

## Democratization in the Gulf Monarchies and American Civil Society

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### *Abstract*

The paper deals with the efforts made by American private sector and civil society actors after 2000 to popularize democratic values and norms in the six Gulf states, namely Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates. The study is focused on areas including politics, education, culture, media, human rights, and women empowerment. The paper also deals with approaches adopted, goals and objectives set and strategies devised and employed by the American NGOs regarding democracy promotion in the Gulf region.

*Key words:* civil society, democratic values and norms, democratization, human rights, women empowerment

### **Introduction**

As the Bush Administration laid an increased emphasis on democracy promotion in the Arab world, attention of the American nongovernmental sector was also drawn to the goal of promoting democracy in the region. Nongovernmental U.S. organizations worked

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shoulder to shoulder with the governmental organizations. It does not mean that the American NGOs have not been engaged in democracy promotion in the Arab world before 2000 when George W. Bush took charge of the presidential office. But the point is that there was a mega change in the frequency as well as volume of activities directed by the American civil society to the cause of democracy in the region.

Events of 9/11 not only had caused terrible shocks to the Bush Administration but also to the American people. Civil society and businesses in the United States could not stay indifferent to the miseries of those who suffered from the 9/11 events. A strong sense of insecurity prevailed among the Americans. This sense of insecurity mobilized the American NGOs and businesses for making practical contributions to the American security in the longer term, in particular, and to the world peace, in general. The realization of the need of ‘doing something’ and the resulting mobilization required a concrete policy and direction. This policy and the direction were provided by the President: promoting democracy in the Middle East.

### **Organizations and Programs**

Two types of American organizations in nongovernmental sector played their role: (i) organizations focusing on a single area, like research, human rights, etc., and (ii) organizations working in more than one areas. Human Rights Watch (HRW) is an example of the former and National Democratic Institute (NDI) of the latter.

American civil society employed all types of resources in order to spread democracy in the Middle East, including the Gulf countries. A variety of American organizations, institutions and companies made contributions in introducing democratic values, norms and institutions to the Gulf societies. NGOs, obviously, were at the forefront. Besides, think-tanks, advocacy groups, universities, internet-based groups and networks, businesses, and media companies, also played their role in this regard. Many of the NGOs were provided support, financially and/or otherwise, by the Bush Administration.

A large number of organizations, institutions and programs were launched during 2000 and 2008 by the private American sector—civil society and private businesses.

Some of the newly established ones and the year of their establishment are given in the following table.

**Table 1: American Organizations Contributing towards Democracy in the Gulf Region  
Launched during 2000 to 2008**

	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Year of Establishment</b>
1)	Brookings Doha Center	2008
2)	Carnegie Middle East Center	2006
3)	U.S.-Saudi Arabian Strategic Dialogue (SUSRIS)	2003
4)	Saban Center for Middle East Policy	2002
5)	Democracy Coalition Project (DCP)	2001
6)	Center for Democracy and Human Rights in Saudi Arabia (CDHR)	2004
7)	Sultan Qaboos Cultural Center (SQCC)	2005
8)	Center for Democracy and Election Management (CDEM)	2002
9)	Network of Arab American Professionals (NAAP)	2001

### **Approaches and Strategies**

Paying attention to education, culture, media, human rights and women empowerment was thought necessary and strategies were devised to liberalize these areas in a democratic way. American educators and doctors were brought to the region for the sake of introducing democratic norms and values to the people. Monitoring the ongoing situation in the region was necessary in order for planning accordingly. In-depth understanding of the states and societies was required, so a large number of research works were generated by American think-tanks, academia, and professional researchers.

Most of these organizations made efforts for promoting liberal democratic ideals in an apolitical fashion. Perhaps this is why the critics argue that the NGOs “targeted the effects not the fact of autocracy.” But exceptions were also there. Human Rights Watch, for example, took directly political stances. It criticized donors “for funding human rights bodies in developing states that lacked proper independence from non- or weakly democratic governments.”<sup>1</sup>

National Endowment for Democracy (NED) worked to bring together democracy activists from democratic and autocratic countries into a “community of democrats.”<sup>2</sup> Network of Arab American Professionals (NAAP) made efforts to create social and professional networks between and among Arab-Americans in the United States and other parts of the world. Promoting political interests of the Arab American community in the United States was NAAP’s another area of focus.<sup>3</sup> Creating a network of specialists from every Gulf country was a major area of work of the Gulf/2000 Project. Center for Democracy and Election Management (CDEM), at the American University, in Washington, D.C. focused on issues related to polls and balloting. Many of the organizations built partnerships and made collaborations with one another in order to maximize the impact of their efforts. American NGOs worked with governments along with the civil society and private sector in the Gulf countries.

American civil society and nongovernmental organizations pursued a wide variety of goals and objectives regarding democratization of the Gulf countries. Among their goals and objectives were bringing awareness; advocating for reforms in political, economic, educational and religious institutions; social liberalization; participatory and pluralistic politics; improvement of human rights conditions; women empowerment; and enhancement of ties among politicians in the region.

A range of strategies and tools were employed by the American organizations and businesses including advocacy for reforms; debate and discussion through conferences, seminars, colloquia, roundtables, dialogues; training schools and workshops and other education programs; generating required information and providing new perspectives; launching blogs and websites; and distributing newsletters through emails. In addition, the American civil society made a good use of exchanges (trips, visits, tours, business missions); creation of networks; co-education; and talk shows. They also encouraged partnerships in the fields of education, business, entertainment, etc., supported democratic reformers and democracy activists, made policy recommendations, provided funds, and stimulated collaborations among organizations from the United States and the Gulf.

**Democracy Awareness Campaign**

There were two types of private American organizations and institutions that took part in the awareness, advocacy, and propaganda campaign for democracy in the Gulf. First type of these organizations strove for propagating and advocating within the United States. The second type made efforts to propagate and advocate at the international level, including the Gulf region and the Middle East. Among the organizations falling into the first category is the Americans for Middle East Understanding (AMEU). It endeavored to create in the United States a deeper appreciation of the culture and history of the Middle East and current events taking place in the region. Similarly, Middle East Policy Council (MEPC) and National Council on U.S.-Arab Relations (NCUSAR) were dedicated to improve Americans' understanding and knowledge of the Arab world and the Middle East. Project on Middle East Democracy (POMED) and Arab American Institute (AAI) advocated within the United State for Arab democracy. POMED made efforts for influencing American policy "to peacefully support sustained, authentic democratic reform" in the Middle East. AAI encouraged Arab American participation in the American electoral system.

Saudi-U.S. Forum (SAF) and U.S.-Saudi Arabian Strategic Dialogue (SUSRIS) fall under the second category of organizations that work at the international level. Both of these organizations provide information and resources helpful in a better understanding between the people of the United States and Saudi Arabia. Project on Middle East Democracy and Development (MEDD), Democracy Coalition Project (DCP), and other similar institutions also carry out activities at international level. DCP campaigns for a permanent UN Democracy Caucus. MEDD builds understanding on strategies for political and economic reform.

These organizations and institutions employed different strategies and used multiple tools to achieve above-mentioned objectives. SUSRIS, POMED, and DCP held roundtables, dialogues, and periodic meetings. In addition to activities in other areas, AMEU and NCUSAR also launched educational programs. AAI, DCP, and POMED conducted research along with other activities. AAI publishes a bi-monthly *The Link*. SAF maintains a website for spreading information and sends emails to the subscribers.

CDHR focused on democratic reform in Saudi Arabia and also campaigns for improvement of human rights in the country. As a part of its campaign it has issued guiding principles for blue print of a transitional constitution of democratic Saudi Arabia. The guidelines revolve around the principles of free and fair elections, universal suffrage, fair political representation, limited terms of public office, and restricted mandates.

Academic, educational, business, and cultural exchanges on part of American civil society were a crucial part of the efforts that contributed towards pushing democratic reform in the Gulf. High profile visits also played a role. In 2008, for U.S. president Jimmy Carter, for example, visited Saudi Arabia and supported democratic reforms in the country.<sup>4</sup>

Many of the American nongovernmental organizations held dialogues, seminars and conferences at national and international levels on the subject. Three of the ten international conferences convened by the Gulf/2000 Project were held within the Gulf countries. A conference held by the Gulf/2000 Project in 2005 at the University of Pennsylvania was titled as “Borders, Battles, and Cultural Bonds: A Historical and political perspective on Gulf Societies.” In 2001, a colloquium on U.S.-Arab relations, held by the AMIDEAST, was participated by a group of 20 graduate students of University of Maryland College Park and a group of 20 Fulbright grantees from the Middle East. The University of Maryland University College hosted the colloquium.

In 2003, a conference was held by the Rockefeller Foundation on Saudi-Arabian-American relations. A conversation took place between around 20 Americans and Saudis. The conference was first in a series. The second was held in 2004. Around ten American organizations and institutions, including Democracy Coalition Project and International Studies Association, participated in the Sixth International Conference of New or Restored Democracies in Doha, Qatar in 2006.

In 2007, CSIS Middle East Program launched Gulf Roundtable Series on monthly basis to explore social, economic and political trends in the Gulf region. Goal of the series was to identify opportunities for constructive U.S. engagement. In 2004, NDI-sponsored Congress of Democrats from the Islamic World (CDIW) in Turkey, was also participated by individuals from Kuwait and Bahrain. Editor-in-chief *Al-Watan Daily* (Kuwait) highlighted obstacles faced by the democratization process in the country. The

Congress decided to establish an association of democratic political parties from the Muslim countries. “Islam and democracy are compatible” was the message boldly delivered to the journalists and politicians by the Congress.<sup>5</sup>

Policy makers, scholars, and activists discussed how to promote democracy and freedom in the Muslim World at the CSID Fifth Annual Conference in 2004 in Washington, D.C. The conference also highlighted topics like “political reform in the Muslim world” and “establishing religious harmony”. Themes like “impact of globalization on democratization and development in the Arab world” and “voices of Muslim democrats” were discussed at CSID Sixth Annual Conference in Washington in 2005. Voices of democrats from the Arab world were highlighted in the CSID Seventh Annual Conference in 2006. A paper on ‘promoting democracy in the Arab world: new ideas for U.S. policy’ was presented in the CSID 10<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference.

A paper “Enabling Dialogue and Supporting Action in Arab Feminism” was presented at the NAAP National Conference in 2007. Political reforms in Saudi Arabia were discussed by a panel hosted by an American weekly magazine, *The News Republic*, in 2003. Tamara Cofman Wittes explained American role in building Arab democracy at an event organized by the Saban Center for Middle East policy at Brookings in 2008.

In the absence of local organizations, the American organizations took on themselves to produce, record, document and share information on different aspects of states and societies in the Gulf countries. Newswires, digests, blogs, and bulletins generated huge volumes of information and contributed towards highlighting the human rights and political conditions in the region. Among these is the *Arab Reform Bulletin*. It is an online publication issued on monthly basis by the Carnegie Endowment. *Weekly Democracy Digest* is published by the Transatlantic Democracy Network and produced by the NED. Transatlantic Democracy Network is a joint venture of the World Movement for Democracy, based in Washington, D.C., and the Freedom House. CDHR operates a blog and a Facebook profile. It also distributes a biweekly newsletter to about 5,000 recipients all over the world. *GulfWire Digest* is published by National Council on U.S.-Arab Relations (NCUSAR). The Council also maintains a website *arabialink.com*.

Huge volumes of research work by American think-tanks and writers, and reports and articles by the American media helped the reformers in the region to better chart their

strategies and courses of action. Papers and books were produced on the subject. A large number of U.S. research institutions made valuable contributions to help the democracy promoters, implementers, and activists in understanding the ground realities.

New institutions focusing at the Gulf region were also created. Washington-based Saban Center for Middle East Policy was launched in 2002. The Brookings Doha Center in Qatar is the best example which was established in 2008 within the Gulf region. The Brookings Doha Center is a part of Saban Center. Initial grant for establishing the Saban Center was provided by an American businessman.

Doha Center conducts research on geopolitical and socio-economic issues in the Gulf whereas the Saban Center conducts research on how to promote “a better understanding of the policy choices facing American decision makers” in the Middle East.<sup>6</sup> Doha Center, through its research work, makes efforts to bridge the gap between the Muslims of the Gulf region and policy makers in the United States. Other private American institutions which conducted research on the subject and related issues included Middle East institute, Center for Islam and Democracy (CSID), Middle East Program of the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS), Middle East Policy Council (MEPC), Sultan Qaboos Cultural Center (SQCC), Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, Washington Report on Middle East Affairs (WRMEA), Middle East Media Research Institute (MEMRI), Middle East Research and Information Project (MERIP), Center for Democracy and Human Rights in Saudi Arabia (CDHR), and Arab Reform Initiative.

Network of Democracy Research Institutes (NDRI) of NED is an association of research institutes, centers and programs that conduct research on democracy and democratization. Gulf Research Center, Dubai is also a member of the network from the Middle East. Total members are around 80 institutions from across the world.

Among the leading journals which substantially contributed to the subject were *Journal of Democracy*, *Middle East Journal* and *Middle East Policy*.

In 2008, NED provided a grant of 63,000 U.S. dollars to Search for Common Ground (SFCG) for publishing 40 articles from Gulf countries on its website and other publications.

**Political, Cultural, and Education Sectors**

Activities focused on political sector included conferences, seminars, training sessions, workshops, and study missions. NDI and CDEM were more active than other organizations in this sector. Though, NDI also carried out activities for youth, students, and journalists, it paid more attention to municipal councils and political societies.

NDI convened programs for the purpose of formation of a Gulf Municipal Councils Association. Efforts were also made by NDI for institutionalization of an annual conference of the Gulf municipalities. The objective of these efforts was to enable municipal officials to get organized and influence political system and structure of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) in a better way. It was based on the logic that “by aggregating resources, expertise and influence, the regional institutions will have a greater impact” on change toward democracy. The NDI provided technical assistance for the creation of the Gulf Municipal Councils Association on a request by the GCC leaders. An annual Gulf municipalities’ conference was approved by the GCC ministerial committee in 2005. Thus, efforts made by the NDI became successful in this regard.

As an effort to assist Saudis in political modernization, NDI held a seminar in 2005. In Bahrain, NDI assisted political societies in drafting a proposed alternative legislation which was passed by the Nuwab Council in 2005. A group of 21 municipal leaders from Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates, Kuwait, and Bahrain participated in a Foundational Workshop on Creating and Managing an Association in 2006, organized by the NDI. Later, a group of 10 municipal leaders from Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Kuwait, and Qatar was taken to the United States on a week-long study tour. In 2007, a group of Saudi municipal councilors visited Spain to study the country’s municipal system. The trip was organized by the NDI.

Before elections in Kuwait in 2006 and in Qatar in 2007, NDI held training workshops focused on election campaigns, communication strategies, and development of media messages. In 2006, NDI held discussions with the members of civil society and government of Qatar to push the democratic development forward by discussing the new opportunities. In a program, NDI and Kuwait Transparency Society (KTS) trained

election monitors and observers. NDI also encouraged young people for participating in elections and used internet and social networks to this end.

In 2006, CDEM team visited the Gulf extensively to examine the training needs. Next year, a group of 20 election practitioners from Bahrain, Kuwait, Qatar and other countries participated in a week-long institute on democracy and elections, organized by the CDEM.

In 2007, NDI launched a 13-month program in collaboration with Qatari Permanent Elections Committee (PEC) to make the Qatari people aware of their electoral system and to encourage them for voting and participating in elections. The PEC staff and volunteers were also trained during the program. The participants were sensitized on the subjects like the responsibilities of the Shura Council and its role.

From Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar and other regional countries, a group of 25 participated in an Election Management Training Institute in 2008. Sponsored by the MEPI, the training institute was organized by CDEM in Washington, D.C. Among the participants were election practitioners, and members of civil society, media, and parliaments. The training institute's focus was on best practices in election management.

The American private sector also made collaborations and investments in the cultural sector. In 2006, Guggenheim Foundation in New York launched Guggenheim Abu Dhabi having global art, exhibitions and education programs.<sup>7</sup> In 2007, New York Film Academy announced establishment of its Abu Dhabi branch (NYFA-Abu Dhabi). It was a milestone in the direction of establishing Abu Dhabi as a center for television and film in the Gulf. Professionals from different parts of the world are among its faculty. Curricula offered are same as at other locations of the New York Film Academy.<sup>8</sup>

American Swimming Coaches Association (ASCA) in collaboration with the UAE Swimming Association launched a plan in 2007, for uplifting the profile of swimming sports in the Gulf region. Though Arab Fund for Arts and Culture (AFAC) is registered as a Swiss Foundation, among its founders are American organizations like Open Society Institute, Ford Foundation, and many others. It was launched in 2004. The Fund aims at promoting freedom of cultural expression in the Arab societies. Its policies also foster economic liberalization in the region. Supporting cultural research and stimulating cultural exchanges are among the Fund's objectives.

Campuses of and programs offered by the American universities in the Gulf also play their role in popularizing democracy in the region. Students who go to the United States for education purposes also get a taste of democratic culture and system. After getting back, they are more likely to behave in a democratic way compared to their compatriots. All four women elected in Kuwait last year, for instance, had acquired PhD degrees from the United States.<sup>9</sup> Many American educational institutions established their campuses or launched degree and certificate programs in the Gulf region. Some of these institutions and the year of their establishment are given in the following Table.

**Table 2: American Educational Institutions Established in the Gulf (2000–2008)**

Institutions	Year of Establishment
1) Rochester Institute of Technology (RIT) Dubai	2008
2) New York University (NYU) Abu Dhabi	2005
3) New York Institute of Technology (NYIT) Abu Dhabi	2005
4) Carnegie Mellon University (CMU) Qatar	2004
5) The Harvard Medical School Dubai Center	2004
6) American University of Kuwait (AUK)	2003
7) AMIDEAST office in Muscat, Oman	2008

Having a comparative look at six American educational institutions—New York University (NYU) Abu Dhabi, New York Institute of Technology (NYIT) Abu Dhabi, Rochester Institute of Technology (RIT) Dubai, Northwestern University (NU) Qatar, American University (AU) of Kuwait, and Carnegie Mellon university Qatar—in the Gulf countries reveals that American private education institutions engage students in the Gulf countries almost at all levels—school, college, and university. Not only programs in engineering, technology, management, and other sciences are offered but also in the areas of humanities, liberal arts, fine arts, performing arts, and behavioral and social sciences. These institutions bring at least a part of faculty from the United States, mainly from their main campuses in different American cities. The faculty is also highly qualified in the

American colleges and universities in the Gulf. American University of Kuwait, for example, has 50 of its undergraduate faculty with PhD degrees.

As these institutions claim, curricula and education standards they offer are same as or identical to those their head branches offer in the United States. Language of instruction is English and classes are coeducational. The values these American institutions espouse include liberalism and democracy promotion. New York University, for example, promotes academic freedom and encourages students to challenge bodies of knowledge, ideas, and cultural traditions. AUK, like others, promotes critical thinking, encourages freedom to engage in academic inquiry, and aims at creating leaders. RIT Dubai aims at development of human capital in the Gulf region. Many of the institutions offer sports opportunities for their male and female students. New York University has athletic facilities for both men and women. Carnegie Mellon University Qatar aims at transcending traditional disciplinary boundaries and inculcating leadership qualities among the students.

Beginning in 2006, the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) helped in establishing the Masdar Institute of Science and Technology, Abu Dhabi. “Making a meaningful contribution towards sustainable human development” is among the Masdar Institute’s objectives. MIT conducts scholarly review of the Masdar Institute’s potential faculty members. Full time faculty of the Masdar Institute spends one year at MIT in Cambridge where they work with the MIT faculty.

Washington-based American-Mideast Educational and Training Services, Inc. (AMIDEAST) has field offices in many countries in the region, including Kuwait, Oman, and United Arab Emirates. It provides educational advising and English language trainings in these countries and administers academic exchange programs. In addition to providing services in all seven emirates of the UAE, it administered the Military Language Institute in the country. The Institute provides language trainings to military officers and personnel. For its online courses, AMIDEAST has registration offices in four—Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Oman, and United Arab Emirates—of the six GCC countries.

NDI also worked for strengthening and enhancing the capacity of civil society organizations in the Gulf so that they play a meaningful role in reforms. For example, it

created a partnership with Kuwait Transparency Society (KTS) as a part of its civil society programming.

### **Media and Human Rights**

To strengthen media and promoting freedom of expression in the Gulf, training workshops were organized and visits were sponsored by the American nongovernmental sector. NDI was among the leading institutions in this regard. It supported a roundtable discussion, for example, organized for journalists working with Arabic newspapers in Qatar. The purpose of discussion was to comprehend the lessons learnt from reportage of the previous elections. A five-day training workshop was organized by Search for Common Ground (SFCG), headquartered in Washington, D.C., for producers, news anchors, and directors of Al-Jazeera in Qatar. An emphasis was laid on production of talk shows.

In another workshop, media professionals from the United States took part along with online writers and journalists from the Gulf. The focus was on exploring the role of new forms of media influencing public debate. Case studies from Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, and Bahrain were presented during the workshop that proved to be a fruitful opportunity for interaction between media professionals from the Gulf and the United States. A senior news editor from Internet based American newspaper, *Huffington Post*, explained the newspaper's role during the 2008 Elections in the United States.<sup>10</sup> In 2008, in collaboration with Imagination Abu Dhabi, National Geographic Entertainment committed 100 million U.S. dollars for the production of 10 to 15 films. National Geographic Cinema Ventures and National Geographic Films were also engaged in this project.<sup>11</sup>

A group of journalists from Saudi Arabia visited the United States under a sponsorship program of NDI. The delegation held meetings and discussions with reporters from major American newspapers. They were trained on political reporting and media ethics during the visit. The journalists also discussed the state of freedom of expression in Saudi Arabia with American NGOs. CDHR advocated flow of uncensored information in Saudi Arabia.

Relatively, areas of human rights and women empowerment in the Gulf region were much emphasized by the American nongovernmental sector. In a 131-page report, Human Rights Watch (HRW), headquartered in New York City, highlighted abuses against domestic workers in the United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, and Kuwait.<sup>12</sup> HRW published a policy paper on Labor laws in the United Arab Emirates and provided recommendations.<sup>13</sup>

In 2008, American professor George E. Edwards, founding director of the Carl M. Gray Law School's Program in International Human Rights Law, visited Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, and Kuwait and discussed legal dimensions of human rights with government officials and relevant individuals. He explained American legal education during his visit.<sup>14</sup>

In his visit to the region in 2008, Jimmy Carter emphasized on the need of improving human rights in the region. CDHR continuously highlighted the human rights abuses in Saudi Arabia and provided analyses of the ongoing situation in the target country.

In 2008, NED provided a grant of 87,000 U.S. dollars to the Gulf & Middle East Association for Civil Society (GMEACS) to establish a coordination office in London, and to launch a tri-lingual website on human rights violations in Gulf States. In the same year, NED granted 36,000 U.S. dollars to Bahrain Human Rights Society (BHRS). The grant was made for seminars and workshops on civic rights and democratic values.

### **Women Empowerment**

U.S. organizations played a significant role and carried out a variety of programs for women empowerment in the Gulf countries. Study and training programs were launched in the United States as well as in the Gulf countries. The programs were spread over months. Focus group series were held to highlight the issues related to women empowerment. In 2008, NED provided a grant of 20,400 U.S. dollars to Bahrain Women Association for Human Development (BWA).

In Saudi Arabia, a core group of women journalists was facilitated by NDI in developing a network.<sup>15</sup> Some of the NDI's activities were focused on guiding women on how to deal with the challenges and how to avail rising opportunities in the newly-

introduced electoral politics in Kuwait. A comprehensive voter education program was also arranged by the NDI to bring awareness among Kuwaiti women on their voting rights.

In 2004, NDI joined the campaign for women's political rights and universal suffrage in Kuwait. To this end, NDI provided advocacy tools to women activists. It organized its fourth Partners in Participation Regional Campaign School after Kuwait's official announcement of granting women the right to vote and run for office. The Campaign School was attended by more than 70 women activists. Among them, 30 were from Kuwait. The trainings were designed to make the participants learn how to build a network of women at the regional level and how to run successful campaigns.

Before elections in 2006 in Kuwait, NDI organized a one-month program for training female candidates. Eighteen (18) of the 32 female candidates were engaged in series of one-on-one consultations with elected women from other Arab countries. Consultations were also held between the female candidates and media and campaign experts. The series was focused on voter outreach, media strategy, fundraising, and candidate image. The female candidates were also trained on speech development and campaign messages.

A series of focus group discussions was conducted by the NDI in the wake of 2006 elections in Kuwait. The purpose was to comprehend the factors of voters' political choices. Understanding the role of women in democratic politics of Kuwait was another goal of the discussions. The findings helped NDI plan future activities and strategies.

In a five-months advanced studies program in the United States, administered by the AMIDEAST, 29 young Arab women participated. All of the participants were specializing in law and business. AMIDEAST organized another four-month career and leadership program for Omani women. The 30 participants were high school graduates from four different regions of the country. Among the participants' career interests were public relations, social work, NGO-related work, and education. The basic purpose of the program was "instilling a sense of empowerment" in the female participants.

## **Conclusion**

It was in fact because of the Bush Administration's serious emphasis on a democratic Middle East that the U.S. civil society also paid a greater attention to promote democracy in the region. During the period under study (2000–2008), focus of the American democracy promoters was less on democratic structures and elections and more on diffusion of the democratic awareness, as discussed earlier. Most of the activities and efforts made by the U.S. Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) were aimed at imparting with the individuals and groups values associated with democratic norms, culture and society.

In political sector, institutions like Shura Councils were provided support in order to enhance their capacity to effect democratic change. People of these countries were sensitized on their political rights and their role in politics and economy. To this end, awareness campaigns were launched, and exchange programs and training workshops were held. Workshops on electoral processes helped people understand not only the process but also the philosophy and importance of holding elections and choosing representatives. Candidates, including females, were trained in a number of programs on launching successful electoral campaigns and on how to bring the voters out of their homes on polling day.

In education sector, American private sector universities and academics played their part in inculcating democratic values among the Arab students through classroom as well as extra-curricular activities. These programs were launched in addition to a number of scholarship schemes launched for the Arab students, and in addition to educational exchanges sponsored by the American CSOs. A large number of Arab students both male and female from these countries availed such scholarships and got education in various institutions of higher education in the United States, where they had the opportunity to experience democracy as a culture and a way of life and thinking.

The areas of human rights and women empowerment drew greater attention than ever before. The regimes were asked again and again for taking measures to improve human rights conditions in their countries and to empower women. Women were educated and trained on their rights. Women in business were provided assistance and were trained on entrepreneurial skills and abilities. Arab women were engaged in various

types of activities like training workshops and exchanges in order to familiarize them with their rights and potentials.

Arab journalists, anchorpersons, and editors were trained through programs designed to empower media in this region. Some of the journalists were also invited to the United States on scholarships for higher education and training in journalism. Some others were sponsored for visits. During their visits, the journalists held discussions and meetings with their counterparts in the United States. All these efforts were focused on encouraging the journalists against self-censorship. Special trainings were held on how to report political events.

The number of research works and news and information services launched by the American institutes, organizations, and individuals during the period under study, to bring the issue of Arab democratization to the forefront and to enhance understanding of the subject, was extraordinary.

Thus, American civil society, in fact, using a variety of tools, played a significant role in the spread of the democratic ideals and values in the Gulf region.

## NOTES

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<sup>3</sup> <http://www.naonline.org/mission.asp>, accessed on Apr. 27, 2010.

<sup>4</sup> [http://www.cartercenter.org/news/current\\_qa/jimmy\\_carter\\_on\\_middle\\_east.html](http://www.cartercenter.org/news/current_qa/jimmy_carter_on_middle_east.html), Sep. 30, 2008, accessed on Jun. 20, 2009.

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<sup>6</sup> [www.brookings.edu/saban.aspx](http://www.brookings.edu/saban.aspx), accessed on May 7, 2010.

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<sup>9</sup> <http://www.ndi.org/node/15508>, accessed on Dec. 23, 2009.

<sup>10</sup> Samar Fatany, "Online Journalism in the Gulf", Jun. 17, 2009, [www.saudi-us-relations.org](http://www.saudi-us-relations.org), accessed on Jun. 24, 2009.

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<sup>11</sup> [www.admedia.ae/english/press\\_details.php?id=11](http://www.admedia.ae/english/press_details.php?id=11), accessed on Apr. 26, 2009.

<sup>12</sup> *Exported and Exposed*, (Human Rights Watch, 2007).

<sup>13</sup> *The UAE's Draft Labor Law: Comments and Recommendations*, (Human Rights Watch, 2007).

<sup>14</sup> <http://indylaw.indiana.edu/humanrights/News.cfm?nid=297>, accessed on Apr. 22, 2009.

<sup>15</sup> [www.ndi.org/saudi\\_arabia](http://www.ndi.org/saudi_arabia), accessed on Oct. 31, 2009.