

# ENHANCING DEMOCRACY ASSISTANCE

A RESEARCH PROJECT OF



THE NATIONAL COMMITTEE ON  
AMERICAN FOREIGN POLICY

AND

ARNOLD A. SALTZMAN INSTITUTE OF WAR AND PEACE STUDIES  
COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY IN THE CITY OF NEW YORK

AND



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The National Committee on American Foreign Policy was founded in 1974 by Professor Hans J. Morgenthau and others. It is a nonprofit activist organization dedicated to the resolution of conflicts that threaten US interests. Toward that end, the National Committee identifies, articulates, and helps advance American foreign policy interests from a nonpartisan perspective within the framework of political realism. Believing that an informed public is vital to a democratic society, the National Committee offers educational programs that address security challenges facing the United States and publishes a variety of publications, including its bimonthly journal, *American Foreign Policy Interests*.



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Founded in 1951 under the sponsorship of Dwight D. Eisenhower during his tenure as President of Columbia University, the Institute of War and Peace Studies (IWPS) was renamed the Arnold A. Saltzman Institute of War and Peace Studies (SIWPS) in March 2003. President Eisenhower created the Institute to promote understanding of the “disastrous consequences of war upon man’s spiritual, intellectual, and material progress.” Under its first director, William T.R. Fox, the Institute became one of the major research centers on international relations in the United States. Although the Institute does not take official positions on any public policy issues, individual members of SIWPS contribute to the general discourse on these topics by authoring articles in journals such as *Foreign Affairs*, discussing current issues with officials and journalists, serving as consultants to government departments and agencies, and testifying before Congressional committees.



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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Research Project on Enhancing Democracy Assistance is undertaken by the National Committee on American Foreign Policy, the Arnold A. Saltzman Institute of War and Peace Studies of the School of International and Public Affairs at Columbia University, and the Atlantic Council of the United States. This report recognizes that democracy assistance is essential to the promotion of US foreign policy and global interests, and offers political and technical recommendations in order to enhance democracy assistance.

Today's global setting poses several distinct challenges to democracy assistance. Countries such as China offer an alternative model of governance that promotes economic development without political reform, while wielding substantial economic leverage. Populist authoritarian regimes and illiberal democracies, such as those of Venezuela and Iran, claim popular legitimacy while cracking down on internal dissent. Challenges to democratization have also been exacerbated by the Iraq War and the Global War on Terror (GWOT), which have fueled anti-Americanism around the globe, undermined US credibility, overstretched US resources, and compromised domestic support for democracy assistance.

Democracy's foes maintain that US democracy assistance is merely a pretext for undermining governments hostile to America's interests. They have limited the activities of local non-governmental organizations (NGOs), restricted the independence of the media, and impeded the flow of foreign resources to local pro-democracy groups. Many use counter-terrorism as justification for cracking down on dissent. At home, domestic critics of democracy assistance point to the ongoing problems in Iraq and the victory of Hamas in the Palestinian Authority as evidence that democracy assistance is not in the interest of the United States.

But an assessment of several decades of successful democracy assistance reveals important lessons that can serve as guiding principles for making future efforts effective and pragmatic: (i) be patient, (ii) maintain modesty, (iii) tread softly, (iv) localize leadership, and (v) recognize the limits of military intervention. America's role should be to stand behind, not in front of democracy movements.

In order to address negative perceptions of democracy assistance around the world and to rebuild bipartisan support at home, it is necessary to reframe the means and ends of assistance efforts. The democracy assistance community can maximize the impact of its activities by planning for the long term, insuring better training and preparation for field staff, and emphasizing more rigorous project evaluation.

This report offers recommendations to hone proven approaches to democracy assistance, specifically, programs that strengthen civil society, prepare elections, assist political party development, and support democratic governance. It also identifies different regime types that are the focus of democracy assistance -- authoritarian states, illiberal democracies, free-wheeling kleptocracies, and post-conflict states. While recognizing that the distinctions among them are not iron-clad, the report offers context-specific recommendations for each.

For authoritarian regimes, this report stresses advocacy to expand the space for political activity and to diffuse political power. It describes strategies for nurturing and supporting underground media and discreetly assisting in-country NGOs, minimizing the risk of regime reprisals. This report also maintains that although support for governance should reinforce democracy assistance, under authoritarian regimes such support must include a democratization component to avoid the risk of undermining the overall process of democratization. Governance support is especially important in countries where reform-oriented governments have recently come to power. If they cannot deliver on expectations by providing improved social services and economic growth, a backlash will likely ensue against both the government as well as the concept of democracy as a viable form of government.

For illiberal democracies, this report highlights the importance of an independent judiciary and the rule of law in constraining despotic tendencies. To guard against inadvertently strengthening illiberal leaders, it recommends linking governance with democracy assistance while emphasizing participation, contestation, and accountability. In particular, it proposes security sector reform with a focus on democratic policing and human rights training.

Recommendations for free-wheeling kleptocracies focus on strengthening civil society through support for watchdog groups and grassroots organizations that stimulate local associational life, rather than elite NGOs. This report also stresses long-term work with political parties, so that when an election leads to a shift in power it will result in durable democratic reform.

For post-conflict states, it is important to balance the need for elections as visible evidence of democracy's progress with concerns that elections may empower anti-democratic leaders. Voter registries should accurately reflect pre-war populations, and a transitional justice system should be instituted to promote reconciliation and help address the legacy of violence as the political transition unfolds. Improving security and cultivating social and economic development will also help break the cycle of violence that undermines democracy assistance efforts.

In 2007, the US Government (USG) will spend about \$1 billion on democracy assistance in 50 countries (excluding Iraq and Afghanistan). Using these funds effectively requires a flexible approach that incorporates a range of delivery systems suited to the type of regime, the type of assistance, and the geographic location of the beneficiary country. Working through NGOs helps avoid the stigma that typically accompanies direct efforts by the USG, so in addition to project financing, this report proposes that the US Congress fully and more flexibly support the National Endowment for Democracy and political party institutes to insure their rapid response to democratization opportunities.

Relevant government agencies and NGOs should work together to develop the broad outlines for democracy assistance in particular countries, and enhance communication and cooperation in Washington. On the country level, implementers of democracy assistance would benefit from structured opportunities for sharing information and collaboration.

US democracy assistance is most successful when it is undertaken in cooperation with other countries and multilateral organizations. For example, the European Union (EU) has been a magnet for reform since the end of the Cold War, as well as a generous sponsor of democracy assistance. In the context of EU expansion, its Stabilization and Association Agreements (SAA) provide a democratization track for countries that aspire to membership.

This report emphasizes international cooperation that respects donor preferences based on their history of involvement in particular countries and regions and their expertise in specific program areas. It proposes the creation of donor affinity groups with the goal of empowering donors to take responsibility for specific countries, regions, and/or thematic areas. To maximize the potential role of the United Nations, the report suggests that the Secretary General affirm the world body's commitment to democracy and make an active effort to marshal consistent support from member states.

This report also highlights the fate of democracy in the Arab and Muslim World. It recognizes the risks posed by extremists who scorn liberalism and reject the path of politics, opting instead to pursue their goals through violence. It affirms, however, that there is nothing inherent in the character of Muslims that is inherently prone to radical ideology or that makes democratization impossible. The democracy deficit in the Arab and Muslim world is a problem of supply, not demand. Stagnant democratic development has been exacerbated by America's preference for stability and support for authoritarian regimes. The incoming administration and the democracy assistance community have an opportunity to change this

and improve prospects for democracy in the Arab and Muslim world.

What does Hamas' electoral victory and the ascent of Hezbollah mean for the future of democracy assistance? There is no place for violence in the political process, and governments should ban armed political groups from participating in elections if they do not renounce violence. However, it is also critical that policymakers not mistakenly conclude that democracy is somehow incompatible with Islam, or that democracy assistance is futile when addressing mostly Muslim countries. Many Muslims believe otherwise, rejecting fanaticism, invoking the religion's longstanding tradition of pluralism, cosmopolitanism, and open-mindedness, and affirming that the Islamic process of consultation is entirely consistent with democratic debate. The democratization of the Arab and Muslim world, and successful democracy assistance more broadly, requires patience, persistence, and the recognition that short-term setbacks should not undermine long-term goals.



## INTRODUCTION

The Research Project on Enhancing Democracy Assistance is based on the premise that democracy assistance advances US foreign policy and global interests. It makes political and technical recommendations to enhance democracy assistance suggesting ways to hone techniques for four regimes types- authoritarian states, illiberal democracies, free-wheeling kleptocracies, and post-conflict states. While the report is intended for US policymakers, appropriators, and practitioners, as well as Presidential candidates and the incoming administration, it stresses the need for international cooperation and offers guidance to this end. Critiquing the modalities of democracy assistance should not be misconstrued as criticism of democracy assistance itself. The goal of this project is to improve democracy assistance – not diminish or reinvent it.

### Why Democracy?

Democracy is both a reflection of American values and in America's strategic interests.<sup>1</sup> Democracies do not fight wars against each other, nor do they engage in terrorism or produce refugees. They also make more reliable allies and better trading partners. Democracy has proven to be the best system of governance to realize universal human aspirations for freedom and to support human development.

Democracy is also the basis for steadier and more reliable economic development. It is grounded in the rule of law, which stimulates competition, innovation, and progress while providing the necessary legal framework for free markets. Democracy also fosters an ethos of self-reliance and entrepreneurship that is far better suited to economic growth than that of authoritarianism, which breeds apathy and stagnation. Democratic governance creates conditions for individuals to fulfill their potential and live better lives.

Since 9/11, US foreign policy has been dominated by a national security paradigm rather on international relations more broadly. As a result, a debate has emerged between the proponents of stability and the supporters of democracy assistance. The former believe that democracy assistance distracts the United States from its core strategic interests: fighting terrorism, enhancing economic growth, and securing reliable energy supplies (even when they come from anti-democratic regimes). The latter maintain that there is no trade-off between a policy that emphasizes democracy assistance and the promotion of US security and economic interests. Notwithstanding the importance of stability for countries around the world, claims of maintaining stability are too often the last refuge for despots desperate to maintain power. The misconception that authoritarian regimes can provide stability and thus advance security is being

<sup>1</sup> The Project utilizes the definition of democracy in the National Endowment for Democracy's (NED) Founding Statement of Principles and Objectives: "Democracy involves the right of people to freely determine their own destiny. The exercise of this right requires a system that guarantees freedom of expression, belief, and association, free and competitive elections, respect for the inalienable rights of individuals and minorities, free communications media, and the rule of law."

played out very clearly now in Pakistan, a key country in the GWOT. While there is often genuine tension between maintaining stability and promoting democracy, particularly in the short term, ultimately these two goals are intertwined and interdependent. Democracy is essential for long-term stability, and, accordingly, supporting democratic development is in the interest of US national security.

### Why Now?

This report is not the place to debate the efficacy of President George W. Bush's war on terror. However, it is indisputable that negative attitudes towards the United States have increased during the Bush administration and that this trend has affected US options for and methods of democracy assistance.

Damage to America's international image as a well-intended and effective promoter of democratic change resulted from the perceived failure of its war in Iraq, which was seen as a war of choice with limited international support. Questions about America's commitment to the rule of law arose from revelations of torture at Abu Ghraib, Guantanamo, the rendition of suspects to countries that torture and the reported existence of secret prisons run by the CIA. Continuing to turn a blind eye to the abuses of autocratic allies also undermined US credibility. The perception of a double standard has contributed to unprecedented levels of anti-Americanism, especially in the Arab and Muslim World.

The end of the Cold War signaled a victory for the forces of democracy. According to Freedom House, there are now 123 electoral democracies around the globe (63% of all countries) as opposed to 66 in 1987 (40%). Yet despite this progress, today's global setting is in flux and democracy faces an uncertain future. Countries like China, which have substantial economic leverage, represent an alternative model of governance that promotes economic development without political reform. Populist authoritarians in illiberal democracies such as Hugo Chavez in Venezuela, Mahmoud Ahmedinejad in Iran, and Vladimir Putin in Russia, actively obstruct democracy assistance and inspire anti-democratic forces worldwide. Kleptocracies such as Haiti and Kyrgyzstan offer only the illusion of democracy, as elections are frequently stolen and individual freedoms are compromised by political corruption.

In these countries and others, the opponents of democracy are pushing back. They maintain that US democracy assistance is really a Trojan horse for undermining governments hostile to America's interests, and that by resisting democratization efforts they are protecting national sovereignty and guarding against foreign interventions. Citing the threat of invasion, other forms of interference by the US, or terrorism to justify repressive measures aimed at tightening their grip on power, they have limited the activities of local non-governmental organizations (NGOs), cracked down on independent media, and restricted the flow of foreign resources to local pro-democracy groups.

These challenges require policymakers to rethink the approach to democracy assistance in order to make it more productive, responsive, and relevant. To play a constructive role in democratization, the United States needs to re-establish its credibility. This requires skillful public diplomacy, but restoring America's international image requires substance as well as spin. The United States government needs to pursue policies that are both effective and reflect favorably on America's intentions. It must also dedicate resources to democracy assistance at a time when policy and budget priorities are constrained by fighting expensive wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. Finally, the US must recognize that successful democracy assistance should not only be based on advancing US interests, but also on broader, value-based principles such as safeguarding individual rights, enhancing human capital, and allowing individuals to control their destiny.

Democracy assistance has typically enjoyed broad bipartisan political and popular support. From the US Constitution to the Atlantic Charter and the 1961 Foreign Assistance Act, democratization has been embraced by presidents of both parties as a key goal of American foreign policy. Even when members of Congress have differed on democratization strategies, Republicans and Democrats have often overcome their differences and worked together on democracy assistance programs. Currently, however, Democrats



and some Republicans are leery of engaging the principles of liberty and human rights as part of foreign policy, in part due to setbacks in Iraq and other failings in the Middle East. A June 2006 survey by the German Marshall Fund concluded that 64% of Republicans believed that the United States should “help establish democracies in other countries” while only 35% of Democrats agreed. Only 45% of Americans overall believed that democracy assistance should be a central feature of US foreign policy. In this year’s presidential campaign, only a few of the presidential candidates from either party has made more than a passing reference to democracy assistance. Yet recent developments and current challenges mean that America’s next and future presidents will be challenged to revitalize the democracy agenda. While serving as a resource to the democracy assistance community, this report can also serve as a briefing paper to candidates in the 2008 election.

## **Principles**

Decades of successful democracy assistance as well as recent experiences have yielded some guiding principles. They proceed from the recognition that America’s role in democracy assistance should always be to stand behind, not in front of democracy movements. The United States should not seek to “lead” democratic revolutions or “teach” about democracy. In this vein, “democracy assistance” is a more preferable term than democracy “promotion.” The United States can make an effective contribution by working on the margins of pro-democracy movements and acting as a catalyst for and supporter of change.

- *Be Patient*: Democratization is a process, not an event. It is based on evolutionary rather than revolutionary change and cannot be achieved over a short period of time or on a timetable.
- *Maintain Modesty*: There are limits to the ability of the United States to influence events; and democracy assistance efforts should proceed accordingly. Pro-democracy activists risk being discredited within their countries if it appears that they are acting as agents of the US.
- *Tread Softly*: External actors can help create an environment of change, but domestic factors ultimately drive the democratization process in ways that are consistent with local conditions, history, and culture.
- *Localize Leadership*: Democratic reforms are driven by societal demand. The participation of local stakeholders is critical to the sustenance and legitimacy of democratic institutions.
- *Recognize the Limits of Military Intervention*: Initiating armed conflict creates difficult conditions for implementing effective democracy assistance, often undermines US credibility, and raises suspicion about all forms of intervention. Although the military has contributed to democratization, the goal of democracy must not be used as a post-facto justification for armed conflict.



## **FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **Political Challenges**

#### *Address Current Political Challenges*

In the wake of the Cold War, the low-hanging post-Communist and post-authoritarian fruit has been picked. Democracy assistance no longer consists of consolidating pro-democracy movements through training and technical support. A new generation of leaders from authoritarian, semi-democratic, and post-conflict states has emerged as strong and committed opponents of democracy. They present a political challenge that cannot be simply “trained away” via workshops aimed at transferring skills and building capacity.

### *Reframe Democracy Assistance*

Internationally, there is a wide range of views about US-led democracy assistance. Organizations that receive US financing face a credibility problem, especially in countries with negative views of the United States. This problem can be addressed by reducing the extent to which democracy assistance programs are formally associated with the USG. The goal of democracy assistance should not be for programs to propagandize on behalf of the United States. Reports, business cards and public events should not always be branded with the logo of the US Agency for International Development (USAID). In the US, democracy assistance has become too closely associated with regime change and getting rid of unfriendly dictators. In reality, most democracy assistance is less dramatic and controversial. Helping Americans understand that democracy assistance often consists of technical tasks like providing support to legislatures and training to journalists would develop domestic support for democracy assistance. Further reframing democracy assistance will also require a fundamental shift in US foreign policy, but such recommendations are beyond the scope of this report.

### *Rebuild Bipartisan Support*

Most Americans have been unaware of the nature and scope of democracy assistance programs supported by the United States. Until the current administration, those who were informed generally believed that smoothing the transition from authoritarianism to democracy was benign and non-controversial. Assisting the democratic aspirations of people around the world seeking to gain control of their political destinies and live in freedom also enjoyed broad bipartisan political support. During the administration of George W. Bush, some Republicans and particularly so-called neo-conservatives tried to make democracy promotion a partisan issue by linking it to the war in Iraq. To move forward, a successful democracy assistance policy depends on recognizing that democracy assistance is in the best interest of the United States, rebuilding bipartisanship, and making a deeper commitment through legislative support.

### **Technical Tasks**

#### *Don't Try to Do Too Much*

Though democracy assistance is limited in its potential effect and the areas where it can have an impact, politicians have recently used it as an instrument to advance broader US foreign policy objectives. Elections in the Palestinian Authority were presented as the lynchpin to regional peace. The democracy promotion mission was offered as a post-facto rationale for war in Iraq. Democracy has been cited as an instrument for regime change in Iran, North Korea, and elsewhere. However, it is important to be realistic about both the potential and the limitations of democracy assistance. At best, it can have a modest but positive impact, helping to expose fraudulent balloting, supporting reform oriented governments efforts to deliver on promises, and strengthening vibrant civic institutions that undergird democratic developments. Democracy assistance never should, or can, replace the efforts of people in their own countries or serve as a substitute for other foreign policy tools. Goals and expectations should be set accordingly.

#### *Plan Beyond the Short Term*

Democracy assistance requires a commitment to work in-country for years and, in many cases, decades. The annual nature of the US budget cycle, however, puts pressure on democracy assistance programs to show quick results. Successful democracy assistance requires long-term planning. Particularly in countries where the authoritarian regime has recently collapsed or is just beginning to weaken, ten-year plans are a more realistic time frame for transition. This long-term approach must be balanced against the need to retain flexibility. When regimes fall or democratic breakthroughs occur, events are fluid, fast-moving and unpredictable.

#### *Consider the Military's Role*

Iraq will not be the last time that US forces are deployed to a country where democracy is at stake. The military has a complex and sometimes indispensable role in democracy assistance. The US military has a

long history of constructive involvement in post-conflict countries where the first contact with local populations is by US military personnel. More must be done to define a constructive role for the US military in post-conflict situations when troops have been deployed. If the host government is incapacitated, the military must step in to deliver services and restore basic governance. Linking security and governance goals at the early stages of deployment can help create a positive atmosphere for future democracy work. Liaising with civilian agencies and organizations helps military personnel develop an understanding of the tactics and mechanisms of democracy assistance. Democracy assistance approaches will be different in cases where military intervention is involved, but it is still essential lest the opportunity to shape outcomes be lost.

### *Prepare Field Staff*

The success or failure of democracy assistance programs depends on the skills and capabilities of field staff (US citizens, local hires, and third country nationals working for local NGOs, foreign NGOs, contractors, multilateral organizations and disparate funding agencies). Most are dedicated and hard-working individuals who believe in what they do. They come from diverse backgrounds with a range of education, experience and language skills. While this diversity is a strong point, the breadth of their backgrounds should be complemented by some basic preparation. Field staff must understand the meaning of democracy, the role and limits of democracy assistance, and the need for transparency and civil society. Language training and knowledge of specific country conditions should be bolstered.

### *Assess Project Impacts*

Democratizing societies are not laboratories for conducting experiments. Conditions of rapid change and political turmoil exacerbate the difficulties inherent in evaluating programs. Nonetheless, current evaluation methodologies are inconsistent and lack rigor. Many programs are not evaluated at all. Others are subjectively evaluated by the implementing organization, or evaluated using criteria of the funding agency. Evaluations are typically qualitative and impressionistic. The absence of a standard approach makes it impossible to compare assessments across cases. The so-called F Process has been a part of the State Department's "Foreign Assistance Reform Question." However, instead of encouraging best practices, the F Process tends to stove-pipe activities in highly compartmentalized categories by program and country type. Program evaluation must be taken more seriously, and it is important to evaluate programs as well as outcomes. The providers of democracy assistance should include evaluations in their budgets, and use more rigorous monitoring tools such as control group studies, public opinion research, qualitative methods, and other means to acquire measurable data.

### **Enhancing Techniques**

A toolbox of approaches and methods has come to define democracy assistance since the Cold War. However successful, these efforts have tended to be applied in a mechanistic and boilerplate fashion. It is necessary to hone the most frequently used democracy assistance techniques.

### *Strengthen Civil Society*

Democratizing countries often lack the necessary social capital for establishing trust and cooperation, nurturing civil society, and building democracy. Elite NGOs are largely, if not entirely, dependent upon foreign financial support. They can contribute meaningfully to a country's political growth, but their presence and activities should not be mistaken for a strong, sustainable civil society. Civil society work supporting elite NGOs should be buttressed by a civil society development approach that is considerably more grass-roots in nature. These include, for example, local soccer clubs, dance and music associations, parent and student societies, as well as other communal organizations that tend to the everyday life and activities of citizens. Such associational groups need relatively little financial support and minimal guidance. In recent years, NGOs supported by the United States have been perceived with suspicion. They

are harassed and, in some countries, new laws have been adopted restricting their ability to receive and use foreign assistance. Accordingly, to effectively promote the development of civil society, US officials must tone down rhetoric that links NGOs with regime change.

### *Rethink Political Party Work*

For over a decade, campaign training and short-term election work has been the centerpiece of US efforts to strengthen political parties and the electoral process. While there is still some value in such assistance, helping parties become more competitive in election campaigns is only part of what needs to be done to foster multi-party democracies. Advisory and consultative work is critical to political party development. Such activities need to be fully understood by donors who are usually reluctant to become involved with politics. In many countries today, parties are able to engage in sophisticated campaign techniques and have the resources to hire Western political consultants. However, this does not mean that there is no role for democracy assistance organizations. The political party institutes and democracy assistance organizations can support political parties by helping them develop internal democracy, build coalitions for elections, and strengthen relations between party leaders and members. Parties should also be encouraged to think beyond politics and focus on governance and service delivery.

### *Support Elections*

Because support for elections has become the most visible form of democracy assistance, elections have been conflated with democracy as a simplistic and often erroneous yardstick of democratization. To be sure, elections are integral to democratization but they do not necessarily represent the culmination or confirmation of a country's democratic development. Free and fair elections start with an electoral law and a law on the formation of political parties. These are part of the institutional arrangements of the country, and should not be considered as stand-alone activities. Frequently, however, in transition processes- particularly in post-conflict contexts- negotiation of the electoral law precedes negotiation of the constitution. Therefore, special attention should be devoted to addressing the links between constitution-making and electoral assistance. The administrative framework for conducting elections- the Electoral Management Body (EMB)- is critical. It requires a voter registry, an elections commission to print and distribute ballots and count the votes, as well as mechanisms for adjudicating disputes and managing the conflicts that may arise around elections. Another important though often overlooked function of the EMB is the management of perceptions and the cultivation of trust among both elites and the citizenry. The EMB must also implement mechanisms that incorporate both civil and political elites in the preparation of the election and that educate and inform the populace of the scope, aims, and limits of elections. To ensure an election's integrity, local and international election monitors should be allowed to work unhindered. Elections are just one step toward a sustainable democracy, and after the election, democracy assistance efforts should not be scaled down. No matter what the outcome, the need for assistance is just as great even if the nature of assistance changes to reflect the needs of the post-election environment. Elections are part of a larger process of institutionalization, liberalization and democratization. Therefore, event-driven election assistance should evolve into longer-term electoral assistance that may have the added benefit of catalyzing the capacity of democracies to run local services, building confidence in democratization.

### *Promote Democratic Governance*

While governance and democracy assistance are closely linked and have significant overlap, they are not the same. Supporting good governance can complement democracy assistance, but it cannot replace it. Governance support should reinforce democracy assistance, but in authoritarian or post-authoritarian countries, supporting governance without a democratization component often undermines democratization itself. Governance support is especially important in countries where reform-oriented governments have recently come to power. If they cannot deliver on expectations by providing improved services and economic growth, a backlash will likely ensue, both against the government and against the

concept of democracy. Efforts to support governance and service delivery should incorporate key components of democracy such as participation, contestation, and accountability.

### Strategies by Regime Type

Today's democracy assistance must be calibrated to the specific challenges posed by different regime types. This report offers a guide to implementing democracy assistance in regimes where such measures would be useful. Few, if any, regimes fit neatly into these categories, but the recommendations here are a guide to refining democracy assistance based on country conditions and local demand. This guide should be viewed as a point of departure. Within each regime type, efforts should be made to create an assistance strategy that is best suited to the needs of each individual country. Some combination of the following recommendations will be appropriate for different regime types.

#### Authoritarian Regimes

Authoritarian regimes enforce strict social control through coercion and repression. The state governs without consent of the governed, and denies them basic freedoms and human rights. Political parties are restricted, as are the rights of assembly and expression. Genuine civil society organizations are discouraged, lest they threaten the regime with effective advocacy and mobilization. Since the regimes lack legitimacy, authoritarians may give lip service to democracy at the same time as they use the organs of the state, especially its security services, to block democratic development. Authoritarian regimes frequently act outside the bounds of international law, disregarding norms with scant concern for their standing in the international community (e.g. North Korea, China, and Belarus).<sup>2</sup>

#### *Advocate Democracy*

Diplomatic tools can promote democracy by recognizing and spotlighting the work of democracy activists and visibly expressing solidarity with their cause. In response to specific country conditions, the Executive Branch and Members of Congress can support democratization by publicly criticizing regimes for anti-democratic behavior, downgrading in-country diplomatic representation, and issuing demarches to express concern. US officials can support democracy activists by granting them high-level meetings and/or publicly praising them. Economic approaches can use a combination of carrots and sticks, such as awarding trade benefits based on positive performance and conditioning aid and trade benefits when the performance falls short. Public diplomacy activities, such as the Fulbright and International Visitors Programs, are effective tools for presenting the United States as a political model and developing a local appetite for democratization. NGOs can also play an important advocacy role.

#### Recommendations:

- Recognize that America's diminished credibility limits the impact of its advocacy and take steps to restore moral authority.
- Support multilateral fora where the US can engage in collaborative advocacy with like-minded countries.
- Use leverage with autocratic regimes, especially those with whom the US has cooperative security arrangements, to encourage them to democratize.
- Consult with local pro-democracy activists before heralding them lest public endorsement delegitimize or undermine their efforts.

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<sup>2</sup> While both authoritarianism and totalitarianism use similar means to consolidate and maintain power, totalitarian regimes are characterized by the central role of ideology and the erasure of the distinction between the communal and the individual and between private and public. Accordingly, "authoritarian" is a more useful and accurate term to describe the regimes in question.

- Take into account the complementarity of advocacy by NGOs and, as appropriate, coordinate advocacy efforts.
- Expand public diplomacy efforts via reading rooms, libraries, Internet strategies such as blogs, YouTube video posts, and support for people-to-people activities including Fulbright Fellowships and International Visitors Programs.

### *Support Underground Media*

When there is no one to bear witness, authoritarian regimes commit abuses with impunity. The growing power of the Internet and new media technologies offer formidable tools to confront ruthless regimes. Just as authoritarians try to isolate pro-democracy activists from domestic audiences and the world at large, they also take extreme measures to cut them off from the virtual world. Authoritarians arrest people for taking pictures or transmitting information. They shut down in-country Internet access and bombard remote Internet sites to disable them. Despite these efforts, the creative application of technology is making it more difficult to maintain secrecy. Activists use e-mail, blogs, video cell phones, and text messaging to coordinate their activities and keep the outside world abreast of new developments. When Internet access is limited, cell phones are smuggled out or their image files broken down for reassembly. Information is posted on social networking sites, e-cards, and encrypted as part of larger files such as Wikipedia. Pro-democracy activists transfer electronic files to embassies, foreign journalists, or international NGOs with satellite connections.

#### Recommendations:

- Support groups that provide small video cameras to in-country activists (e.g. Witness).
- Provide direct and virtual training on encrypting reports and images and using conventional Web services to transmit hidden information.
- Increase the frequency, range and anti-jamming capacity of pro-democracy radio broadcasts (e.g. Voice of America, Radio Free Europe, Radio Free Asia, etc.).
- Develop backup Internet services in the event that authoritarian regimes shut down Web services.

### *Use Discretion With Civil Society*

Authoritarian regimes deny political space for civil society to organize or engage in political activities. Activists are often rounded up and tortured. Many disappear in detention. While supporting political action below the leadership of the state, the United States must act discreetly when working with civil society in authoritarian regimes. It is critical to support front-line activists while taking pains not to exacerbate the risks they already face.

#### Recommendations:

- Provide training to civil society activists off-site or in neighboring countries.
- Support exile groups with bona-fide relationships in the country that give them legitimacy in their own societies.
- Provide financing through NGOs, third parties, or like-minded donors whose support is less likely to compromise the independence and integrity of beneficiaries.

- Incorporate Secretary of State Rice's Ten Guiding Principles on the treatment of NGOs by governments into the State Department's Country Report on Human Rights.

### Illiberal Democracies and Free-wheeling Kleptocracies

Illiberal democracies and free-wheeling kleptocracies are both semi-democratic. They each have some elements of democracy, but key shortcomings make it impossible to categorize them as democratic regimes. These two regime types are different, and depending on where a country lies on the semi-democratic continuum, democracy assistance programs need to be applied differently. Illiberal democracies are characterized by strong states with weak freedoms (e.g. Venezuela, Russia and Egypt). Though free-wheeling kleptocracies hold elections and permit citizens considerable freedoms, democracy is shallow because the state is weak, political elites are corrupt and self-interested (e.g. Kyrgyzstan, Bangladesh and Haiti), and elections are often stolen. In these regimes, attitudes towards democracy assistance and democracy range from outright hostility, especially in illiberal democracies, to a more ambivalent stance in freewheeling kleptocracies, where democracy assistance is practiced but is often frustratingly ineffective. Since illiberal democracies suffer from a deficit of contestation, accountability, and participation, strengthening state institutions does not address these deficits. Instead, it makes the illiberal state stronger and democratic progress more difficult.

#### *Support Elections and Recognize Their Limits*

In illiberal democracies, election irregularities often occur long before Election Day, taking the form of intimidation, limited ballot access, high-level corruption and the like. It is important to maintain realistic expectations for elections. Voters may respond to rigged elections with protests that are then used by the regime to justify a crackdown and further stymie democratic development.

#### Recommendations:

- Maintain realistic expectations, at home and abroad.
- Stress longer-term observation of elections and election preparation, with particular attention to the pre-election period.
- Focus on media exposure of electoral fraud and undemocratic practices during the front-end period.
- Resource domestic election observers to undertake comprehensive long-term observation efforts, and broadly publicize their findings.
- Stress the importance of electoral assistance, both during voter registration and dispute adjudication.
- Support the EMB to operate with autonomy and integrity.

#### *Link Governance Support to Democracy Assistance*

Improving governance in illiberal democracies can undermine democracy assistance efforts by further empowering anti-democratic leaders already in charge of relatively strong states. Helping illiberal democracies improve their delivery of services may make the states more effective, or even more popular, but it will do little to make them more democratic.

#### Recommendations:

- Emphasize participation, contestation, and accountability for all governance programs.

- Work to strengthen oversight and other legislative functions to balance executive power more effectively.
- Support efforts to involve minority groups in the parliamentary process.
- Strengthen the organizational capacity of legislatures by training members and staff and providing them with useful information technology.

### *Promote the Rule of Law*

The rule of law is shorthand for the constitutional and statutory measures that ensure fundamental social, political, and economic rights. As the bedrock for the rule of law, constitutions define responsibilities and the separation of powers between the executive, parliament and judiciary in a unitary state. In countries with deep social divisions, the best way to advance ethnic or religious rights is through a comprehensive bill of rights that benefits all citizens. In addition, both statutory protection and promotion are required when it comes to advancing the long-standing grievances of minority groups. Minority interests can also be served through the constitutionally defined devolution of powers and decentralization, which enables local self-rule and is administratively viable. In addition, the rule of law provides a legal framework governing economic development, foreign trade and investment.

#### Recommendations:

- Support the development of an independent judiciary comprised of jurists appointed for their merit, impartiality, and commitment to fairness, with the power, authority, and resources to hold officials accountable.
- Combat corruption by supporting programs that decouple political power from state resources, introduce transparency into the expenditure of public resources, and adopt administrative measures to shrink the bureaucracy, downsize the public sector, and adopt anti-corruption laws holding police, judges, and elected officials accountable.

### *Strengthen Civil Society*

In illiberal democracies, civil society is often quite weak and there is a paucity of strong NGOs capable of challenging the government and holding it accountable. In countries like these, NGO development plays a key role. Leaders of illiberal democracies are aware of the potential challenge posed by empowered civil society, and create obstacles to the formation and operation of NGOs.

#### Recommendations:

- Support advocacy, media projects, and NGOs with activities aimed at transparency and government accountability.
- Seek ways to reduce the visibility of US support for democracy assistance in countries where NGOs are attacked by populist governments for their ties to the United States.

### *Reform the Security Sector*

Organs of the security sector should exist to protect civil liberties, uphold human dignity, and serve the public good. Subordinate to civilian authority, they are accountable for their conduct and restrained from intervening in the private life of citizens except under specific circumstances. Instituting and maintaining accountability, respect for human rights, and budgetary oversight within the security forces is critical to democratization. To date, democracy assistance targeting the security services has usually been done “mil-to-mil” (e.g. the International Military Assistance and Training Program).



## Recommendations:

- Create standards drawing upon the Code of Civil-Military Conduct (Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe) and country codes (e.g. Switzerland’s “Democratic Control of the Armed Forces”).
- Offer instruction at staff colleges on “democratic policing” that will inform civil-military relations and subordinate the security services to the democratically elected government.
- Guard against abuses by providing human rights training to security personnel helping them distinguish between legitimate law enforcement activities and human rights offenses.
- Provide instruction on the norms that govern arrest, detention, and the use of force.
- Pay adequate salaries and benefits to security personnel to discourage plunder and corruption.
- Emphasize prevention through community-based policing that employs local residents and deploys them to areas where they have family or communal affiliations.
- Mainstream security sector reform into an overall democratization strategy that uses both civilian and military agencies for implementation.
- Enhance the role of civilians in military affairs, including legislative oversight of military budgets and operations.

### *Distinguish Between Illiberal Democracies and Free-wheeling Kleptocracies*

Democratization will unfold differently in free-wheeling kleptocracies. The climate of more individual freedom and a less functional state, combined with widespread political and financial corruption, creates a specific set of needs. Because civil society organizations are often already strong at an elite level, elections are more likely to be opportunities for democratic breakthroughs. Similarly, governance programs can be more successful because there are usually democratically inclined factions in government.

## Recommendations:

- Emphasize support for non-politically oriented associational life to develop greater social capital, trust, and cooperation among citizens.
- Avoid concentrating leadership in elite NGOs.
- Encourage NGOs to act as watchdogs of the government.
- Provide ample assistance for election monitoring by both international and domestic organizations.
- Support election administrations that currently lack the resources and capacity to administer elections.
- Emphasize ongoing and long-term work with democratically oriented political parties so that if an election leads to a change of power it will also result in enduring democratic reform.
- Identify and work with democratically oriented state agencies and bureaucratic institutions.
- Introduce the democracy agenda into all elements of government assistance.

## Post-Conflict States

Violent conflict is the worst possible environment for democratization. Though conflict tends to occur in countries with a democracy deficit, democracy assistance typically takes a back seat for donors who are inclined to focus on post-conflict state-building to foster the development of legitimate institutions that are capable of delivering democracy to societies where governance and political institutions are weak or have been destroyed (e.g. Democratic Republic of the Congo and East Timor). Regardless of the sequencing, democracy and post-conflict peace-building are closely linked. Moreover, democracy helps to create conditions for economic development. Peace accords have the immediate goal of stabilizing and abating conflict. They usually integrate human rights, transitional justice, and reconciliation into power-sharing, security arrangements, and economic development plans intended to prevent the renewal of conflict and act as a bulwark against identity politics. Embedding democratic principles in these accords also mitigates the prospect of resurgent conflict, since many conflicts are fueled by injustice, discrimination, or other grievances associated with authoritarian rule.

### *Lay the Ground for Elections*

There is a debate over how to prioritize elections in post-conflict states. Some worry about the potentially destabilizing effect of democratization, and believe that elections should be delayed until state institutions and the rule of law have been entrenched. Others cite the risks of deferring political participation by citizens whose expectations have been raised by the promise of democracy. Despite the inherent uncertainties, elections in post-conflict countries are critical to launching a democratic process to harmonize competing claims. It should be recognized, however, that the sequencing of events in post-conflict countries is something over which the international community has limited control, since people in those countries have their own goals that motivate them to demand elections from their governments and the international community. Even in countries that lack a constitution or well-developed institutions, the first election is an important moment to select representative actors to negotiate the next phase of the democratic transition.

### Recommendations:

- Balance the need for elections as visible evidence of democracy's progress with concerns that elections will empower spoilers or anti-democrats.
- Ensure that voter registries in post-conflict countries accurately reflect pre-war populations by instituting a process to return internally displaced persons to their homes and to register refugees in other countries.
- Use the drafting of an electoral law as a point of departure for preparing a constitution that embodies power-sharing.
- Empower and support domestic election monitors.
- Invest in efforts to professionalize the EMB and enhance its autonomy and integrity.
- Continue investing in and supporting the democratization process regardless of electoral outcomes.
- Manage expectations for electoral outcomes and their potential impact.
- Provide assistance to political parties during post-conflict elections to create a level playing field and better represent voters.

### *Develop a Transitional Justice Strategy*

During a political transition following a period of violence or repression, a society is often confronted with the difficult legacy of human rights abuse. Weak and post-conflict countries confront difficult challenges

in addressing their past-whether it is seeking to prosecute individual perpetrators, make reparations to victims of state sponsored violence, convene truth commissions, implement institutional reforms or remove human rights abusers from positions of power. In attempting to come to terms with past crimes, government officials and non-government advocates are likely to consider both judicial and non-judicial accountability mechanisms, and are increasingly employing a combination of both. As a starting point, truth-telling can help break the cycle of violence that typically afflicts war-torn societies. Truth-telling does not, however, derogate the need for justice and institutional redress, and the truth and reconciliation process is not a substitute for accountability through trials. Since 1973, more than 20 truth commissions (TRCs) have been established around the world with each balancing amnesty and accountability in different ways. TRCs face the challenge of advancing reconciliation by shedding light on abuses without polarizing constituencies.

#### Recommendations:

- Encourage the development of a transitional justice system that prevents victimizers from committing future crimes and discourages victims from vigilante justice.
- Emphasize reconciliation to obviate the exclusion of constituencies from the political process.
- Recognize that unless individuals are held accountable, citizens are likely to hold an entire society or system responsible for past abuses.
- Emphasize multi-stakeholder dialogue involving former combatants, civil society, local politicians, and national figures that gives all constituencies the opportunity to present their views on the balance between amnesty and accountability.
- Use the transitional justice system to create a plan to demobilize, disarm, and reintegrate both militias and state-sponsored paramilitaries.
- Adopt lustration laws to prevent former officials who committed crimes from staying in power.

#### *Promote Social Justice and Human Development*

Democratization does not occur in a vacuum. Measures are needed to address the insecurity that fuels the cycle of violence and undermines democracy assistance efforts. Insecurity also hinders reconciliation as vulnerable populations revert to identity politics. To create conditions for democratization, it is also important to address social justice issues that link the polity's need for security with a better quality of life. It is also important to consider ways that democracy assistance can increase the chance of pro-development outcomes such as poverty alleviation, education, and the political, economic, and civic participation of women. While being flexible, assistance should be goal oriented, both to prevent mission creep as well as the conflation of democracy assistance with other aspects of official development assistance or foreign policy.

#### Recommendations:

- Prevent spoilers from fomenting violence as part of a power grab.
- View humanitarian assistance through the lens of conflict prevention, thereby addressing both basic needs and promoting political goals such as stabilization and other measures necessary to break the cycle of violence.
- Use humanitarian assistance to consolidate peace agreements by engaging former adversaries in collaborative efforts.
- Link relief, rehabilitation, and reconstruction efforts to “social action plans” that are designed in consultation with affected populations.

- Expand the capacity and resources of the Office of Post-Conflict and Stabilization at the US Department of State and create a Directorate General within the National Security Council to enhance the importance of assistance to weak and post-conflict states and establish program links to democracy assistance efforts.

### *Improve Governance*

Establishing basic services in war-torn societies is essential to restoring a sense of normalcy to traumatized, vulnerable, and displaced populations. Involving the recipients of services in the process of identifying requirements, monitoring implementation, and evaluating results enhances effective service delivery and helps restore democratic governance. It engages both community leaders and average citizens in efforts to hold officials accountable. Their empowerment contributes to a better informed and politically active polity.

### Recommendations:

- Include elements of democracy in all aspects of project development, regardless of the timetable for elections.
- Recognize synergies between improving governance and enhancing accountability, contestation, and participation.
- Establish citizen's action groups to build social capital and cultivate grassroots participation.



## COORDINATION AND COMMUNICATION

### US Mechanisms

The US Government will have spent \$1 billion in 2007 on democracy assistance in 50 countries (excluding Iraq and Afghanistan). Tactical flexibility requires a variety of delivery systems that are suited to the type of assistance as well as the category and geographic location of the beneficiary country.

US government agencies include USAID, the Millennium Challenge Account, the Middle East Partnership Initiative, the Office of Post-Conflict and Stabilization, the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor (DRL), the Department of Justice Rule of Law Program and Defense Department support for democratic policing.

Even when most of their funding comes from the US Government, NGOs are formally independent and can act more efficiently than government bureaucracies involved in grant-making and assistance. These include NDI and IRI, the Center for International Private Enterprise (CIPE), IFES, the American Center for International Labor Solidarity, Freedom House, the United States Institute for Peace, the Eurasia Foundation, and the Asia Foundation.

Other NGO activities can be undertaken by more than 70 foundations with headquarters in the United States (e.g. the Open Society Institute, the Ford Foundation, and the Rockefeller Brothers Fund). For-profit consulting groups play a prominent role in post-conflict settings where they receive more than half of the contracts issued by USAID's Office of Transitional Initiatives (i.e. SWIFT-II contractors including ARD, Casals, Chemonics, Creative Associates, DAI and PADCO). OTI small grants to local partners and cooperative agreements with NGOs for specialized tasks maximizes their ability to work in the most flexible and responsive fashion.

The National Endowment for Democracy (NED) occupies a unique and valuable role in this constellation. Its effectiveness is based on its ability to act significantly and decisively as a grant-making organization which provides substantial support for its four core grantees (NDI, IRI, CIPE, and the Solidarity Center) as well as numerous other organizations involved in various aspects of democracy work in over 90 countries.

These different mechanisms offer a range of assets and skills for democracy assistance. In Washington, relevant government agencies and NGOs can agree on the broad outlines for democracy assistance in particular countries. Cooperation and communication should occur at multiple levels, since inconsistent and sometimes contradictory implementation of assistance reduces its overall impact. Implementers of democracy assistance would also benefit from sharing information, which is currently done largely on an ad hoc basis and focuses on short-term needs.

Communication through information exchange at the country-level as well as via headquarters is more likely to enhance the impact of democracy assistance than coordination, which tends to be restrictive and foster competition. To this end, communication needs to be systematic and encompass both strategic questions and specific programs.

#### Recommendations:

- Emphasize NGOs and other informal channels to avoid the stigma associated with grants from the United States or other governments.
- Encourage the US Congress to provide adequate and long-term funding to the NED, which currently is supported only via the annual federal budget, and more generously resource political party institutes and other key NGOs such as IFES and Freedom House in order to enhance their flexibility and response time.
- Avoid use of the term “coordination” by emphasizing “cooperation” through information exchange, including the use of information technologies.
- Set up an “ambassador’s cooperation mechanism” at US embassies to make sure that different members of the country team are talking to each other, including representatives from NGOs, US government agencies, and the military.
- Develop a consistent analytic framework for developing country strategies and measuring progress in democracy assistance.
- Explore innovative approaches, including multi-year funding and umbrella grants to organizations with proven records of accomplishment, experience and integrity as acknowledgment of the need for a patient and long-term approach.
- Highlight grants or cooperative agreements as the preferred mechanisms in work with non-state actors.
- Expand training for Foreign Service Officers on issues related to democracy assistance in accordance with the Advancing Democratic Values Act.

#### **International Cooperation**

US democracy assistance is most successful when it is undertaken in cooperation with other countries and multilateral organizations. Despite unilateralist tendencies, this has remained true during recent years as well. Individual European countries, as well as multilateral organizations such as the UN, EU, OSCE and others have contributed to democratic development in many ways by monitoring elections and providing

financial support for democratic governance and the strengthening of civil society.

Stronger operational partnerships between the United States and other promoters of democracy would enhance international cooperation. International partners offer a range of assets and capabilities. The UN is one of the largest supporters of democratic governance: UNDP investments in democratic governance exceeded \$1.3 billion in 2006. The impact of UN efforts is diluted, however, by their dispersal across a dozen departments and agencies and the lack of an overall strategic framework to guide activities.

By offering incentives to semi-democratic regimes to become more democratic, the EU has been a magnet for reform since the end of the Cold War, as well as a generous sponsor of democracy assistance. Working with Europe not only would magnify US capabilities and effectiveness. Its focus on using soft power could help overcome the barriers resulting from America's reduced credibility. In the context of EU enlargement, its Stabilization and Association Agreements (SAA) provide a democratization track for countries that aspire to membership. EU financial assistance tends to use a "whole of country" approach and includes state-building activities that are well-suited to weak and post-conflict states. The Council of Europe sets human rights standards and evaluates the performance of its members. The Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe is extensively involved in electoral assistance. NATO's Membership Action Plans (MAP) and Partnership for Peace (PfP) provide benchmarks and incentives for political, economic and security reforms to potential members. Other regional bodies, such as the Organization of American States, monitor and evaluate the progress of members and engage in democracy assistance.

Donor countries directly support in-country groups working on democratization. Some donors, like Sweden, establish funds "under control" of their embassies. Others, like Norway, finance Norwegian institutes that work in partnership with local pro-democracy groups. Many countries, including the UK and Australia, have recently set-up political party institutes while others have established multi-party institutes.

Unofficial bodies also play a helpful role. The Community of Democracies was launched at a meeting of 105 states in Warsaw in 2000 for the purpose of fostering international cooperation in support of democracy. The Forum for the Future, established in Rabat in 2004, includes hundreds of NGOs that seek to engage their governments in discussions about liberalization. Inspired by the National Endowment for Democracy, many countries have established similar structures that have banded together through the World Movement of Democracy. The Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IDEA) in Stockholm effectively exchanges information between donors. The German Marshall Fund is planning a series of meetings in 2008 to explore ways of expanding transatlantic cooperation for democracy assistance.

Recommendations:

- Work with Europe and other allies to form democracy assistance coalitions.
- Emphasize international cooperation that respects donor preferences based on their historic involvement in countries and regions and their expertise in specific program areas, as well as their political will and their capacity to help drawing upon their own experience with democratization.
- Establish affinity groups with the goal of empowering a donor to take lead responsibility for specific country, region, and/or thematic area.
- Maximize the UN's potential role by encouraging a statement of renewed commitment to realizing international norms through democracy assistance and marshaling consistent support from member States.
- Review areas where US assistance to the UN system could strengthen multi-lateral democracy assistance efforts.

- Emphasize regional and sub-regional organizations in multilateral approaches.
- Enhance the role of NED’s World Movement of Democracy, a global network of democrats to inform strategies and program development based on the experience of activists, academics, policy-makers, practitioners, and funders in the network.
- Elaborate on the “right to democracy” in the Warsaw Declaration of the Community of Democracies.
- Raise the profile of civil society representatives participating in the Forum for the Future so that governments pay more attention to their recommendations.



## DEMOCRACY IN THE ARAB AND MUSLIM WORLD

The 21st century has thus far been characterized by a war of ideas between liberalism and Muslim extremism that rejects the path of politics, opting instead to pursue its goals through violence. The emergence of Hamas in Palestine and Hezbollah in Lebanon raises legitimate concern about whether the current approach to democratization in the Arab and Muslim World has instead unleashed anti-democratic forces that foment fanaticism and conflict.

Democracy’s detractors maintain that democracy is a secularization of Christian and Western values and that it therefore lacks universal appeal and viability. This project firmly rejects the notion that there is something inherent in the character of Muslims that makes them intrinsically prone to radical ideology or that dissuades hope for freedom in the Arab and Muslim world. Hundreds of millions of the world’s Muslims live in democratic countries and enjoy democratic freedoms. The democracy deficit in the Arab and Muslim world is a problem of supply, not a problem of demand. The failure of democracy in Muslim countries has more to do with the authoritarian rule of political leaders than any predisposition against political and economic liberalization. Turkey is a case in point. It is ruled by political leaders who are devoutly Islamic, but the ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP) is not Islamist. In fact, AKP has done more to bring Turkey in line with EU standards than any of the secular parties that preceded it.

Since the democratic process is viewed as being about winners and losers, autocrats in the Arab and Muslim world who seek to hang on to power often tolerate a democratic opposition as long as it has no real chance of success. Regimes do not want reform, since it would mean sharing power or catalyze events that could lead to their demise. Leaders driven by enlightened self-interest may focus on good governance and services. Rather than a commitment to social welfare and individual well-being, they are motivated by the desire to deflect demands for democracy that might threaten their grip on power.

In the 20th Century, political Islam was introduced by neo-fundamentalists who reinterpreted Islamic sources in response to the challenges of the modern world. Rejecting innovation, they believe that any Muslim who deviates from Shari’a is impure and should be excommunicated. By linking piety with an end to political corruption and misrule, they reject constitutional democracy as the basis for secular government because it empowers human rulers over the law of God. Iran’s President Mahmoud Ahmedinejad is the primary proponent of this radical political theology, which maintains that Islam and democracy are fundamentally incompatible. In an open letter to George W. Bush (May 2006), he declared: “Liberalism and Western-style democracy have not been able to realize the ideals of humanity. Today, these two concepts have failed. Those with insight can already hear the sounds of the shattering and fall of the

ideology and thoughts of liberal democratic systems.”

Ahmedinejad and his ilk are wrong. Many Muslims believe that Islam and democracy are compatible and reject fanaticism, citing longstanding traditions of pluralism, cosmopolitanism, and open-mindedness within Islam. They affirm the religion’s peaceful nature and reject justifications for violence using its teachings. They also maintain that the Islamic process of consultation is entirely consistent with democratic debate.

How should democracy assistance account for Hamas’ electoral victory or the ascent of Hezbollah? Voters elected Hamas by a narrow margin largely because they were frustrated with Fatah’s corrupt and incompetent leadership. Voters were drawn to Hamas’ reputation for integrity, not necessarily its Islamist agenda. Hamas couches its narrative in religious terminology, but it is just like any party that uses grievances to mobilize popular support.

Hezbollah’s leaders argued that electoral participation represented an acknowledgment that an Islamic state could be achieved peacefully at the ballot box. They do not believe that change in Lebanon will occur via revolution. Instead, they view elections as a way to penetrate democratic institutions and thereby promote Islamic ideals. Hasan Hodeibi, former Supreme Guide of Egypt’s Islamic Brotherhood, concluded that Islam and democracy were not contradictory, so long as democracy did not impose Western values on Islamic societies. The Brotherhood’s recent reform movement, Wasat, espoused a civic platform based on the Islamic faith that is committed to pluralism and the alternation of power. The Brotherhood believes that Shari’a can help advance its goals of modernization if it is subject to independent interpretation by open-minded and democratically elected figures.

The United States has historically been aligned with authoritarians in the Arab and Muslim World. It has not wanted to take a chance with democrats. However, no Islamist party has come to power and reneged on its commitment to democracy. There certainly are risks involved in the democratization of the Arab and Muslim world, but these risks can be minimized through patient efforts to foster civil society and democratic institutions as a bulwark against extremism.

#### Recommendations:

- Encourage host governments to ban armed political groups that do not renounce violence from participating in elections (e.g. Hamas and Hezbollah).
- Maintain a steady and patient approach to democracy assistance, even when elections empower groups that are hostile to US interests.
- Support civil society and independent media as ways to reduce the potential for extreme Islamists to ascend to power after elections.
- Emphasize incentives for entrenched authoritarians to voluntarily give up power such as political horizons, guarantees, and buy-outs.
- Promote linkages and information exchange between pro-democracy groups in the Arab and Muslim World.
- Support greater dialogue and exchanges between civil society in Arab countries and the West, particularly the US.
- Encourage Muslim theologians at leading institutions, such as Al-Azhar University in Egypt, to publicly affirm the compatibility of Islam and constitutional democracy.



- Leverage private resources from Gulf States. For example, encourage the UAE's Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid al-Maktoum to include civic and democracy education in his proposed \$10 billion education foundation.
- Get more Arab and Muslim states into the World Trade Organization to use economic liberalization as an engine for reform.





## APPENDIX

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