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Looking to the Future

IN THE COMING DECADE, promoting democracy will increasingly mean dealing with semi-authoritarian regimes. The number of countries that do not have the formal institutions of democracy and do not hold multiparty elections has decreased rapidly, but the number of states where democracy is only a facade has increased almost as quickly. Countries that have had successful transitions to functioning democracies will no longer need support. The problem of semi-authoritarian regimes will continue to loom large, however. Democracy assistance by itself cannot bring about a second, democratic transition in countries with such regimes; nevertheless, assistance would be more helpful if it were based on a clearer understanding that these countries are not imperfect democracies, but political systems with special characteristics and political dynamics. They are very different from each other as well.

Democracy assistance is only one of the factors that influence political transitions, and it is not even the most important. Most countries that are democratic today have become so because of domestic processes and without the benefit of outside assistance. But external aid can contribute significantly to political change, in both positive and negative ways. In little over a decade, democracy assistance has caused the diffusion of a new, standardized language of politics around the world. With remarkably few exceptions, politicians everywhere feel the need to talk about democracy and to use the same terminology

when doing so. Even in countries where democracy until recently meant "people's democracy" and "democratic centralism," politicians, including many who started their careers long before the days of democratic orthodoxy, now talk of transparency and accountability, extol the virtues of civil society rather than those of the broad masses, and in general try to show the world that they share in the values upheld by the established democracies. Actions rarely live up to the language, but the fact that the same language is spoken everywhere shows the influence of democracy promotion.

Such influence is also reflected in the similarity among the organizations of civil society that exist in all countries—from Latin America to Central Asia, one encounters organizations that resemble each other to an extraordinary degree and furthermore are unlike any that ever existed in democratizing countries in the past. Professional advocacy and civic education organizations are virtually interchangeable in terms of their language and way of functioning from Nepal to Zambia. At one level, such similarities are not surprising because civil society groups around the world are funded by the same countries, mentored by the same organizations, and belong to the same international networks. But if one considers the cultural differences among the countries of the world, the similarity among the organizations that supposedly represent these diverse societies gives one pause.

Democracy assistance has contributed much to the creation of the facade of democracy, but it is domestic factors that have determined the political realities behind that facade. The question is whether democracy promoters can now have a deeper impact on these transformations. I believe this is possible in many cases. Although internal factors will continue to be the most important ones, outsiders could have more effect than is currently the case. In order to achieve greater success, however, they have to refocus their efforts, rethink their methods, be willing to take greater risks by resorting to high-end approaches, be more selective about where they work, and take into consideration the differences among types of semi-authoritarian regimes. Taking the characteristics of specific countries into account does not mean making marginal adjustments to standard programs, as is most often the case now, but taking quite different approaches in at least some countries.

In this concluding chapter of the present study, which is essentially

prescriptive, I will deal with two major issues. The first is whether and how democracy assistance can address the shallowness of the transitions that have led, not as many had hoped to democracy, but to semi-authoritarianism. Unless these transitions are deepened, the prospects for a further change leading to democracy are dim. Addressing the shallowness of transitions will require change in most areas of democracy promotion. The second issue I will deal with is how democracy promoters could address more pointedly the problems that are specific to the three types of semi-authoritarian regimes: those in equilibrium, those in decay, and those experiencing dynamic change.

Deepening the Transitions

Shallow transitions, I have argued, are attempts to craft new political systems out of the old social and political components. In contrast, deep transitions are changes in the political system that take place when economic growth, a modification of borders, the mobilization of new political groups into politics, or any other underlying transformation introduces new factors into the political equation. Deep transformations, in other words, are not purely political, but build on social and economic change. One problem of transition in semi-authoritarian states is that political changes generally far outpace any deeper transformation of the society. In some countries, for example Senegal, political changes have taken place without much social transformation at all. Furthermore, only in those semi-authoritarian regimes where a process of dynamic change is underway will the process have any chance of becoming deeper without outside intervention.

Democracy promoters cannot address the underlying problems of social and economic stagnation that keep these transitions shallow, or at least not quickly enough to make a difference in political transitions. It is simply not within their capacity to bring about in short order the socioeconomic changes that could underpin deep transformations. Half a century of development assistance has shown all too clearly that the international community's capacity to engineer socioeconomic development is limited. Countries that have developed rapidly enough for socioeconomic change to drive political transition—such as Taiwan

and South Korea—are few and far between, and in any case they have not experienced this development as a consequence of foreign assistance. Thus, in the short run most countries will undergo an inherently shallow transition or no transition at all. Since democracy promoters cannot deepen transitions by affecting underlying conditions, they have no choice but trying to deepen the political process itself.

Outside intervenors could help deepen political transitions by abandoning the assumption that democracy is a natural aspiration of humankind and thus is automatically relevant to all people; by consciously promoting embedded elites even though it is much easier and less risky to work with free-floating ones; and by helping to reestablish the link between democratic politics and policy making that has been weakened by externally imposed conditionalities.

Making Democracy Relevant

In order to contribute to the deepening of transitions, foreign governments and organizations involved in the process need to devote more effort to making democracy relevant to the majority of the population in transitional states. This means, first and foremost, discarding the assumption that democracy is the aspiration of people everywhere and facing the fact that there are other ideologies that have a much more immediate appeal and are less abstract than democracy.

As a rhetorical device, the idea of democracy as the universal aspiration is hard to beat. As an assumption for guiding policy, however, it is highly misleading. What the five cases in the present study, and others, suggest is that while resentment of oppressive governments and a desire for a better life exist everywhere, these feelings can translate into different types of political demands, many of which cannot in any way be construed as representing democratic aspirations.

Even with the end of the Cold War, democracy is still competing with other ideologies. For example, nationalism is not a spent force. Western European countries appear to have put much of the problem behind them, and there is no reason to believe that other countries cannot do so eventually, but eventually is not now. In terms of immediate appeal to large numbers of people, nationalism gives democracy strong competition.

There are also political ideologies based on religion. Those based on Islam have attracted the most attention, because their adherents have become more strongly mobilized and are more willing to use violence in the pursuit of their goals. But there are faith-based ideologies in other cultures as well, and they all challenge democracy in some fashion, because religious values tend to be absolute, and democracy requires compromise. Even in an established democracy such as the United States, religious and democratic values do not always coexist comfortably.

Finally, democracy is challenged by leftist organizations, which have continuing appeal because they put the very concrete cause of socioeconomic justice ahead of the more abstract one of political and civil liberties. The Marxist-inspired socialism of the old Left has lost much of its luster, and it is difficult today to find many outside a small, die-hard intellectual elite who are willing to uphold those ideas. But broad attempts are underway to revive, in the name of antiglobalism, a socialist Left capable of addressing today's problems rather than those of the early Industrial Revolution. With about 50 percent of the world's people living on less than two dollars a day, the appeal of the Left cannot be dismissed as a thing of the past.

The movements that pursue these competing ideologies are headed by political elites who can become embedded more easily than those who advocate democracy, because they can appeal to concrete interests or to values that are part of the everyday experience of most people. The word *democracy* does not translate easily into many languages, but all societies have a word denoting a supreme being, and all draw the distinction between "us" and "them" on which nationalism is built. And globalization, while an abstract concept in theory, quickly becomes a concrete, bread-and-butter issue when local producers are put out of business by foreign imports or the privatization of utilities leads to higher costs for consumers.

The importance of political ideas that compete with democracy is clear in most of the case studies. Venezuelans chose to support President Hugo Chávez and his populist message over the old parties that represented democracy. Croats supported President Franjo Tudjman and his nationalism, and it took ten years and Tudjman's death for democratic ideas to start competing with nationalist ones—and this in a country that sees itself as an integral part of Europe. In Egypt, where

a sophisticated, democratic elite already existed in the early twentieth century, the population has shown far more support first for President Gamal Abdel Nasser's socialist ideas and now for Islamist ones than for democracy.

What can democracy promotion organizations do to help make the idea of democracy more relevant and more competitive with other ideologies? Abstract civic-education programs are not the answer to this problem—experience so far suggests that their effects are limited and, even more important, brief. Making democracy relevant does not mean simply telling people that democracy is a good thing, but showing how it can be a means of influencing the government to address the issues people care about. At the same time, democracy promoters cannot promise people concrete results, because democracy is a process with open-ended outcomes. Finally, there is no direct correlation, particularly in the short term, between democracy and improved economic conditions. Democracy did not save the United States from the Great Depression, for example.

Developing a message about democracy that is concrete enough to resonate beyond the small circle of the urban educated class but at the same time does not make promises that cannot be kept is tricky business indeed, and has often been mishandled. Democratic parties in their election campaigns and even foreign supporters of democracy trying to get people to vote in transitional elections often link the idea of democracy to that of prosperity—the underlying idea is that democratic countries are likely to have inherently superior, free-market policies, more capable government, and less corruption. Unfortunately, a country that has just held its first democratic election does not suddenly acquire a more capable or even more honest government, and economic reforms tend to inflict pain before they lead to greater prosperity. When the promised democratic dividend fails to materialize, disillusionment sets in. "This is democracy" is a sarcastic, even cynical response to the government's failure to address some major problem that I have heard personally, or has been reported to me, too often for comfort.

It is probably not outsiders who can develop a message about democracy that makes sense for specific countries. This is indeed a job for local elites, but these local elites now speak a formulaic language about democracy, which is the same from Albania to Zimbabwe, that

thus cannot go beyond general principles. This does not help deepen transitions.

The most important step that can make democracy relevant is the decision by organized interest groups, including those that are not committed to democracy as a matter of principle, to pursue their goals through democratic institutions and processes and not through other means. Prospects for the deepening of political transitions increase when socialist parties decide to compete in parliamentary elections rather than to organize underground cells to carry on the revolution, to use a historical example, or when Islamist organizations decide to do the same, to refer to a more contemporary challenge. It is only at this point that democracy stops being an abstract idea and becomes a means to a concrete end.

The decision to work through the democratic process, rather than outside it, is not one outsiders can make for local interest groups. Members of the international community, nevertheless, have a part to play. First, they need to be more open to dialogue with any embedded, organized interest group, no matter how unpromising, instead of relying solely on free-floating partners in the world of small nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) and prodemocracy organizations. Second, they need to reconsider the conditionalities and practices that, de facto, reduce the power of the very domestic, democratic institutions they promote, making it less appealing for organized interest groups to work through such institutions.

Dealing with Embedded Elites

Most of the organizations democracy promoters work with in countries with semi-authoritarian regimes are not membership based, or else have very small memberships. This is true not only of NGOs that are considered to represent civil society but of the opposition political parties, which are usually small, highly fragmented, and poorly organized. Yet in most semi-authoritarian states there are organizations with large memberships, or at least considerable emotional appeal and public support. These organizations could be a crucial element in deepening transitions even if they were not committed to democracy in principle, as long as they came to see its instrumental value.

In trying to increase support for democracy, democracy assistance providers have two options: either try to build the small, democratically oriented organizations of civil society into movements with mass memberships, thus making democracy more relevant to many and transforming the nonembedded elites who guide these organizations into embedded ones; or try to work with nondemocratic organizations that already have followings and steer them toward pursuing their goals through democratic means. The two approaches are not mutually exclusive, but the latter is the more important, because as long as organizations with substantial followings reject democracy, there will be no deepening of transition.

In some countries, democracy promoters have already been experimenting with a strategy of building small civil-society organizations into broad movements for democracy. They have recognized that only large organizations with massive support can generate sufficient power to force change in countries with semi-authoritarian or even authoritarian regimes. They experimented with this strategy in Slovakia, where they built an election-monitoring coalition into a catalyst for change, and then replicated the approach in Croatia, as mentioned earlier. They expanded this strategy in Serbia, backing what was essentially an insurgent movement that had the stated aim of defeating Yugoslav president Slobodan Milošević. Despite the enthusiasm generated by that success, democracy promoters still have a lot to learn about the conditions that made it possible to build small civil-society organizations into mass movements. They have even more to learn about whether such movements are ephemeral, disintegrating once their immediate goals are achieved, or can remain significant actors in a pluralistic, democratic system in which they are no longer the sole beneficiaries of donors' largesse. Building small civil-society organizations into mass prodemocracy movements is not a panacea; nor is it a substitute for engaging organizations that already have popular support.

There are antecedents that show how unpromising nondemocratic organizations can play a pivotal role in democratization. I have already mentioned the role of socialist parties in some European countries. Labor unions, despite a history of extremism and violence in certain periods of their development, have also helped consolidate democracy in some countries in the past by providing the needed link between broad constituencies and democratic ideals. Even in recent years,

labor unions have played a crucial part in democratic transitions—or attempted transitions—in several countries, including Poland and South Africa. Several democracy promotion organizations recognize this and already work with labor unions in many countries. Other examples of the democratic role of nondemocratic organizations are offered by Catholic countries: Christian democratic parties with close ties to an authoritarian, hierarchical Catholic Church helped foster democracy by building a bridge between church and state. Such parties convinced conservative constituencies influenced by the Catholic Church to pursue their agendas through the parliament and other institutions.

It is unlikely that any of these experiences will be replicated in the same way in other countries today. The old socialist parties are a thing of the past, and labor unions are the product of industrialization, and thus have very limited importance in countries where the economy is dominated by subsistence agriculture and the informal sector. The specific organizations will be different. The general problem, however, is the same. Organizations with significant constituencies are crucial to democratization even if they do not embrace democratic platforms and are not internally democratic.

One aspect of all attempts to increase the relevance of democracy in any country should thus be the search for embedded organizations that can play that bridging role between the ideas and institutions of democracy on one side and the concerns, beliefs, and values that motivate important constituencies on the other. Such groups are more likely to generate enough power to defeat incumbents, or at least to compete with them on a reasonably level playing field, than elite organizations, parties with little popular appeal, and small, urban NGOs.

In all five countries discussed in the present study, there are groups and organizations that will obstruct democratic transformation unless they are a part of it. In Egypt, these organizations are primarily the Islamist groups. In Venezuela, they include the people who support Chávez, and who will continue to be a threat to democracy until they are drawn into parties that will provide them with effective representation. In Croatia, they are the nationalists who backed the Croatian Democratic Union (HDZ) and who remain a threat to the second transition. In Senegal this role is played by the Sufi brotherhood, once solidly tied to the government through patronage links but now more

distant. This group must remain committed to democracy if the danger inherent in the radical ideas currently spreading throughout the Islamic world is to be avoided. Only in Azerbaijan is it difficult to identify a major, organized constituency that needs to be drawn into a democratic process lest it derail all prodemocratic change.

Reaching out to large, nondemocratic groups is difficult for outsiders. Many such groups are hostile by definition, particularly to the United States. All of them, however, include some moderate elements that may see the utility of working within a democratic system. Of course, these groups also include radical elements that will never accept democracy. There is also a risk that organizations will take advantage of the opportunity for victory that democracy offers them but will resort to undemocratic means if they win. For example, nervous white South Africans talked before 1994 about the danger of "one man, one vote, one time" elections. But there is an even greater risk in ignoring such organizations, or worse, cooperating with the incumbent government in continuing to repress them. The outcome is the perpetuation of semi-authoritarianism, at best (the price Egypt pays for keeping out Islamists), and a violent confrontation, at worst (the price Algeria paid). Of the two risky strategies, the only one that may lead to democratic results is that which seeks to bring organizations with mass followings into the democratic process, no matter how undemocratic these organizations' goals appear to be.

Reestablishing the Link between Politics and Policy

The organizations that could make democracy relevant to larger constituencies do not have to turn to democracy in order to pursue their goals. They have the option of using other avenues to obtain what they want, including violence. Nor do they need to embrace democracy in order to continue existing, unlike most donor-supported NGOs. They are thus unlikely to work within the framework of democratic institutions unless they believe that by doing so they can derive some benefits. In other words, they will accept democracy if they see it as an effective means of obtaining the policy changes they desire.

Unfortunately, democracy promotion has coincided with a process

of erosion of the ability of many governments to make autonomous policy decisions in a range of crucial areas. The policy-making capacity of many governments, including those that are democratically elected, is severely restricted by the conditionalities imposed by donor agencies. For more than two decades now, donors have required regimes to carry out numerous policy reforms, originally in the economic realm but increasingly in others as well, as a condition for receiving assistance. The more a country needs such assistance, the more limited the sphere of autonomous policy making has become.

Technically, conditionalities are not imposed by international financial institutions and bilateral donors; rather, they are agreed upon through negotiation. But negotiations by and large focus on the details of policy, not substance—for example, how and how fast a government will privatize its parastatal companies, not whether it will privatize them at all. And these negotiations, furthermore, take place among technocrats on all sides, not in the kind of open processes that should be the basis for policy making in democratic countries. Increasingly, negotiations between donors and recipient governments formally require the participation of "civil society," but the individuals supposedly representing civil society are usually picked from the realm of NGOs—which are often not representative of the populations' desires, needs, or opinions—rather than from elected institutions. There is often a good reason for sidelining institutions elected in rigged processes, but this also creates a vicious circle: There is little incentive for any interest group to work through democratic processes if the institutions so formed have no power to make decisions. As a result, the institutions remain unrepresentative and often inactive.

Deepening transitions requires reviving the weakened connection between democratic politics and policy outcomes. Outside intervenors need to abandon the prevailing assumption that there are no contradictions between their efforts to promote democracy and their prescriptions for specific policy outcomes. Policy making in a democracy is a messy and conflict-filled process in which different groups—executive agencies, political parties, lobbies, and sometimes experts—push for different goals, with the outcome ultimately being a compromise dictated by the necessity to gather enough support for a decision. The international community wants democracy, but at the same time it wants policies based on a concept of "best practices," as defined by pro-

fessional reformers rather than fashioned in political battle. (In reality, the concept of what constitutes best practices is itself far from apolitical, but it is influenced by the politics of the donor countries rather than those of the recipients.)

The tension between democratic policy making and technocratic policy making is most evident in regard to economic policies and the role of government in establishing a social safety net for its citizens. The idea that democracy and the free market go together—and consequently that democracy requires a small, streamlined government—is a dominant assumption that simply does not stand up to evidence. It is true that there has never existed (and it is impossible even to imagine) a state that put tight control of all economic activities in the hands of bureaucrats while at the same time allowing the civil liberties and free debate that are characteristic of a democracy. But democratic countries do not choose pure free-market economic models, either. European democracies until recently considered it necessary for their governments to control public utilities and key industrial sectors. Indeed, the post–World War II democratic reconstruction of Europe and Japan took place in a climate of strong statist economic intervention. Furthermore, all democracies have developed social welfare systems that, once in place, are difficult to scale back because of public opposition. And all interfere in domestic and foreign markets in many different ways, from subsidies for agriculture to the imposition of tariffs on goods that compete with domestic production.

All these departures from the free-market economic model, furthermore, are not aberrations. Rather, they are inevitable outcomes of democracy. A political system that allows interest groups to set forth their demands and mobilize the power of voters to sway the government's decisions will inevitably produce compromise policies that are responsive to the demands of mobilized interest groups, and thus that will modify the pure economic logic of the ideal free market with the political logic of the democratic marketplace.

Donors do not limit their policy prescriptions to economics. The range of what is prescribed is vast indeed, as I showed briefly in the discussion of Croatia's second transition. Many of these prescriptions are supposed to strengthen democracy by making countries that have adopted democratic institutions more similar to established democracies in all respects. In reality, however, policy prescriptions coming

from the outside contribute to shallow transitions. They embellish the democratic facade rather than help institutions become tools citizens can use to pursue their goals in competitive processes.

Donors could go one step further to promote debate on important policy issues in the appropriate domestic institutions by requiring that all foreign assistance programs be discussed by relevant domestic institutions.[1] While such a requirement would in itself be another conditionality, it would be the imposition of a process of decision making, not of a policy outcome, and thus it would be more compatible with democracy.

Foreign donors negotiate their assistance programs with respective recipients' executive agencies, increasingly in consultation with civil society organizations, as I have mentioned. However, such consultations are exclusive processes, to which only a select few are invited. Donors should insist that assistance projects, which imply policy choices on the part of the recipient as well as a commitment of its own funds, be discussed in national parliaments. This would make a more significant contribution to the vitality of national legislatures—and show citizens the value of the democratic process—than, say, providing training for parliamentary staff.

Of course, from the point of view of donors, such debates would complicate matters greatly. They could result in the rejection of some programs, particularly those involving loans, and would force compromise on others. And it would not be possible to submit all assistance to parliamentary scrutiny in all countries; obviously, it would be more beneficial to vet programs in more plural parliaments, such as Croatia's, than in those heavily dominated by government parties, such as Azerbaijan's. Still, if the goal is to deepen transitions beyond the facade of democracy, donors should accept the utility of debate on foreign assistance within the institutions of recipient countries.

Making Choices

The suggestions in the present chapter about the steps members of the international community should consider in order to deepen democratic transitions lead to an inescapable conclusion: Meeting the chal-

lenge of semi-authoritarianism will require donors to make clearer and harder choices among conflicting goals in many countries, to engage more often in high-end activities that entail greater risks but also the possibility of greater payoffs, to decide when they are justified in intervening more forcefully in the deepening of transitions, and to do a better job of coordinating overall policy toward individual countries and the democracy promotion projects they fund in those countries.

Since the early 1990s, the international community has sometimes been able to avoid some hard choices and tough issues, in part because of numerous apparent successes in democracy promotion. But the rise of semi-authoritarian regimes, as well as outright reversals in countries that have suffered new military coups d'état or sunk into civil conflict, is dispelling illusions about democratization, fully revealing its conundrums. When the major obstacles to the deepening of transitions are structural, little difference can be made by low-end activities—such as creating more civil-society NGOs or giving civic education to a few thousand more people—directed at thwarting the games played by the incumbents. This means that democracy promoters need either to engage in high-end activities or, where that does not appear feasible under the circumstances, to disengage from democracy promotion for the time being. Not all semi-authoritarian regimes should be targeted for high-end intervention in the short run; nor should all interventions necessarily be directed at creating a democratic political system immediately. In many countries, identifying next steps is much more important than trying to figure out what the political system should look like eventually.

Even for governments that invest considerable effort and funds in democracy promotion, democracy is never the only consideration in the formulation of policy toward a particular country. This is inevitable and is not a problem in itself. What are problematic and counterproductive are the situations in which a donor continues to go through the motions of democracy promotion in a country with a semi-authoritarian regime, even as other interests make the donor reluctant to confront the government with high-end activities. By continuing to carry out low-end, ineffective democracy promotion activities as if there were no problem, outsiders help the semi-authoritarian regime maintain the facade of democracy. It would be less detrimental in the long run if they would simply cease democracy promotion activities and instead used their limited resources for other purposes.

The necessity of using high-end activities in semi-authoritarian states raises questions about the right of donors to interfere in other countries' domestic policies. Democracy promoters have avoided confronting this issue by pretending that democracy is such a universal value that its promotion is not a partisan political activity. This is never true—there are winners and losers in a process of democratization, and the fact that the losers are the undemocratic "bad guys" does not make democracy promotion less political or less of an interference in another country's domestic politics. Many low-end policies are not effective enough to constitute serious interference. But higher-end activities are inherently political. Do donors have the right to engage in them? Or is such interference in flagrant contradiction of the principles of sovereignty and the ideals of democracy? No single answer can cover all situations, particularly in semi-authoritarian states where violations of citizens' rights are not extreme. All forms of democracy promotion constitute interference to some extent. Whether they also contradict the very idea of democracy depends on the form of intervention. For example, attempts to encourage nondemocratic organizations to pursue their goals democratically constitute interference but do not hinder democracy. The decision by foreign governments to impose multiple conditionalities on a country without any consultation with its more representative institutions both entails interference and violates the idea of democracy.

Whether an outside intervenor decides to promote democracy through high-end activities or to step back until a more favorable time, a more focused effort to deal with semi-authoritarian regimes requires better coordination between diplomats in charge of the overall policy toward a country and democracy specialists in other agencies. For the United States, that means coordinating the high politics of diplomatic relations, which are in the hands of the Department of State and its diplomats on the ground, with those of the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) and its democracy and development specialists both in Washington and in the recipient country, and with the array of "partners"—both American NGOs and consultants—through which USAID implements its projects. Democracy specialists are highly suspicious of interference by State Department officials, believing that the diplomats' multiple concerns with security, economics, and domestic politics interfere with democracy pro-

motion. Indeed, they do. But if the high politics of the relations between the United States and semi-authoritarian regimes do not include democracy promotion, then low-end democracy promotion programs cannot possibly make a difference.

Dealing with Different Types of Semi-Authoritarian Regimes

Each type of semi-authoritarian regime has special characteristics that democracy promoters need to take into account. While the shallowness of transitions is a problem characteristic of all such regimes, a deepening of the process poses quite different challenges in states in equilibrium, in decaying states, and in states where semi-authoritarianism is accompanied by a dynamic process of change. Furthermore, even regimes that fall within each broad category are far from identical to each other. As a result, no single set of policies should be considered for all semi-authoritarian regimes. I will return to the case studies to provide examples of how the problems of each country could be addressed.

Semi-Authoritarian Regimes in Equilibrium

Semi-authoritarian regimes in equilibrium pose the most difficult problems. They are well established, stable, and have their own proven methods of dealing with challenges to their stability. Semi-authoritarian regimes in equilibrium, in other words, are extremely good at remaining as they are. The allocation of power is closed in such regimes, and elections have no impact. In Egypt, the extent to which people are aware of this closure is reflected in the constantly heard assertion that change can only come from the top, as the result of an elite decision that might occur when power is transferred to a new generation—this, it should be noted, is an optimistic view of what the future holds.

Democracy promoters have three options in such closed situations, none particularly good: to do nothing and wait in the hope that more enlightened members of the elite, probably younger ones, will decide that democracy is a good thing; to continue with the present low-end

programs of support for civil society organizations and institutional strengthening in order to maintain the pretense that they are contributing to democracy; or to help mobilize a countervailing force capable of threatening the incumbent regime sufficiently to convince it to open up the political system.

The first, do-nothing alternative is defeatist and is also based on the unsubstantiated assumption that, with time, governments are bound to change. Given the stability attained by a state such as Egypt, this is probably wishful thinking, at least in the time span of interest to policy makers. With an economy that is growing too slowly to benefit more than the members of a small elite, Egypt is not soon going to experience the emergence of new interest groups that are anxious to control the government and influence its policies yet are also capable of mounting a real challenge. A wait-and-see attitude is an acceptance of semi-authoritarianism, not a strategy for long-term democratization. The high politics of the Middle East conflict and the imperative to combat terrorism may well lead the international community, particularly the United States, to decide not to rock Egypt's domestic political boat. This may be a justifiable decision in terms of the larger problems of the region, but commenting on that issue goes beyond the scope of the present study. But adopting a passive stance is not a decision that can be justified on the grounds that Egypt's political evolution will in any case lead that country to democracy. Egypt has had a semi-authoritarian regime for a quarter-century, and may be able to maintain it for a long time to come. The recent trend, furthermore, points to a hardening of semi-authoritarianism, rather than its relaxation, as a consequence of the rise of Islamist organizations.

The second option—continuing the present low-end programs—is counterproductive because it demeans the idea of democracy in the eyes of many Egyptians. To the opponents of the regime, the programs that fall into the U.S. democracy portfolio, such as the NGO Support Center, look like a form of assistance to President Hosni Mubarak because they are vetted by his government. European countries have been somewhat more daring than the United States in providing support to genuinely independent organizations, particularly in the human rights field, but these are small, free-floating groups that are too weak to make a difference.

The third option—working to develop a countervailing force—is

the only one that holds any hope of influencing political change in Egypt. It is, however, a risky option. It requires high-level political decisions on the part of the governments embarking on that route, as well as coordination between the politics of diplomatic relations and the politics of assistance. Furthermore, the possibility of developing a countervailing force in Egypt by building up the existing organizations of civil society and parties that have democracy as their goal is remote. The government has made it clear that it does not want these organizations to grow, and they are too weak and isolated to resist. Already, many human rights organizations have disbanded, or at least have ceased functioning.

There is, on the other hand, a countervailing force the government cannot eliminate, namely the Islamist organizations. Repression has not worked against them, because they are embedded groups with broad support. Of course, these are not organizations that speak the language of democracy. Some, in fact, are far too radical to ever become amenable to being part of a democratic process. But others probably are already amenable. The position of the Muslim Brotherhood is ambiguous—it has followed the path of parliamentary politics when it has been allowed, and its leaders claim that they want to do so again. There are also smaller, moderate organizations spinning off from the Brotherhood that declare themselves in favor of parliamentary politics, but whether such groups by themselves could gather enough support to make a difference is not known.

There are a lot of unanswered questions about the potential role of Islamist groups in any democratization process in Egypt, but if the international community wants to make a difference it needs to open a dialogue with them, at least those willing to talk. Such a dialogue would have three purposes. The first would be to exert pressure on the government to likewise engage the Islamists in dialogue by putting the regime on notice that the international community would no longer accept at face value the contention that all Islamist organizations are dangerous to the stability of the country and the prospects for democracy. The second purpose would be to get to know the organizations and the differences among them, and ultimately to understand which ones could play a role in moving Egypt away from the present semi-authoritarianism, and how they could do so. The third purpose would be to stimulate change within the organizations themselves by

showing that donors are not averse in principle to their participation in a more liberal political process.

Such dialogue needs to be undertaken at many different levels, not just with the leadership of the Muslim Brotherhood. There is, first of all, a vast world of Islamic organizations, which are more deeply part of the civil society than a lot of the donor-supported civil rights NGOs. Such groups need to be understood better, since they are part of the country's social capital. The question is whether they are a part of the social capital that can contribute to democracy.

There are also the professional syndicates, whose members in the early 1990s appeared to be on the verge of voting in new leadership affiliated with Islamist groups and were stopped by the government's freezing of their internal elections. Are these syndicates truly hotbeds of radical, dangerous political Islam? Or were they mostly guilty of rejecting the candidates favored by the government? Would freer elections turn the syndicates into agents of religious obscurantism, or would they contribute to the pluralism on which democracy is built? And what does it mean when the country's professional class, even one debased by two generations of government service at derisory salaries, is apparently ready to elect Islamists to head their associations? Engagement with the professional syndicates is crucial, because it is difficult to envisage how the country is ever to become democratic if its professional class is not part of the process.

Finally, there are the major political organizations, in particular the Muslim Brotherhood. Starting a process of exploration of and dialogue with such groups would require a variety of approaches and a lot of delicate balancing. International NGOs, professional associations, and party foundations would probably be in the best position to engage with their Egyptian counterparts, but they need enough backing from their respective governments to make it more difficult for the Mubarak regime to stop such contacts immediately. No matter how and by whom they are approached, many Islamist organizations will refuse, at least initially, a dialogue with the international groups, particularly those backed by the United States. It is equally likely that many Islamist groups will prove too radical to become part of the democratic process, or conversely too narrowly focused on charity and self-help projects to become part of that segment of civil society directly relevant to democracy. But there will undoubtedly be more moderate groups,

which could play a constructive role if included and continue to be a negative force if excluded.

The approach I suggest is neither easy nor unproblematic. It would be resisted by the Mubarak regime, which has no interest in democracy or in taking steps that might increase the legitimacy of organizations that could command a significant following in a free election. But any significant democratization program in Egypt or any other stable semi-authoritarian state would be resisted by the government. Despite the difficulty and potential for controversy, however, democracy promotion projects in semi-authoritarian states in equilibrium will remain ineffective unless they engage groups with followings, because there can be no democracy without countervailing power.

Semi-authoritarian regimes in equilibrium are unlikely to change on their own, at least until new elements can be injected to alter this equilibrium. In theory, breaking the equilibrium should be the goal of democracy promoters in all such countries, but the opportunities might not always exist. Egypt affords opportunities because of the existence of organizations with considerable public support, which could change the balance of power and force the semi-authoritarian government to face competition.

Semi-Authoritarian Regimes of Decay

The semi-authoritarianism of decay is represented in the present study by Azerbaijan and Venezuela. Although I have grouped these two countries together, they are in some ways quite different from each other. Azerbaijan's semi-authoritarianism was a response to the chaos of a postcommunist transition for which the country was utterly unprepared; Azerbaijani president Heydar Aliyev is now trying to transform this emergency system into a regime in equilibrium similar to Egypt's, that is, into a machine capable of perpetuating itself beyond his own lifetime. Venezuela's semi-authoritarianism emerged from the decay of democracy. It is more complex and more unstable, with little likelihood of ever reaching equilibrium and consolidation. The two countries require different approaches.

Azerbaijan does not offer the international community many entry points for the introduction of change. Basic structural conditions are

unfavorable. The country is mired in a no-war, no-peace situation, with no prospects for an early solution. The results include a large refugee population and a depressed economy. Aside from the problem with Nagorno-Karabagh and the Armenian minority, the country is not deeply polarized, at least not yet, but there are many fault lines running through the society, with religious and economic divisions becoming more pronounced.

Democracy has scant relevance to the majority of the population: None of the parties have been able, or have even tried, to articulate a program that gives content to the idea of democracy. Most parties are highly personal vehicles of their leaders, selling personalities rather than programs. The Azerbaijan Popular Front lost its best-known representative with the death of Abulfaz Elchibey, and the appeal of its original nationalist message has been blunted by the attainment of independence and by the festering problem of Nagorno-Karabagh, to which the party offers no solution beyond tough talk. Furthermore, the party endorses a Turkic identity for Azerbaijan that is not shared by all its citizens, particularly the non-Azeri minority and those Azeris living in the southern region of the country who have ties to northern Iran based on religion. The actions of the regime's opponents do not augur well for prodemocratic change, either. Attempts by the opposition parties to work together against Aliyev have faltered repeatedly because they are all headed by strong personalities who refuse to defer to each other in any form.

Civil society organizations also do little to spread a culture of democracy and to give the idea substantive meaning, even less than their counterparts elsewhere. Small, new, and not embedded in the society, these organizations are closely tied to the political parties—indeed, the distinction between civil society and political society has little meaning in Azerbaijan.

Democracy in Azerbaijan is a game played by the ruling party elite, the opposition parties, and the NGOs. This elite is divided, but not along lines that would favor an elite pact leading to a political transition. The dominant divisions are not between hard-liners and reformers with different ideas about what the country needs, but among personal factions that all want power. Without an organized popular force pressing for reform or otherwise manifesting its discontent, a reformist faction is unlikely to emerge, let alone prevail.

Democracy promotion in Azerbaijan is thus unlikely to bear fruit in the near future. The international community is faced with the unhappy prospect of either continuing with ineffective low-end activities, particularly support for civil society organizations, or suspending democracy promotion activities altogether. The chances that the country will move beyond semi-authoritarianism are probably equally dim, regardless of whether members of the international community continue their present activities or step back. Continuing to support civil society organizations that have no membership or that are simply part of the apparatus of a political party will not change the political equation; nor would suspending democratization programs jolt Aliyev into acting more democratically. Suspending democracy promotion programs has the advantage of sending other semi-authoritarian regimes the message that the international community will not continue indefinitely to accept at face value the fiction that these countries are democratizing. Such a move, however, would be of no more than marginal significance. High-end options are not open to the international community: There is no promising organization that could be built up into a popular movement to get rid of Aliyev. In any case, even if he were eliminated, the countervailing forces necessary for a democratic system to emerge are weak at best. Azerbaijan will probably continue to decay politically over the near term no matter what the international community does.

Venezuela presents a very different situation, rich with possibilities for change, although not necessarily for democratic change. The long-term extension of the status quo is not a likely scenario for a number of reasons. Venezuela has a tradition of democracy, and while the politics of the late democratic period disgusted a large part of the population into supporting Chávez, polls also show that a majority of Venezuelans believe that the problems of democracy could be fixed. Venezuela also has a pluralistic political system, even now. There is a tradition of political organization on a large scale in the old parties and the labor unions. Even if the old parties have faded, new ones have formed, and labor unions remain players. Furthermore, many analysts believe that the Acción Democrática party structures, although weakened, have not disappeared, particularly in the provinces. The country has a tradition of a free and critical press. Whatever Chávez's personal inclinations, this is not an easy country to coerce into quiescence. Venezuelan pluralism is real.

But pluralism can lead to conflict and further decay as well as to

democracy. Socioeconomic polarization runs deep. Chávez has repoliticized the military, first with his own coup attempts and then, once he became president, by assigning it a social reform role that is inconsistent with the concept of a professional military and that has caused considerable tension among officers. In his effort to make the military an integral part of the society, Chávez has succeeded all too well, as was seen in the attempted coup of April 2002. While this new situation is counterbalanced by a tradition of military professionalism established over almost half a century, that tradition has been shaken along with the tradition of democracy.

In this fluid situation with its contradictory trends, the international community has an interest in preventing further decay and helping restore a democratic process. However, this is a country where the most common tools of democracy promotion cannot be used. The international community does not have as much leverage with Venezuela as it has with donor-dependent countries. The country receives some World Bank loans for antipoverty programs, but it is not eligible to receive assistance from most donors because it is an upper-middle-income country. Outsiders provide assistance to Venezuelan NGOs, especially human rights groups. The assistance provided by the U.S. National Endowment for Democracy has become somewhat tainted by questions about the ties of some of the grantees to the plotters of the April 2002 coup attempt, complicating matters. In any case, assistance to NGOs in Venezuela serves a useful role in supporting specific organizations but is of marginal importance in terms of the future of democracy; Venezuela is not a country where the population needs to be introduced to the concept of democracy or awakened to the possibility of political participation. Nor do Venezuelans need training in order to organize their parliament or run an independent press. They have done all this for a long time.

The threat to democracy in Venezuela does not come from the weaknesses democracy promoters normally address, but from the perception of a majority of the population that democracy is irrelevant to their problems. Chávez's decreasing popularity suggests that he, too, is coming to be perceived as incapable of providing answers. He has spent too much time on political reform while failing to deliver on economic promises. This provides an opening for democratic parties to show that they have answers.

To the extent that the international community can help convince Venezuelans that a democratic system can provide answers to the country's problems, it is not through the organizations that specialize in democracy assistance, but through those that deal with economic problems. Venezuela needs help in devising policies that address the issue of poverty in meaningful ways. More important, the crafting of such policies must result from the work of domestic democratic institutions, not from discussions among technocrats, because that will not restore confidence in the relevance of democracy. The discussion needs to be broader and more public, involving all political parties, the organizations of civil society, and the legislature. The international community has the capacity to encourage such a discussion, particularly by providing support for political parties and organizations that seek to address issues of economic policy. The real problem here is one of political will: whether the international community is willing to promote a dialogue that can help restore faith in the relevance of democracy but may have policy consequences the international community does not like. In order to help overcome semi-authoritarianism and prevent further political decay in Venezuela, the international community has to decide whether it values democratic politics more than its own policy prescriptions.

Semi-Authoritarian Regimes of Dynamic Change

Semi-authoritarian regimes in countries where change is being driven by internal factors are the most promising ones. It is important for democracy promoters, however, to understand the real nature of the change that is taking place and to take it into account in their programs. Croatia and Senegal, the examples chosen in the present study to illustrate the semi-authoritarianism of dynamic change, are not static states. Both recently experienced an important turnover of political leadership. In Croatia, the ultranationalist HDZ was defeated in February 2000, and the forty-year grip on power of the Parti Socialiste was finally broken by the victory of Abdoullaye Wade in Senegal just a month later. These turnovers do not guarantee that semi-authoritarianism is a problem of the past, because in both countries the change was extremely shallow, driven by highly contingent political events. It was the death of Tudjman that made it possible for the opposition par-

ties to defeat the HDZ, while in Senegal the *alternance* was made possible above all by Moustapha Niasse's decisions first to break with President Abdou Diouf and then to back Wade in the second round of the presidential election. The challenge for outsiders in both cases is thus to help the transitions deepen and to perpetuate the change. Croatia offers considerably more opportunity to do so than Senegal. Croatia, however, is also the country where donors can do the greatest amount of damage if they continue asking too much, and in particular if they seek to impose policies that cannot be adopted democratically because the domestic political process would lead to other solutions.

A deepening of the political transition leading to a stable democracy is not impossible in Croatia, even in the short-to-medium term. The idea of democracy has more meaning for more people there than in some of the other countries discussed in the present study. Croatia has a more urban and better-educated population, for whom even abstract democratic principles mean something in practice—the ideas of freedom of speech and freedom of assembly resonate better in the streets of Rijeka than in the villages of the Sahel. Furthermore, the allure of membership in the European Union, for which a democratic political system is a precondition, gives a concrete meaning to democracy even for people who are not attracted to its principles. Political parties are becoming better organized, although factionalism remains a problem. Organizations of civil society have more capacity to organize and implement programs, although most are still free floating and donor dependent, while some of the better-embedded ones, such as war veterans' groups, are not democratic. The political scene is nevertheless active and pluralistic. Croatia is also changing economically. It is true that the economy is still stagnant and that the unemployment rate is high, and may well rise further as a result of cuts in the civil service. But reform and privatization are beginning to change the character of the economy, reducing the role of the state and slowly creating an entrepreneurial class.

But a revival of semi-authoritarianism leading to decay is not out of the question. The government has not been able to deliver much more than an improved political climate, and it needs to provide something more tangible or risk a backlash. Ethnic tensions remain high, particularly in the regions that were most affected by war and to which the Serb refugees are returning. The Croatian refugees from Bosnia, many of whom cannot return there, or are afraid to, add another ele-

ment of uncertainty. The unexpectedly strong performance of the HDZ in the most recent local elections shows that much can still go wrong in Croatia. If the economy continues to stagnate or deteriorates further, ethnic tensions may increase again, and Croats might again be open to the appeal of nationalist organizations offering a different kind of salvation.

Intervenors can help deepen the transition that is underway and increase the prospects for a democratic outcome not by stepping up their democracy promotion efforts but by scaling down their demands on the country, interfering less with the domestic political process and allowing the many political forces in the country to work out solutions to major problems through their own institutions. The international community must accept that democracy will only take hold if the government and the parliament pick their own way among the multitude of problems and find solutions that are acceptable to the major political parties and interest groups. A democratic government needs to respond—and even more to be seen as responding—to the expectations of its citizens, not to the expectations of the international community. In a fragile transitional situation such as that prevailing in Croatia, it is particularly important for the government to be responsive: In a well-established democracy, a government that fails to respond to the expectations of the majority is voted out of office; in a transitional situation, it is democracy itself that could be rejected.

The international community can best help to deepen Croatia's transition by examining the combined impact of its demands and conditionalities on democracy there. There is an urgent need for better coordination among all the bilateral and multilateral agencies that are involved in promoting reform in Croatia. In particular, these agencies need to evaluate the extent to which their respective demands and pressures are compatible with each other and with the democracy to which all claim to be committed. Democracy promoters also need to reassess how they work with Croatia's institutions now that they have become more open and pluralistic, in order to make sure that they do not undermine these institutions by pursuing their own visions of how Croatia should reform. While such discussion is important in all countries, it is particularly so in a country such as Croatia, where these institutions are pluralistic and are still acquiring capacity.

Low-end assistance to civil society, political parties, and government institutions may be more useful in Croatia in the next few years

than it has been in the past, particularly if the transition deepens further. Democracy assistance in Croatia in the past has been based on a supply-side approach—hoping to increase the demand for democracy by supplying organizations with funding and training. A deepening of the transition, however, could increase the demand for technical assistance by organizations and institutions that are already playing an active role in a democratic process but feel the need to acquire more know-how. Still-inexperienced political parties competing in open elections would probably find such training useful. Members of parliament actively engaged in drafting legislation or amending bills introduced by the executive could do their jobs more easily with the help of trained staff and with access to information retrieval systems. But such programs, however useful, have only secondary importance to providing decision making space for domestic political institutions.

The case of Senegal is less encouraging. The country is still stagnant economically and socially, and even the impulse toward political change seems to have exhausted itself with the *alternance*. With political parties and civil society still weak, and Wade very much a part of the old political elite, Senegal can easily slip back into the benign semi-authoritarianism that characterized it before the *alternance*. Indeed, there are indications that this is already happening.

Most low-end activities are probably not going to help much in Senegal. A little more funding for civil society organizations or a few more civic education projects will not create real countervailing forces or well-defined interest groups. On the other hand, high-end activities hardly appear justified in a country where the government is not particularly repressive and the human rights record is reasonably good. Donors should accept that, for the time being, democracy in Senegal will mean the *alternance*, and they should concentrate on keeping the possibility of further alternations of power open. Election assistance is thus particularly important for Senegal.

Conclusions

Semi-authoritarian regimes are today's major challenge to democracy, and fostering further change in countries with such regimes is the main challenge for the United States and other countries that

make the promotion of democracy an important part of their foreign policy. In order to meet this challenge, these countries need to address more directly the structural problems that facilitate and encourage semi-authoritarianism. The measures I have suggested, both in general and for the five case study countries, provide indications of how democracy promoters could address some *structural* problems. In doing so, these measures depart considerably from the typical democracy promotion activities of the last decade. In some cases, I have suggested riskier and more intrusive policies; in others, I have argued that doing less would be a greater contribution to democracy.

The more typical democracy promotion programs are useful in some cases, but they should not be used indiscriminately. In particular, support for small NGOs should not be considered an all-purpose activity, helpful in all circumstances. Supporting nonembedded elites does not broaden political space in countries with semi-authoritarian regimes, although even small organizations that can provide specialized knowledge may be useful in countries whose political environment is already more open. Elections assistance is useless at best or even sends the wrong messages in semi-authoritarian regimes in equilibrium or those experiencing decay, where the problem is not the technical quality of elections but the repressive measures taken over a period of years or the absence of a credible challenge. But in a country such as Senegal, where democracy will probably only mean *alternance* for the foreseeable future, election assistance is an important activity. For this, and for any other type of program, it is the specifics of the situation that determine whether an outside initiative is helpful, pointless, or counterproductive. Conditions do matter, and they matter a great deal.

The rise of semi-authoritarianism is a disappointment. This is not what people committed to democracy in their own countries and outsiders seeking to assist democratic transitions hoped for in the early 1990s. Analysis of the outcome of the last decade shows that the number of new democratic regimes is much smaller than the number of new semi-authoritarian ones. It would serve no purpose to try to make this reality more palatable by pretending that semi-authoritarian regimes are just imperfect democratic ones. On the contrary, they are of an altogether different type that requires different approaches from democracy promoters. Even with different, high-end approaches, out-

siders will not always be able to make a substantial difference. A transition to democracy is not inevitable in all semi-authoritarian states, and in most it is certainly not imminent.

The disappointment, however, should not overshadow the fact that the rise of these semi-authoritarian regimes in itself demonstrates the extent of the political transformation of the world since the end of the Cold War, one that has transformed the language of politics in most countries as well as the structure of their formal political systems. In many cases, furthermore, semi-authoritarian regimes are less repressive and allow their citizens somewhat more political space than their predecessors did. This is not enough, but it is a positive change nonetheless.