2013

[Introduction to] Political Aid and Arab Activism: Democracy Promotion, Justice and Representation

Sheila Carapico
University of Richmond, scarapic@richmond.edu

Political Aid and Arab Activism

Democracy Promotion, Justice, and Representation

SHEILA CARAPICO
University of Richmond

CAMBRIDGE
UNIVERSITY PRESS

Introduction

Political Aid in Theory and Practice

Jackbooted security forces raided the offices of foreign and Egyptian political think tanks on December 29, 2011, confiscating computers, records, cell phones, maps, documents, and cash. Five of the organizations targeted were overseas branches of the federally funded quasi-non-governmental National Democratic Institute (NDI), International Republican Institute (IRI), the International Center for Journalists, Freedom House, and Germany's Konrad Adenauer Foundation. The others were locally headquartered professional advocacy organizations, including the Egyptian Organization for Human Rights and the Arab Center for the Independence of Judges and Lawyers. The Minister of International Cooperation, Fayza Aboulnaga, often nicknamed "the iron lady," and a "Mubarak holdover," had asked prosecutors to investigate what foreign democracy brokers were up to, how Egyptian organizations received foreign aid, and whether they all had official authorization.

This news event was spun in various directions. That evening, Dawlat Soulam, a bilingual Egyptian-American, gave a scathing in-depth interview on a Channel 2 TV program called *The Truth* (*al-Haqiqah*) about why she and six colleagues had already resigned their jobs at IRI. She complained of blatant anti-Islamist bias in party training, CIA officers posing as democracy experts, grant-making according to ulterior motives, deliberate provocation of sectarian tensions, and anti-Egyptian prejudices expressed by drunken consultants at after-hours expatriate social gatherings. Soulam's accusations fed tales in Cairo's state-run media and unofficial rumor-mills about colonial agents undermining Egyptian sovereignty and fomenting instability.

Across town the following day, spokespersons for more than two dozen independent Egyptian civic organizations including the Egyptian Initiative

for Personal Rights and the Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies held a press conference. They expressed outrage at the inordinately forceful crackdown on independent agencies that had been monitoring parliamentary elections or documenting human rights abuses before, during, and after the popular revolt that forced President Husni Mubarak from power. These organizations, their attorneys, and international rights advocates braced for another round in a long series of litigations. Several of them had already faced court charges mostly related to unauthorized receipt of foreign funds for political activities, but also including treason or other trumped-up accusations. One friend of this group wrote at the time that "while many Egyptians seem to have bought the official line that this was a long-overdue move aimed at subjecting foreign NGOs to local legislation and thus correcting a momentarily injured Egyptian sovereignty, pro-democracy activists suspect that the true purpose of the trial is nothing less than intimidating human rights organizations, and some even fear that the ultimate goal is to close down not only foreign but all human rights organizations working in Egypt."[1]

There was an outcry from Washington. Former Republican presidential nominee John McCain and former Secretary of State Madeline Albright, chairs of the boards of IRI and NDI, respectively, denounced the heavy-handed harassment of American-funded 'non-governmental' pro-democracy workers. President Barack Obama and Secretary of State Hillary Clinton chimed in. Congress suspended payment on $1.3 billion of military aid to Egypt (for fighter jets, army tanks, riot control gear, and intelligence consultations) before deciding to maintain this pivotal security arrangement. In the event, once bail was paid to allow most of the foreign defendants to evacuate around March 1, only Egyptians and permanent residents of Egypt employed by four foreign organizations actually stood trial. As this cased stretched into 2013, the new Egyptian government proposed legislation further restricting associational freedoms and access to resources from abroad.

How can we sort through such conflicting claims and testimonials about justice, imperialism, and pushback? European, Canadian, and American experts in 'political transitions' had been working in Arab countries for a couple of decades. After the end of the Cold War, more intently after 9/11/2001, and in another spurt after the 'youth' uprisings in 2011, professional democracy brokers (and some amateurs) flocked to the region with projects to upgrade legal systems, institutionalize competitive

[1] Khaled Fahmy, "The Truth About Fayza," *Egypt Independent*, February 26, 2012.

elections, encourage female participation, and organize liberal civic networks. Drawing on dollars, pounds sterling, and euros, often cooperating with United Nations programs, they were employed inside Egypt, Jordan, sometimes Lebanon, the Maghreb countries, Yemen, and the two exceptional ill-fated cases of Palestine and Iraq. They offered technical advice, collected data, wrote assessments, conducted seminars, ran public information campaigns, and made grants to national or regional public advocacy think tanks for projects on human rights, political reform, civil society, and related topics. Involvement varied over time and space. In some countries, foreign experts offered boilerplates for commercial legislation; in Iraq, Americans created new courts. To different degrees, foreigners participated in electoral events as technical consultants or volunteer monitors. Many donors worked directly with public sector or parastatal institutions such as parliamentary libraries or national councils for women. Other projects provided grants and training to civil society organizations defined as NGOs or CSOs. More broadly, democracy brokers sponsored or co-sponsored virtual networks and transnational conferences on topics such as how to run electoral campaigns, lobby for reforms to family law, or battle press censorship.

This book investigates how such projects work, their proximate outputs, and the experiences of practitioners.

QUESTIONS AND PRELIMINARY ANSWERS

My task is to describe and analyze the dynamics of Western or multilateral organizations' programs 'promoting' Arab transitions from authoritarianism in the context of national, regional, and international politics in the Middle East during two tumultuous decades. The main research question is not *whether* political aid 'worked,' but rather *how* it worked, in actual practice. What work gets done, how, by whom, to what effect? Who gets what, when, where, and how? What were the actual channels, mechanisms, and institutional practices – inter-governmental, for instance, or non-governmental? Where are the sites of interaction inside or beyond national boundaries? Who are the agents, intermediaries, and audiences? How were goals relating to justice, representation, women's rights, or civil society framed, routinized, or contested? How did theories about political transitions mesh or clash with pre-existing legal jurisdictions, political institutions, and public civic spheres? When, why and how did client governments embrace or reject overtures? How did initiatives jibe with the aspirations, inspirations, and counter-hegemonic claims of civic

activists? What did professionals and close-hand observers see as the proximate benefits or risks? How relevant is applied transitology to indigenous struggles for fair and decent governance? Does political aid advance social justice, representative political institutions, and popular empowerment; or authoritarian retrenchment; or imperial domination – or what?

In response to the basic question of how democracy promotion works in practice, I venture a simple answer, a basic argument, a composite theoretical structure, and a bottom-line political point. The simple answer is that political-development assistance consists of projects that are carried out by specialized professional agencies working through cross-national institutional channels. The specificities warrant further investigation. The straightforward argument is that institutional arrangements and professional practices across and inside national domains are contextual, complex, and often contested. Regardless of nationality, professionals know that transnational engagements in matters of law, elections, gender, and what is 'non-governmental' intersect with international and domestic power arrangements in complicated, sometimes counter-intuitive ways. The paradoxes encompass but go beyond what a famous historian called the collocation of "megalomania and messianism" in macro-level American foreign policy.[2] Agents and participant observers reflect ruefully on the mixed motives, messages, and blessings of political aid; ironic convergences of empowerment and power; ethical and practical dilemmas; differently scaled legal-political jurisdictions; grandiose plans gone awry; confluences and disruptures between domestic and international regimes; banal competition over symbolic capital, institutional access, and monetary advantage; and the rarified experience of conferences in fancy off-shore locations.

Amidst these complexities, I suggest that it helps to break political aid into its component parts, goals, and fields of specialization. The formal organizing thesis around which this book is structured is that practitioners and researchers in four key sectors – the rule of law sector, projects dealing with formal electoral politics, gender programming, and funding for civil society – each identify distinctive terminologies, establishments, and contradictions. Legal scholar-practitioners explore layered articulations, harmonizations, and rifts between and among legal regimes. In Iraq, the disruptures were colossal. It is in the field of elections that Western powers earned their reputation for hypocrisy, because in the Middle East the 'high politics' of geo-strategic alliances so often contradicted professional

[2] Eric J. Hobsbawm, "Spreading Democracy," *Foreign Policy* (Sept/Oct 2004) 40–41.

election monitoring and/or design. Feminist intellectuals and gender specialists debated cultural and institutional ways of 'representing' women. Civil society promotion and hostile counterattacks caused scholars and activists (not that these are mutually exclusive categories) to consider what it means to be governmental or not, national or not; and to analyze ironic convergences and separations between sovereign and transnational manners of governmentality.

My colleagues cited in this book variously have analyzed the salience of enduring authoritarianism; the diffusion of international law; armed interventions; feminist internationalism; neo-liberal globalization; and paradoxical interactions between or among these trajectories. Many grappled with ironies, contradictions, and dialectics: 'the West' both does and does not 'promote' human rights, ballot-driven political transitions, the struggles of Arab women, and civic freedom; democracy promotion is – but is not simply – an imperial venture; political aid might undermine or upgrade authoritarianism. There is an overarching tone of irony. I am going to suggest that seemingly antithetical hypotheses are concomitantly valid because contradictory trajectories are in play.

Beyond a straightforward answer, a narrative argument, and a thesis structure, *Political Aid and Arab Activism* aspires to solidarity with independent human rights defenders, election monitors, feminist activists, and independent advocacy organizations. We want to understand the reasoning of government officials; but our sympathies are with colleagues accused of purveying Western agendas. Therefore the evaluation of political aid must provide enough experiential and epistemological nuances to counter either vicious smear campaigns against politically engaged activist intellectuals or the sanctimonious naiveté of the Washington establishment. We seek, in other words, to confront complexities facing the mostly bilingual agents and actors caught between these conflicting narratives. The way to do this is to read the reports and commentaries they publish about their experiences and frustrations. This is a political point, but also a research strategy.

WHAT DOES IT MEAN, PROMOTING POLITICAL TRANSITIONS?

The "work" discourses must be investigated along two axes: (1) examining a text's or ideology's logics – the assumptions the discourse implies, its context-dependent uses, and the possibilities it forecloses; and (2) investigating the rhetoric's effects – the ways in which that discourse is mediated, reiterated, and transmitted,

and how it is assessed and resignified over time through political organizations, extraordinary events, and everyday practices.[3]

We understand the first of these axes – the ideological postures of donors – better than its routines, outputs, and denouements overseas. Although later in this book I will cite books, reports, and articles generated by the political-aid industry, as well as academic studies of programs dealing with law, women, and civil society, most scholars are not familiar with praxis-level implementation. The undifferentiated notion of 'democracy promotion' is too abstract for empirical investigation. Political scientists comparing political change in authoritarian systems frequently referred nebulously to Western inspiration and influence but often paid little attention to the exact roles of foreign experts or the precise pathways of donor involvement. Instead 'transitologists' offered mostly descriptive policy studies of the 'supply side' of donor motivations, strategies, and intentions, on the one hand, or studies of the purely endogenous, domestic conditions favorable to democratic transitions, on the other.[4] The most prominent works specifically about democracy promotion combine open advocacy for government funding with policy advice for donor agencies.[5]

The transnational democracy complex is so well-funded, professionalized, and prolific that in-house publications virtually flood the market with a steady stream of books and articles. The applied transitology genre is written for policy-makers, in an omniscient, imperative voice: experts tell donors, governments, and activists what they 'should' or 'must' do – or perhaps failed to do – to 'get things right.' I will draw upon the accumulated expert knowledge generated by full-time researchers, much of which is insightful and smart. Still, let us distinguish theoretically inspired academic inquiry from the professional policy genre that generates action recommendations. How-to policy manuals certainly make negative assessments of inconsistencies and wrong-headed policies, and many specialists

[3] Lisa Wedeen, *Peripheral Visions: Publics, Power, and Performance in Yemen* (London: University of Chicago Press, 2008) 217.

[4] Amichai Magen, *Evaluating External Influence on Democratic Development: Transition*, Center on Democracy, Development, and The Rule of Law, Freeman Spogli Institute for International Studies, Stanford University, CDDRL Working Paper 111, March 2009, Palo Alto, California: 18–20.

[5] See, for instance, Larry Diamond, *The Spirit of Democracy: The Struggle to Build Free Societies throughout the World* (New York: Times Books/Henry Holt, 2008); the classic piece by Thomas Carothers, "The End of the Transitions Paradigm," *Journal of Democracy*, 13:1(2002) 5–21; Tamara Coffman Wittes, *Freedom's Unsteady March: America's Role in Building Arab Democratization* (Washington: Brookings Institution Press, 2008).

acknowledge that in the Middle East American democracy promotion in particular has a bad name. Trade publications do not, however, entertain alternative hypotheses, cite critical explanations, or pay much attention to commentary from purported beneficiaries. Democracy promotion is described in very general terms as providing practical, advisory, technical and financial support to 'democratic agents' overseas, usually working with foreign governments but sometimes provoking authoritarian backlash.[6] Specialists distinguish technical advice for government institutions from support for civil society groups, noting that either way, almost all political aid consists of information services via consultancies, conferences, or grants for research and/or outreach projects.[7] Tools for critically analyzing the effects of advice and information are few and rather rudimentary, however, and the appraisal effort is largely driven by agency-financed research on how donors meet mission-statement goals.[8] My purpose in this book is to analyze policy and professional practice; it is not to give policy advice.

Since the majority of policy papers and books on the topic are written from Washington's point of view, some readers will instinctively think of democracy promotion as Uncle Sam's soliloquy, for better or for worse. The autobiographical account is often told as the saga of a lone superpower in the Middle Eastern theater introspectively trying to reconcile ideals and insecurities. Given massive deployments, forceful interventions, arms exports, world-conquering military expenditures, and the preponderant American role in Iraq, perhaps Egypt, and the Israel/Palestine conundrum, this realist focus on the intentions driving American unilateralism makes sense. Even the juxtaposition of sentimental idealism with the calculations of a self-interested rational actor can be a useful heuristic for understanding contradictory official transcripts issued by professional

[6] These points have been made by Peter Burnell, "From Evaluating Democracy Assistance to Appraising Democracy Promotion," *Political Studies* 56 (2008) 414–434; Amichai Magen, "The Rule of Law and Its Promotion Abroad: Three Problems of Scope," *Stanford Journal of International Law* 51 (2009) 51–115; Michele Acuto, "Wilson Victorious? Understanding Democracy Promotion in the Midst of a 'Backlash,'" *Alternatives* 33 (2008) 461–480.

[7] Tamara Cofman Wittes and Andrew Masloski, "Democracy Promotion under Obama: Lessons from the Middle East Partnership Initiative," Saban Center for Middle East Policy Paper 13, Brookings Institution, Washington, May 2009.

[8] See the statistically sophisticated multivariate cross-national analysis of correlations between USAID democratic governance funding and measures of democratization in Steven E. Finkel, Anibal Pérez-Liñán, and Mitchell A. Seligson, "The Effects of U.S. Foreign Assistance on Democracy Building, 1990–2003," *World Politics* 59 (2007) 404–439: 438.

democracy brokers, the State Department, the Pentagon, and/or political leaders. Moreover, many Middle East specialists advance the counter-narrative of a superpower determined to dominate the region using tools including political aid. Nonetheless, this book is not only about American intentions, Americans abroad, or anti-Americanism.

To the contrary, singular focus on the U.S. juggernaut tends to obfuscate analysis in two ways. First, and for our overall purposes, foremost, it over-determines rather than investigates outcomes. The path-dependent projection of superpower discourages serious exploration of what happens next – how various actors 'over there,' on 'the receiving end,' interpret transcripts and reproduce institutional practices. Preliminarily, then, we might pause to consider how people in different countries might view the cover photograph for this book showing Marines mounting the statue of Saddam, or what the act of casting ballots signified for Iraqis in 2005, or what a voter with purple ink on her finger was communicating when she flashed a V-sign to a photographer?[9] Later we will try to understand how various actors react to, act upon, or re-purpose the symbolic and institutional default modes of political aid in specific contexts. This includes (but is not limited to) authoritarian pushback.

The second reason to eschew a narrow focus on American policies is that it can artificially and misleadingly separate them from the work of UN, European, Canadian, and other agencies. Narcissistic monologues belie the cosmopolitan intellectual roots and transnational networks of democratic internationalism. Lofty ideals, capitalist expansion, and geo-strategic superstructures fuse in a 'democratic peace' or 'pacific union' theory of enlightened multilateralism that is grounded in universal, not uniquely American, values.[10] Most contemporary innovations in international law, expertise in elections, and gender rights originate outside the United States, as we will see. The conference circuit is very multicultural. A Washington industry insider described a "democracy bureaucracy" loosely centered in the dense institutional complex in the District of Columbia but dispersed worldwide and lacking a "command and control center."[11] Going further, a conservative Republican decried a "post

[9] On the importance of signification, see Lisa Wedeen, "Conceptualizing Culture: Possibilities for Political Science," *The American Political Science Review* 96:4 (2002) 713–728.

[10] The interplay of idealism, realism, and economic reasoning in enlarging the pacific union was analyzed by Michael W. Doyle, *Ways of War and Peace* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1997).

[11] Thomas O. Melia, "The Democracy Bureaucracy: The Infrastructure of American Democracy Promotion," Discussion Paper for the Princeton Project on National Security Working Group on Global Institutions and Foreign Policy Infrastructure, Washington, September, 2005: 1–2.

democratic" "global governance regime" ... "promoted and run by complementary and interlocking networks" of leftist "Sixty-Eighters."[12] All in all, as we will see, Uncle Sam may steal the limelight, but other roles are pivotal to plot development. Ergo, this is not a book about American foreign policy as told from Washington's perspective, nor a study of Arab reactions to American initiatives. International law, multinational initiatives, and cosmopolitan codes of behavior transcend American foreign policy objectives and hegemonic aspirations.

If American might is just one arc that requires scrutiny, how can we conceptualize the political development enterprise? Very broadly, social scientists offer two main sets of hypotheses about the global governance regime. The more sanguine view, if you will, accentuates the catalytic power of ideas institutionalized in signatory conventions that gradually gain compliance from increasing numbers of states. This 'constructivist' paradigm holds that transnational networks gradually universalize norms, rules, institutions, and procedures governing sovereign and even non-state behavior in particular issue areas.[13] International regimes share distinctive catchphrases, templates, and standards via conferences, training, documentation, web-links, and institution-building activities. They constitute "epistemic communities" of knowledgeable specialists to generate and disseminate the "reasons, habits, expectations, and compelling arguments" for cosmopolitan processes and policies.[14] Now, one realist argument is that the superpower delegates implementation of

[12] John Fonte, "Democracy's Trojan Horse," *The National Interest* (Summer 2004) 117–118. Referring to leftist protests in the United States, France, and other Western countries in 1968, Fonte warns that national sovereignty "is increasingly circumscribed by the growing strength of the global institutions, laws, rules, and ideological norms."

[13] Robert Keohane, *After Hegemony: Cooperation and Disorder in World Political Economy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), argued that the United States was the prime mover in some, but not all, international regimes. Initially a theory of inter-governmental institutions, the concept of regimes was later applied to the grey area of non- and quasi-non-governmental organizations, according to James Bohman, "International Regimes and Democratic Governance: Political Equality and Influence in Global Institutions, *International Affairs* 75 (1999) 499–513.

[14] Emanuel Adler and Peter M. Haas, "Conclusion: Epistemic Communities, World Order, and the Creation of a Reflective Research Program," *International Organization* 45:1 (1992) 367–390: 372. See also Andrew P. Cortell and James W. Davis, Jr., "Understanding the Domestic Impact of International Norms: A Research Agenda," *International Studies Review*, 2:1 (2000) 65–87; Rodger A. Payne, "Persuasion, Frames, and Norm Construction," *European Journal of International Relations*, 7:1 (2001) 37–61; and Amitav Acharya, "How Ideas Spread: Whose Norms Matter? Norm Localization and Institutional Change in Asian Regionalism," *International Organization* 58 (2004) 239–275.

some high principles to allies and multilateral institutions in order "to facilitate construction of an order conducive to its interests."[15] This is certainly a hypothesis worth entertaining. Liberal internationalists reply, however, that universal norms, multilateral efforts, leadership from 'middle powers' such as the Netherlands and Canada, polyglot teams, and 'non-governmental' organizations minimize the perception of meddling in domestic politics, thereby increasing the acceptability of democracy assistance. They distinguish, in other words, inter-governmental institutions and transnational regimes from American imperialism, arguing – normatively, heuristically, and empirically – for multilateralism over unilateralism.[16] In each field of investigation in this book some thoughtful analysis shows how international regimes express universal values, influence state reforms, or bolster the efforts of activists to defend against despotism. Moreover, this perspective encourages recognition that Arab jurists, elections monitors, feminists, and civic activists are agents, and not simply recipients, of cosmopolitan norms. In the best-case scenarios, international rights conventions, techniques for exposing electoral fraud, transnational women's advocacy, and support for independent intellectual production empower a social justice vanguard to work for better governance. The resources of political aid might tip the balance in their favor.

However, other progressive scholars associate dense vertical networks radiating from Europe and North America with neo-liberal globalization's assault on states and their welfare projects. Human rights regimes, election monitoring, gender empowerment agendas, and NGO networks can all perpetuate global capitalist expansion and modes of governmentality dictated by the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, and the World Trade Organization. From this perspective, limited political reform initiatives are meant to subjugate national sovereignty to Western

[15] G. John Ikenberry and Charles A. Kupchan, "Socialization and Hegemonic Power," *International Organization* 44:3 (1990) 283–315: 284.

[16] Jon C. Pevehouse, "Democracy from the Outside-In? International Organizations and Democratization," *International Organization* 56:3 (2002) 515–549: 523, suggests that international rather than purely bilateral involvement may reassure business elites and military officers. To offset criticisms of overt and covert manipulations of elections in Central America and Southeast Asia, Washington financed more multilateral efforts, according to David P. Forsythe and Barbara Ann Rieffer, "US Foreign Policy and Enlarging the Democratic Community": *Human Rights Quarterly* 22: 4 (2000) 998–1010. This argument for multilateralism was applied to Iraq by Rob Jenkins, "Collateral Benefit: Iraq and Increased Legitimacy for International Trusteeship." *Dissent* 53: 2 (2006) 72–75.

corporate hegemony.[17] "Democratic evangelism," accordingly, was about "mobilizing discourses," constructing "frameworks for thought," "creating foot soldiers," and providing "yardsticks" to measure compliance with new standards.[18] It was intended to foreclose prospects of mass mobilizations of "the Arab street" or in the form of "politics from below."[19] These were not only Arab concerns. In 'sub-Saharan' Africa as well, "the ascendancy of form over content" conveyed a "legitimization of disempowerment."[20] Washington-based "democracy makers," the think tanks in the U.S. government, World Bank offices, and the so-called NGO sector comprised of IRI, Carnegie, and others generated modes of knowledge conducive to American dominance, for instance by subsuming human rights under the more managerial notion of good governance, effectively consigning culturally sensitive field workers to 'double agent' roles. As one scholar observed, the genius of this formulation is the premise that political transitions evolve from bureaucratic-authoritarian conditions via expert consultation rather than by popular mobilization.[21] This managerial rendition obscures issues of global democracy and histories of struggles over rights and representation in the West.[22] Instead of taking

[17] Larbi Sadiki, "To Export or Not Export Democracy to the Arab World: The Islamist Perspective," *Arab Studies Journal* VI: 1 (1998) 60–75; Moheb Zaki, *Civil Society and Democratization in Egypt, 1981–1994*, Cairo, Dar Al Kutub for *Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung* and The Ibn Khaldun Center, n.d.

[18] Hisham M. Nazer, *Power of a Third Kind: The Western Attempt to Colonize the Global Village* (Westport, Connecticut, and London: Praeger, 1999), xxiii, 13–15. NGOs' "simplistic narratives" and "zealous rationale," he wrote, constituted "nodal links" in a hegemonic discourse, and human rights "a fetishized commodity... and, simultaneously, a fungible political currency" 103–107.

[19] Assef Bayat, "Transforming the Arab World: *The Arab Human Development Report* and the Politics of Change," *Development and Change* 36:6 (2005) 1225–37; Lila Abu-Lughod, "Dialects of Women's Empowerment: The International Circuitry of the Arab Human Development Report 2005," *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 41:1 (2009) 83–103. Galal Amin, *The Illusion of Progress in the Arab World: A Critique of Western Misconstructions* (Cairo: American University in Cairo Press, 2006); Mark Levine, "The UN Arab Human Development Report: A Critique," *Middle East Report Online*, July 2, 2002.

[20] Claude Ake, "The Democratisation of Disempowerment in Africa," in Hippler, ed., *The Democratisation of Disempowerment: The Problem of Democracy in the Third World* (London: Pluto Press, 1999) 70.

[21] Nicolas Guilhot, *The Democracy Makers: Human Rights and International Order* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005).

[22] Johan Galtung, "Alternative Models for Global Democracy," ed. Barry Holden, *Global Democracy: Key Debates* (London and New York: Routledge, 2000) 142–161; Johan Galtung, "A Structural Theory of Imperialism," *Journal of Peace Research* 8:2 (1971) 81–117; Alan Gilbert, *Must Global Politics Constrain Democracy? Great-Power*

mission statements and in-house publications at face value, critical scholars invite us to consider how developmental "regimes of truth" were disseminated, professionalized, and institutionalized by conventional aid agencies.[23]

Arab rights advocates and plenty of expatriate professionals contemplated these arguments as they applied in specific post-Cold War contexts. Participants in human rights conferences and women's networks frequently discussed, debated, and disagreed about the extent to which international aid for political transitions offered intellectual, material, or mechanical assets for reform projects; provoked authoritarian backlash; and/or perpetuated Euro-American supremacy. It was clear to many that conceptually elegant analyses could be vulgarized as propaganda for dictatorship or for imperialism. The vision of an enlightened evangelical 'West' exporting legal rights, electoral practices, gender equality, and basic liberties morphed into apologetics for hubris and belligerence. On the other side, Arab police-states whipped up xenophobic sentiments against 'colonial meddling' to muzzle and scapegoat citizen rights-defenders. I want to ponder these perspectives, without giving grist to either mill, in order to investigate the anomalous interchanges between them and to appreciate the perspectives of civic activists caught in the middle.

It can already be anticipated that self-fulfilling postulates about political aid – as mode of empowerment or exercise of power – offer insights but don't really explain how it works in practice. What are the events? Who is there; who says what; what do they document about what was said? If projects harmonize procedures or parlances – how so? What's the difference between sending consultants, hiring 'locals,' and providing grants? What are the implications of working through governmental, parastatal, or non-governmental channels, respectively? To give a concrete example: what are the political-institutional ramifications of working inside judiciaries, through national human rights ministries, with independent national watch-dogs, or by fostering pan-Arab transnational 'NGO' networks – and how do they vary by circumstance? Is monitoring elections a way of catching ballot thieves red-handed, a supplement to conventional espionage, a roadmap for authoritarian upgrading, or all of these things? How,

Realism, Democratic Peace, and Democratic Internationalism (Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1999).

[23] Arturo Escobar, *Encountering Development: The Making and Unmaking of the Third World* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995).

by what mechanisms, to what extent, under what circumstances, does political aid in different sectors reproduce technocratic practices – or not?

METHOD AND SCOPE

Decades ago, a famous sociologist observed that *projects* are the "privileged particles"[24] of development. In this research, the units of analysis are projects: discrete, named, finite activities underwritten by donors and implemented by contractors or intermediaries working with indigenous partners or counterparts. If foreign aid is the sum of development projects, then, for our purposes, political aid is its projects. To understand how democracy promotion works, therefore, we would need to appreciate how iterative activities are cumulatively framed, professionalized, institutionalized, and politicized in 'real life.'

I began this research by attending events, visiting offices, talking to people, reading news articles, and learning what agencies named what kind of projects in which countries in the Middle East. Next, I searched backward to the web sites of democracy assistance agencies for their mission statements, lists of projects, partners, and partners' project lists and sponsor links. This exercise provided an overview of activities.[25] My ambition singlehandedly to code and catalogue 'all' projects turned into an unwieldy data file that imploded under the hundreds of separate initiatives by new actors in Iraq and the proliferation of transnational grant-making agencies in the twenty-first century. Nonetheless, tracking two decades' worth of projects yielded an unusually large pile of anecdotes. Thirdly, in pursuit of depth, and most revealingly, I pored over reports, evaluations, scholarly publications, and published or online commentary, mostly written in English by professionals and practitioners. I relied on their writings rather than on interviews in order to capture what they wanted to say rather than what I wanted to know, and by way of analyzing texts and transcripts. Although I did a lot of participant observation 'in the field,' therefore, published or posted first-hand, on-site accounts are the main source for the analyses that follow. Also I relied mostly on readily available English-language sources to which international experts have access.

[24] Albert O. Hirschman, *Development Projects Observed* (Washington, Brookings Institution, 1967) 1.

[25] I described my preliminary findings in Sheila Carapico, "Foreign Aid for Promoting Democracy in the Arab World," *The Middle East Journal* 56:3 (2002) 379–395.

The overview project catalogue yielded some basic descriptive information. First, perhaps obviously, democracy promotion differs from humanitarian aid that provides emergency relief directly to disaster victims or refugees; conventional bilateral or multilateral socio-economic development cooperation; or military assistance in the form of training and equipment for armed forces. Normally, both development aid and military aid are inter-state arrangements negotiated diplomatically and administered through official channels. Both consist mostly of loans for material goods and grants for expert services. Conventional bilateral and multilateral development aid agencies do fund political projects in good governance, decentralization and civil society as part of their overall developmental mandates, and most political aid originates in the group of about two dozen wealthy capitalist aid donors known as the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). However, in addition to conventional providers of what the OECD calls overseas development assistance (ODA), democracy brokers include a range of quasi-non-governmental and transnational agencies and subcontractors situated in different operational niches in and beyond 'the state.' Parastatal publicly subsidized national political foundations include the German *Stiftungen*, the National Endowment for Democracy (NED), NDI and IRI, the Netherlands Institute for Multiparty Democracy, and many others. Among the numerous new quasi-multilateral public entities were the European Union's Anna Lindh Foundation for the Dialogue between Cultures and its Network of Democracy Think Tanks, the U.S.-led Foundation for the Future, and a group based in Stockholm known as International IDEA. With the exception of a few mostly U.S.-based foundations with private endowments such as the Ford, Soros, and Carnegie foundations and the Carter Center, virtually all of them relied on public sector budgets.

Next, only some countries in the Middle East and North Africa (popularly known in English by the acronym MENA) featured prominently in project records. No non-Arab countries were candidates for concerted overt efforts. Israel, the top beneficiary of American security and financial assistance worldwide, was already classified as an advanced liberal democracy not in need of reform or guidance, so although some Israeli peace and human rights groups fund-raise in Europe, few if any judicial advisors or election monitors go to Israel. Turkey, a NATO member aspiring to join the European Union, was scarcely mentioned in project lists for the MENA region except under the broad-ranging Euro-Mediterranean network. At the opposite end of the spectrum, the hostile pariah government of the

Islamic Republic of Iran was beyond the scope of overt initiatives for democratic enlargement. Donors placed Arab League members Sudan (now North Sudan), Mauritania, and Somalia under their Africa bureaus. This left just the Arab countries, by which I mean the places where Arabic is the main official, spoken, and media language.

Not all Arab countries were targeted, however. Rather, lists of projects, office locations, and even attendees at transnational conferences mostly featured nine countries. These were *not* the wealthy oil-exporting monarchies of the Gulf, net donors of development assistance adamant about the sanctity of their dynastic traditions, whose stability was considered a vital American interest. Nor, prior to 2011, were the rogue dictatorships in Libya and Syria, or Iraq under Saddam Hussein, included (however much North Atlantic powers had hoped for regime change there and in Iran). Whether there were clandestine activities via covert institutional channels in Libya before the 2011 NATO intervention or in Syria is beyond the scope of this study.

Candidates for political aid were the Western-leaning, often-called 'moderate,' post-colonial, Third World places where most of the Arab region's roughly 360 million people live. Unlike either the tidy well-to-do Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) states or the belligerent rogues, they were the places where OECD aid agencies, the World Bank, and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) already maintained an active presence: client regimes, low-to-middle income, debt-ridden and dependent to varying degrees on conventional socio-economic development loans, grants, and policy advice from Western, Gulf, and multilateral sources. They were seven sovereign countries and two exceptional cases of political development under conditions of occupation: Egypt, Jordan, Morocco, Yemen, Algeria, Tunisia, and Lebanon; and Palestine during the Oslo era and Iraq after the second Anglo-American invasion. Egypt, Palestine, and Iraq are the most prominent cases overall, in terms of activities and scholarly analysis.

The OECD's Development Assistance Committee (DAC) keeps track of official ODA transfers, and publishes data provided by its member states. By contrast, aggregate figures for political aid through various governmental, parastatal, and quasi-multilateral channels are harder to come by. Tables 1 and 2 give proxy evidence of rank orders and magnitude. Table 1 shows the Middle Eastern recipients of official bilateral American aid via the Agency for International Development (USAID)'s Democratic Governance program for a fourteen-year period ending in 2004. It does not necessarily include all USAID projects for civil society or women or

TABLE 1. *Middle Eastern Recipients of USAID Democratic Governance Assistance during 1990–2004 (by amount and number of years)*

Algeria	$3.7 million	8 years
Bahrain	$1.3 million	2 years
Egypt	$334.3 million	14 years
Iraq	$523.6 million	3 years
Jordan	$28.3 million	5 years
Lebanon	$28.5 million	11 years
Morocco	$3.6 million	7 years
Oman	$0.6 million	2 years
Qatar	$0.8 million	1 year
Saudi Arabia	$0.4 million	1 year
Tunisia	$11.2 million	5 years
Turkey	$0.9 million	4 years
West Bank and Gaza	$155.4 million	11 years
Yemen	$6.6 million	8 years

Source: Steven E. Finkel, Anibal Pérez-Liñán and Mitchell A. Seligson, "The Effects of U.S. Foreign Assistance on Democracy Building, 1990–2003," *World Politics*, 59 (2007) 404–439: 438.

TABLE 2. *Major Donors to Top Arab Aid Recipients circa 2007/08*

Algeria	France, Spain, EC, Belgium, Arabs, Germany, Italy, Japan, Canada, Korea
Egypt	US, EC, Germany, France, Arabs, Japan, Denmark, IDA, Spain, Austria
Iraq	US, Germany, Japan, France, Italy, Austria, Australia, Sweden, UK, Spain
Jordan	US, UNWRA, Germany, EC, Japan, Arabs, Israel, Spain, Italy, Canada
Lebanon	Arabs, EC, US, France, UNWRA, Italy, Germany, Spain, Turkey, Norway
Morocco	France, EC, Germany, Arabs, Japan, Spain, Italy, US, Belgium
Palestine	UNWRA, EC, US, Norway, Germany, Japan, Spain, Sweden, France, Canada
Tunisia	France, EC, Germany, Japan, Italy, Spain, Belgium, UK, Arabs, Canada
Yemen	IDA, Germany, Netherlands, US, EC, UK, Arabs, Japan, France, WFP

Source: OECD data. UNWRA is the UN agency that assists Palestinian refugees; Arabs are GCC donors; IDA is the branch of the World Bank that deals with the most impoverished countries; the WFP is the World Food Program.

American projects funded under the National Endowment for Democracy, the Middle East Partnership Initiative, or other channels. It shows that Iraq, Egypt, and the West Bank and Gaza were the top recipients; Gulf countries are included but the tab is a comparative pittance. Table 2 shows the top

donors to the main Arab ODA recipients circa 2007. These rankings vary from year to year. At that time, the United States was the major donor of economic development assistance to Iraq, Egypt, and Jordan, in that order. The European Union, France, and other OECD donors played larger roles in the other sovereign countries and Palestine. The two lists of recipients and donors roughly seem to correlate with the activities of democracy brokers in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region described in the rest of this book.

The data in these two tables show conventional assistance to nine Arab ODA recipients. However, project records for democracy promotion show additional significant spending on co-sponsored transnational conferences or networks at the Arab or Mediterranean regional level. The steady stream of workshops, summits, and declarations, sometimes coordinated by UN organizations, allow prominent Arab professionals from these countries to meet with European, North American, and international experts to exchange information and ideas. This interesting quasi-non-intergovernmental sphere of intermittent interaction in luxury conference facilities and in cyberspace goes largely unnoticed in studies that usually focus on, say, American policies, or programs inside Egypt. Yet it is very much part of the work democracy brokers do. Investigating this regional dimension is one of the original contributions of this book.

Conspicuously, democracy promotion is an informational enterprise, idealist in the sense that it aims to shape norms and values. Compared with the hardware-and-firepower of military assistance or the brick-and-mortar or syringes-and-books provisions of conventional development aid, political aid mostly delivers words, knowledge, ideas, and publicity. Project activities and outputs are studies, reports, advice, seminars, and educational materials; expenditures go toward consultant salaries, travel expenses, printing costs, and technology and software. More than conventional ODA, democracy promotion produces and reproduces codes and categories of information and disseminates professional practices.

More specifically, however, as already suggested, operational expertise is specialized. There's hardly any such thing as a 'democracy project,' per se, it turns out: professionalism means specialization. Projects, experts, detailed accounts, and scholarly inquiry are refined into several distinct subfields. These are displayed in the project typology shown in Table 3.

The justice/human rights/rule-of-law sector is perhaps the most highly specialized, and Chapter 1 cites a rich trove of academic and legal scholarship on the intermingling of transnational, Arab, and national legal regimes. The second important category of political aid has to do with

TABLE 3. *A Typology of Projects Promoting Arab Democratization*

	Legal-Judicial Sector	Electoral Representation	Civic Sector
Research	Legal sector analysis Human rights reports Legislative documentation Digital inventories Translation of documents Constitutional research Criminal registries	Pilot/background studies Needs assessments Mapping exercises Election monitoring Public opinion surveys Parliamentary records Studies of gender quotas	Studies of civil society NGO directories Research grants Gender analysis Publications Documentaries
Pedagogy	Expert consultations Law schools & programs Human rights training Media campaigns on rights Seminars/workshops Professional exchanges Commercial harmonization	Voter education Party campaign training Women candidate programs Parliamentary exchanges Poll-worker training Election publicity Local monitor training	NGO workshops Women's empowerment Advocacy training Web sites/ handbooks Media seminars Study tours Fund-raising manuals
Institutional	Courts recording Penal system Introducing legislation Law libraries Bar associations Human rights organizations Transnational institutions Iraq's High Tribunal	Election commissions Parliamentary offices Local councils Automated voting Ballots, ink, boxes Election monitors Parliamentary libraries	Think tanks Media centers Women's advocacy Chambers of commerce Universities Global NGO networks Labor unions Arab regional conferences

voting and representation, the crux of what most people mean by democracy and democracy promotion. Here the specialized academic literature is rather thin, but the industry documentation and commentary on the American role are particularly robust. Consultants, critics, and constituents have written extensively about the third major subset of activities

engaging civil society defined as advocacy NGOs. This is a well-researched and well-theorized field covered in analyses of the 'non-governmental' obsessions of neo-liberal globalization as well as studies of civil society in Egypt, Palestine and other countries. Last, but hardly least, grants officers, activists, and scholars have thought creatively about the complicated issues surrounding Arab women's empowerment via legal, electoral, and civil engagement, so there is a unique body of gender research. In each sphere, practitioners faced contradictory challenges.

This book's four main chapters consider these subfields and the relevant literatures. Each examines both a sector and a significant contradiction. They are arranged to be accessible to non-Middle East specialists and to build a cumulative analysis. Chapter 1 on Legal Jurisdictions considers historical articulations among municipal, Arab, European, and international legal regimes before investigating what specialists call 'legal harmonization.' Responding to other scholars' invitation to consider the dissonant ways political aid might erode and/or reinforce states' legal authority, the first half of the chapter investigates relationships between national and transnational legal jurisdictions historically and in the context of specific contemporary project funding for law schools, national human rights councils, non-governmental networks, or new information technologies. It looks at how practices are folded into existing municipal-legal arrangements inside the sovereign domains. The rest of the chapter delves into the exceptional American project to layer some new courts and laws atop the existing Iraqi Arab-style judicial system, mostly as told by some of the leading, ultimately disenchanted, legal consultants and experts involved.

Although a certain trope about 'Western pressure to hold free and fair elections' persists in the English-language mass media, the historical record suggests otherwise. Celebration of Kuwait's non-partisan male-only post liberation balloting, mute reactions to an Algerian military coup that blocked an Islamist victory at the polls, orchestration of voting for the Palestine Authority under the Oslo Accords, fanfare surrounding Iraq's problematic post-invasion elections, rejection of the outcome of the 2006 Palestinian vote, delicate understatements of vote-rigging in Egypt, and other examples cumulatively suggest that the United States in particular sought publicity and/or outcomes conducive to its power. The chapter on elections covers these stories, but also less-studied rubrics of an incipient transnational elections regime. This regime provides expert advice on the design and administration of electoral systems; trains poll-workers, campaign managers, and others; and/or applies an increasingly sophisticated methodology for local and foreign monitors to document what happens in

polling stations and vote-tallying centers. The chapter examines specific expert and documentary activities in different Arab elections between the early 1990s and the end of 2010, as reported by track-record organizations such as the EU Elections Unit, the International Foundation for Electoral Systems, NDI, Canadian groups, the Carter Center, and specialized United Nations agencies. Foreign experts, trainers, and monitors had a complicated and sometimes controversial relationship to national authorities, as IRI was reminded when its offices were raided amidst intensive election-season monitoring and training activities. The chapter considers the ways foreign democracy brokers did or did not work in various Arab elections to harmonize internationally accepted routines, and how those activities imbricated with national and international power struggles.

The second half of the book shifts register. It eavesdrops on interpersonal encounters and confrontations over the discourses and resources earmarked for women's empowerment and civil society, respectively. Drawing on first-hand scholarly analyses, industry reports, conference presentations, and journalistic commentary, these two chapters are less about international relations and geo-strategic issues than about processes of globalization and cosmopolitanism. The third chapter, Patronizing Women, asks how 'regimes of truth' are interpreted and put into action by Arab women and other actors. I draw on women's internationalism as well as on rich feminist critiques of the 'dialects' of 'transnational feminist governmentality.' Still, again the question is: then what? How do bilingual practitioners and/or 'native' audiences react to and act upon the UN-centered gender regime? How are its generalizations institutionalized? What are the politics of this? The chapter is divided into two parts. The first part quotes extensively from transcripts of cross-cultural exchanges in an effort to reveal how women receive, resignify, or reject rather didactic messages. Some Western readers will be surprised by the sarcasm. The second part traces organizational pathways with parallels to national human rights institutions, and anticipates some of the conflicts and controversies over non-governmental funding channels. One of the paradoxes in this chapter – the enigma of institutionalized idealism – is conveyed by years' worth of images of First Lady Susanne Mubarak leading Egypt's International Women's Day celebrations applauded more by foreigners than by Egyptians.

The chapter on so-called NGOs, GONGOs, and DONGOs looks into fierce disputes over legislation, registration and funding of civil society organizations as defined by domestic and transnational regimes. This investigation takes us into the frontier zones of 'non-governmental,' sometimes extra-territorial, activities, and thus necessitates refined notions of

transnational regimes; centrifugal and centripetal forces of globalization; and the dual meanings of 'denationalization.' The main plot line follows the backlash from Arab governments allied with the West, notably the contentious string of disputes, re-legislations, and court cases leading up to the 'foreign funding' trial in Egypt in late 2011. In these inordinate events, I also had to include a glimpse into outlandish feedback loops of anti-terror legislation and crackdowns in 'the West' eerily similar to long-standing restrictions on non-governmental funding imposed by Arab dictators. Like the chapter on women, this one cites leading bilingual intellectuals' sometimes incredulous reactions to both nationalist and imperial parlances.

Given the locations of the main donor agencies, political foundations, and sub-contractors, it is almost impossible to avoid characterizing them collectively as 'the West' or 'Western.' This pseudo-geographic designation carries several distinct, often contrary, connotations, however. An overarching concept of Western Civilization features in English as the bearer of great democratic ideals from the ancient Greek philosophers, Judeo-Christian traditions, and the European Enlightenment. Equally, the term is often used as shorthand for stable liberal democracies and the values they share. 'Western' also refers to European-looking people, and in some usages seems synonymous with 'English-speaking.' Another euphemistic rendering also calls it 'the international community,' as in expatriate communities of diplomats, development experts, and democracy brokers who reside in several Arab capitals. Alternately, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, NATO, 'the Western alliance,' is the world's dominant military force, formerly opposed by the Soviet-led 'eastern bloc.' Another use of the term describes the Group of Seven (G-7) strongest capitalist economies – the United States, Great Britain, France, Germany, Japan, Canada, and Italy – or the larger club of capitalist donor countries that make development policies for the rest of the world through their membership in the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, the OECD. This 'West,' the center of the world capitalist system and its financial institutions the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, also goes by other geographic designations: 'the global North' and 'the core countries.' Similarly, yet contrarily, in the post-colonial Third World, and in Arabic usage, 'Western' is often an adjectival descriptor of imperialism signifying alien, domineering, insidious, and haughty. I will try to keep these alternative meanings distinct, while acknowledging that in everyday conversation and extraordinary events they merge and overlap in ambiguous, contradictory, and very political ways.

To those who used to imagine 'the West' and 'the Arab world' as two parallel universes, conferences and partnerships would seem like intergalactic portals. The analogy is not entirely inept because so-called 'missions' almost always entail intercontinental air travel, Arabic-English (or French) translation, and glassed-off suspension in extra-territorial space. I like the allegory of missions, projects, and meetings as inter-scalar, boundary-crossing, ephemeral portals where dual realities may co-exist or collide.

If projects, branch offices, and conference halls are portals, however, collectively they constitute a sort of denationalized-transnationalized frontier between national and transnational domains. In the late twentieth century, a vast, mostly non-profit, publicly funded industry had set up shop in Cairo, Jerusalem, Amman, Rabat, Sana'a, and other, mostly Mediterranean, locales. Downtown convention centers or offshore resorts hosted endless workshops and conferences. A whole cadre of think tanks staffed by liberal Arab or bi-national intellectuals, many of them educated in the finest Western universities, emerged as democracy brokers in their own right, so to speak, translating and reinterpreting universal norms into Arabic vernaculars and national histories. Under extraordinary circumstances, Ramallah, Jerusalem, Baghdad, Irbil, Amman, and Cairo became destinations for global experts in law, elections, and empowerment. Doha and Casablanca offered even more upscale beachfront venues. These spaces defy binary categories of Western/Arab, native/foreign, state/non-governmental, and expert/activist.

Of course, 'the West' and 'the Arab world' never were two parallel universes. European or 'Western' history evolved in part in interactions with ancient Mesopotamia, Egypt, and the Holy Land, through Roman conquests, Mediterranean trade, Arab scholars' preservation of Greek manuscripts, and the Crusades. The Middle East has been touched by two twentieth-century European wars, post-Ottoman British and French mandates, European Zionism, OECD dependence on Arabian oil, the Israel-Palestine conundrum, two U.S.-led wars in Iraq, 9/11, and so on, not to mention Mercedes cars and McDonald's hamburgers. The first chapter explains something about the historical processes of legal layering and Arab-regional legal harmonization, before analyzing interfaces of political aid with already hybrid legal systems. It opens with the morose execution of the deposed dictator of Iraq, images of which suffice to dispel fantasies about the virtuous superiority of Western, or specifically American, justice. The chapter also sets the stage for subsequent discussions of elections, women's rights, and the campaign to reform Arab NGO laws.