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As You Chart It

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A Basic Typology of Projects Promoting Arab Democratization

	ELECTORAL REPRESENTATION	LEGAL-JUDICIAL SECTOR	CIVIC SECTOR
RESEARCH	Pilot/Background Studies Needs Assessments Mapping Exercises Elections Monitoring Public Opinion Surveys Parliamentary Records Studies of Gender Quotas	Legal Sector Analysis Human Rights Reports Legal Documentation Legislative Records Translation of Documents Constitutional Research	Studies of Civil Society NGO Directories Research Grants Gender Analysis Publications Documentaries
TUTORIAL	Voter Education Party Campaign Training Women Candidate Programs Parliamentary Exchanges Poll-Worker Training Elections Publicity Local Monitor Training	Expert Consultations Law Schools & Programs Human Rights Training Media Campaigns On Rights Seminars/ Workshops Professional Exchanges Commercial Harmonization	NGO Workshops Women's Empowerment Advocacy Training Websites/Handbooks Media Seminars Study Tours Fund-Raising Manuals
INSTITUTIONAL	Elections Commissions Parliamentary Offices Local Councils Automated Voting Ballots, Ink, Boxes Elections Monitors Parliamentary Libraries	Courts Recording Penal System Introducing Legislation Law Libraries Bar Associations Human Rights Organizations Transnational Institutions Iraq's High Tribunal	Think Tanks Media Centers Women's Advocacy Chambers of Commerce Universities Global NGO Networks Labor Unions Arab Regional Conferences

Political speeches and even policy analysis from Washington, Ottawa, and the capitals of Europe in the past two decades about promoting democratization tend towards generalities and platitudes. This research asks what Western and international agencies actually do, on the ground in the Middle East, by way of fomenting democracy. Taking my inspiration from the sociologist Albert Hirschman who decades ago observed that *projects* are "privileged particles"[i] of socio-economic development assistance, I've collected well over twelve hundred examples.[ii] This summary table illustrates the aggregate finding that most projects cluster around electoral representation, legal or judicial development, and support for liberal elements of civil society, and that they are mostly about collecting or distributing information or supporting institutions to do this work.

The most newsworthy projects surround national and/or local elections, in some countries bringing in scores of technical experts, dozens of trainers, and delegations of international observers for a special event. The activities listed in the first column prioritize procedural aspects of democratic representation, especially voting by citizens and elected officials; they are about process. Projects in the legal or judicial sector include programming under the quite different rubrics of human rights, the rule of law, and harmonization of commercial law and practices. This is a highly professionalized sector; most of the participants on both sides of the exchange share specialized legal skills and knowledge. Overlapping at the edges with conventional development assistance channeled through welfare NGOs, civil society promotion as a sub-field of democracy programming mainly fosters professional advocacy and intellectual services on themes like gender empowerment, environmental awareness or press freedom.

This knowledge-intensive industry specializes in collecting and analyzing certain kinds of data, teaching ideas and practices, and supporting Arab institutions to do this work. The rows in this table show examples of research, tutorial, and institution-building projects in each of the three main sectors. There's a veritable library of studies by expats and Arab professionals of electoral and legal systems, women's participation, and the public civic realm. From advanced academic or legal training to workshops for activists and monitors to mass outreach, education is a primary mission. Finally, support for institution-building prioritizes information services like documentation, whether inside the halls of parliaments and judiciaries or outside government in the civic sector. Overall, the most commonly supported kind of institution is what I would call a think-tank, with a professional, bilingual staff who raise funds for research and education by writing grant proposals. These tasks do overlap in conferences where professionals meet at the provincial, national, Pan-Arab, and international levels, forming networks, associations, and websites along the way. Compared with the material element of conventional development aid, expenditures on democratization are heavily skewed toward travel, per diem, consulting fees, and computer software. By and large, projects encourage engagement via the ballot-box, the courts, round-table discussions, or the internet.

I conclude from this exercise that both empirically and normatively promoting democratization is about procedural democracy; justice (although this particular word is not used much); and the empowerment of the liberal intelligentsia. Assessments should be made accordingly.

[i] Albert O. Hirschman, Development Projects Observed (Washington: Brookings Institution, 1967), p. 1

[ii] For notes on my methodology, see "Foreign Aid for Promoting Democracy in the Arab World," *Middle East Journal* 56:3, 2002 (379-395); the sample size has expanded considerably in the interim