is no longer a theoretical issue as democratization has risen to the top of the political agenda in the U.S., Europe and Middle Eastern countries. This interest in democracy has been driven not by ideology but for very pragmatic reasons. Homegrown demands for dignity and better governance by the citizens of the Middle East, increasingly vulnerable and less legitimate authoritarian regimes that find it more difficult to maintain the existing political and economic order and finally external pressures to democratize from the U.S., Europe and other industrialized democracies are some of the very compelling forces applying stress on the Middle East to democratize.

But the expectation that democracy could sweep through the Middle East quickly, even if Iraq turns out well in the end is not supported by the analysis conducted in this paper. Even in the former socialist world where many regimes collapsed, the building of democracy has been slow with no assurance of success. At the other extreme, the contention that the Middle East is ill suited for democracy is not supported by the analysis and to look for a common denominator or single cause for the weakness of democracy in the Middle East is futile. The societies themselves are too diverse, their distinct political characters and state formations too different to permit any all encompassing explanation and therefore an all encompassing solution. In addition, Islam cannot be called upon as the overriding factor affecting the process of democratization in that region. Although they certainly played a part, equally simplistic would be to put the

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[119] Khouri.

responsibility on the workings of external factors such as colonization, the Cold War rivalries or the subsequent Western involvement in the region.  The external factors must definitely be part of the explanation but domestic causes arose equally from forces within these societies themselves.  As a result, it was concluded that the interconnections between external and domestic factors inhibits the establishment and maintenance of democracy in the Middle East as both sets of variables feed off each other.

It appears therefore that Western powers committed to support democratic changes in the Middle East should be prepared to be involved for the long term as significant changes will take time to occur.  It is certainly possible that democratic change will spread in the region over the next twenty years but at the same time there is no guarantee that it will happen everywhere.  Democracy promotion is never easy but it is especially difficult in the Middle East due to a combination of factors that varies from country to country.  These factors include political Islam, the legacy of colonialism, the presence of a significant share of the world's oil, stagnant economies, colonization, the Arab-Israeli conflict, the deeply entrenched nature of non-democratic regimes in the region and the legacy of Western support for these regimes.  In this very challenging context, outside actors will not be the primary determinants of change but they can make positive contributions.  They will be able to do so only if they can come up with measures that are adapted to the realities of the problems and challenges of particular countries rather than imposing a template approach to all.  In addition, they will have to set aside their national interests which are currently what drives the West to engage, and together with the Middle Eastern peoples drive for actions in the long term for the good of all.

# APPENDIX I - Levels of Development for Muslim Majority Countries

| Least Developed Countries | Low Income (per capita GNI less than US$745) | Lower Middle Income (per capita GNI US$746-2,975) | Upper Middle Income (per capita GNI US$2.976-9,205 | High Income (per capita GNI greater than US$9,206) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Afghanistan | Afghanistan | Algeria | Lebanon | Bahrain |
| Chad | Chad | Djibouti | Libya | Kuwait |
| Djibouti | Mali | Egypt | Oman | Qatar |
| Mali | Mauritania | Iran | Saudi Arabia | United Arab Emirates |
| Mauritania | Niger | Iraq | | |
| Niger | Senegal | Jordan | | |
| Somalia | Somalia | Morocco | | |
| Sudan | Sudan | Palestine | | |
| Yemen | Yemen | Syria | | |
| | | Tunisia | | |
| | | Turkey | | |

*Sources*:  LDCs:  Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, "Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States, " http://www.un.rog/special-rep/ohrlls/ldc/list.htm.  Income level:  World Bank Group, World Development Indicators 2003 (Washington, DC: World Bank, 2003).

*LDC criteria:  Per capita GDP below US$900 for inclusion but above US$1,035 for graduation; weak human assets based on health, nutrition, and education indicators; high economic vulnerability based on instability of agricultural exports, inadequate diversification, and economic smallness; and a population below 75 million.  It is important to note that criteria are subject to change.  In fact, the 2003 review of the least developed countries by the United Nations Committee for Development Policy was based on the inclusion threshold of a three-year (1999-2000) average of US$750 and the threshold for graduation of US$900:  United Nations, Committee for Development Policy, "Fifth Session, 7-11 April 2003," Economic and Social Council, Official Records, Supplement 13, 2003, http://www.unescap.org/MDG/LDC.asp.

# APPENDIX II - Per Capita Income

| Country | Per Capita GNI ($) |
|---|---|
| Afghanistan | no data available |
| Somalia | no data available |
| Iraq | no data available |
| Niger | 170 |
| Chad | 220 |
| Mali | 240 |
| Sudan | 350 |
| Mauritania | 410 |
| Senegal | 470 |
| Yemen | 490 |
| Djibouti | 900 |
| Palestine | 930 |
| Syria | 1,130 |
| Morocco | 1,190 |
| Egypt | 1,470 |
| Iran | 1,710 |
| Algeria | 1,720 |
| Jordan | 1,760 |
| Tunisia | 2,000 |
| Turkey | 2,500 |
| Lebanon | 3,990 |
| Libya | 7,570 |
| Oman | 7,720 |
| Saudi Arabia | 8,460 |
| Bahrain | 11,130 |
| Kuwait | 18,270 |
| Qatar | 19,844 |
| United Arab Emirates | 20,530 |

*Source*: World Bank and United Nations Development Programme, *Human Development Report 2003* (New York: United Nations Development Programme, 2003). All data are for 2002, except for those of Bahrain, Kuwait, Libya, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia , and United Arab Emirates, which are for 2001.

# APPENDIX III - Illiteracy Rates

| Countries | Youth (15-24 years) | | Adult (above 15 years) | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Male (%) | Female (%) | Male (%) | Female (%) |
| Afghanistan | n.d. | n.d. | n.d. | n.d. |
| Algeria | 6 | 15 | 23 | 42 |
| Chad | 25 | 38 | 47 | 64 |
| Egypt | 23 | 36 | 33 | 55 |
| Iran | 4 | 8 | 16 | 30 |
| Iraq | 40 | 70 | 45 | 76 |
| Jordan | 1 | 1 | 5 | 15 |
| Kuwait | 8 | 6 | 16 | 20 |
| Lebanon | 3 | 7 | 8 | 19 |
| Libya | 0 | 6 | 9 | 31 |
| Mali | 52 | 74 | 63 | 83 |
| Mauritania | 43 | 59 | 49 | 69 |
| Morocco | 23 | 40 | 37 | 63 |
| Niger | 67 | 86 | 76 | 91 |
| Oman | 0 | 3 | 19 | 36 |
| Saudi Arabia | 5 | 9 | 16 | 32 |
| Senegal | 40 | 57 | 52 | 71 |
| Somalia | n.d. | n.d. | n.d. | n.d. |
| Sudan | 17 | 27 | 30 | 52 |
| Syria | 4 | 20 | 11 | 38 |
| Tunisia | 2 | 10 | 18 | 38 |
| Turkey | 1 | 6 | 6 | 23 |
| United Arab Emirates | 12 | 5 | 25 | 20 |
| Yemen | 16 | 51 | 32 | 73 |

*Source*:  World Bank Group, *World Development Indicators 2003* (Washington, DC: World Bank, 2003).

Note:  n.d. = no data available

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