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Can the Arab World be Democratic: An Analytic Study from the Perspective of the Arab Spring

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ABSTRACT

This article deals with the democratisation debate in the Arab world. The region remains one of the least receptive regions in the world towards the popularly and universally accepted Western norm of liberal Democracy. This is at odds with the location and general direction in which these nations and the people of these nations look for inspiration and direction. Today the Arab world stands at a crossroads, seemingly torn between the forces of the new Cold War. The region appears to be a new battlefield for the proxy war between the West and Russia, with Syria and Yemen being the best examples of this phenomenon. This is particularly tragic, given that in the last Cold War that started in 1945 and ended in 1991, this region was the zone of a number of hot-engagements that resulted in hundreds of thousands of deaths, displacement of people, huge refugee crises (the Palestine-Israel issue, Yemen Civil War, etc) and general instability in the region. This instability in turn provided the impetus for Strong-men and Dictators to take charge in many nations of the region. As a result, the move towards a liberal democratic stature in the region took a back-burner. This article will seek to look at this issue from the perspective of the Arab Spring.

Keywords: Democratic; Arab world; Arab spring

INTRODUCTION

Democracy is often defined in terms of the etymology of the name itself. 'Demos' meaning people and 'Kratos,' meaning rule or power; thereby together referring to 'rule by the people.' Democracy comprises of two main components, 'contestation' and 'participation'.¹ 'Contestation' refers to those political systems where free and fair elections are conducted and different political parties compete against each other. 'Participation' off-course refers to the involvement of different sections of society in the democratic process. There are different types of democratic systems in the world today. Procedural or minimalist democracies are those that prioritise elections over everything else. They can also be called illiberal democracies. Consolidated democracies are those that put limits on the power of

the ruling elites. According to acclaimed American scholar S.P. Huntington, 'democracies...provide accepted channels for the expression of dissent and opposition within the system'.² Democracies can also cease to be democracies, this process is known as de-democratisation. Huntington again describes this phenomenon. He also describes the reasons for this phenomenon, 'such as the low level of loyalty to the democratic values, economic crisis, polarisation, the reluctance of conservative classes to share power, the deterioration of the rule of law, external intervention, the snowballing impact of the collapse of democratic regimes in other countries'.¹

In Huntington's view, there have been three waves of democratisation in the modern world. The first wave occurred during the period from 1828-1926, over a hundred-year period. The second wave occurred during



the period 1943-62, corresponding with the de-colonisation movements in much of Africa and Asia during this period. The third wave, according to him, has been on-going since 1974.¹

DEMOCRATIZATION IN THE ARAB WORLD

In the period after the end of the Second World War, many movements for democracy have swept the world. However till recently, the Arab world seemed to be immune to the call for the installation of democracy in their respective countries. While the Arab people were quick to liberate themselves from centuries of foreign rule in the last century, they seemed to be at a loss as far as the installation of true democracy was concerned. Democratic changes occurred in many parts of the world in the 20th century. The first wave in the post-WWII era transformed, albeit under Western supervision, Japan, Germany and Italy into democratic governments responsible to their respective peoples, while at the same time countries such as Israel, India, Pakistan, Burma, Sri Lanka and other states in Asia and Africa achieved independence and an initial transition to democracy during this period. Democratic stabilization was not possible in all of these countries, however. The second wave of democratization was a primarily European phenomenon as long-standing dictatorial regimes in Spain, Portugal and Greece gave way to popular democratic governments in the 1970s. In the 1980s, many nations in Latin America, such as Brazil and Argentina embraced democracy. However, the most spectacular phenomenon was the fall of the Berlin Wall and the associated spread of popular government across all the states of the former Warsaw Pact in the late 1980s and early 1990s. This was known as the so-called Velvet Revolution.³

While there were projections that the Arab world would be next in line for democratic transition, this did not materialize at that time due to many reasons, such as the rigidity of the various regimes of the region and the extent of support that Western developed nations extended to them. The Middle Eastern/West Asian region is of extreme strategic importance to the West primarily because of its location at the crossroads of the East and West (North and South), but also because of the large quantities of hydrocarbon wealth possessed by many of these nations.

Case 1: Algeria

Algeria was a test case for democratization in the Arab-North African world in the 1990s. When we think of Islamists winning political elections, often the best example that comes to mind is that of the Islamic Salvation Front in Algeria. Known popularly by its French acronym as the Front Islamique du Salut or FIS, this party is credited with winning the first round of free parliamentary elections in Algeria on December 26, 1991, cornering around 48% of

the popular vote and getting 188 of the 231 seats that they contested, naturally putting them in a position to win the subsequent round as well.⁴ The Algerian army that had always dominated the state as in the case in Egypt took fright at this Islamist party success and quickly canceled the whole electoral process. What happened after that was the rapid slide of Algeria into a state of civil war with a multitude of groups, Islamist-oriented as well as pro-government forces fighting each other as well as committing horrendous massacres of civilians, abetted in part, it would generally seem by the internal security services of the ruling Army establishment. In a Civil War spanning almost two decades, more than 100,000 Algerians lost their lives.⁵

This would also probably reflect the view in the West during the period from the early 1980s to the latter part of the 2000s that it would be too dangerous to allow Islamist parties to come to power by democratic means, as they might then seek to rewrite the whole democratic process to their advantage in the future. In short, that Islamists might then emerge as the new dictators. In the contest between a secular-nationalist approach and an Islamist approach, it was generally felt that preference should be given to the secular-nationalist approach, democracy or no democracy. It was this attitude in the Western security establishments that acquiesced in the rule of so many 'secular' non-democratic nationalist dictators in the Arab world for so long. There was also a time in the not so distant past when it was felt by the West that Arab Nationalist leaders posed the main threat to the security of the Middle East, with an emphasis given on propping up various absolutist Kingdoms, Sultanates and Emirates not to speak of Sheikdoms as the acceptable form of rule from a Western point of view in the region. The fact is that absence of a state defined by the rule of law and lasting governmental institutions is the real danger to democracy and stability in all the problem of regions of the world, such as the Middle East, South West Asia, Central Asia and parts of Africa.⁶

Thus in the case of the Algerians, it was clear that no Western power would interfere in the situation as an alliance between local ruling military-political elites and external powers such as France strengthened the role of the state and weakened the emerging civil society in the region. This situation prolonged military dictatorships and tyrannical regimes in the region more than any other part of the world. Western democracies such as France and Great Britain were and have been major obstacles to the process of the shift to democracy in the Arab world. As far as foreign policy is concerned, the US Government has for long been practising what can only be classified as 'democratic exceptionalism'.⁷

Case 2: Palestine

Another apt example of the above syndrome was the case of Palestine. Legislative and presidential elections have been held consecutively since 1996 in Palestine. The first



presidential election in 1996 was won by the late former Chairman of the PLO, Yasser Arafat. Following his fall from favour with the West and in particular with America and the state of Israel, the incumbent President Mahmud Abbas was first elected as Palestinian Prime Minister and later on the untimely death of Arafat, was re-elected as Palestinian President. In 2005, Palestinian municipal elections to various town and area councils were held after a long lapse. The 2006 legislative elections were held on 25 January 2006. For the first time ever in the history of Palestinian democracy, the radical Islamist grouping Hamas won 74 seats out of the 132 seats in the Palestinian Legislative Assembly that were in the public electoral sphere.⁸

Fatah, the main Palestinian Liberation Organisation grouping along with the US and Israel sought to sideline, boycott and deny Hamas its electoral victory in the January 2006 elections and the right to form the next Palestinian government. The resulting clash between the two rival Palestinian factions led to Hamas taking over the Gaza Strip in June 2007. Palestinian internal politics since then has been characterised by a fractured polity, with Hamas's control of the Gaza Strip meaning almost total isolation for the people of the Strip from the outside world, as Israel has enforced a strict blockade of the area from both land as well as sea to put pressure on the radical Islamist grouping, thereby putting the people of the Strip under incredible economic and social hardship and suffering.

Hamas's control over the Gaza Strip and virtually half of the Palestinian political spectrum has also given the Israelis a good excuse to desist from serious or meaningful peace negotiations with the Palestinians on the pretext of not having a suitable partner for peace in the region, Hamas being ideologically committed to the establishment of an Islamic state on all of the historic territories of Palestine, much of which is now the state of Israel. The founding Charter of Hamas mentions that the state of Israel would be eventually destroyed by Islam.⁹

Hamas has never to date formally repudiated this founding Charter of principles that seek to guide the Palestinian Islamic Movement. The new Hamas Statement 'A Document of General Principles and Policies,' released by Hamas Media Office on 1st May, 2017 does not seek to replace the original founding Charter, but seeks to bring to public notice certain new aims such as the willingness to accept a sovereign and independent Palestinian State based on the ceasefire lines of June 4th, 1967, with Jerusalem as the capital of the proposed state.¹⁰

Hamas and Fatah have periodically sought to bury their differences and come together in a show of unity to form a pan-Palestinian national government of unity, but these efforts have also been stoutly opposed by Israel and also by the US under the pretext of having nothing whatsoever to do with a 'fundamentalist' Islamist grouping such as Hamas.¹¹ It remains to be seen whether Hamas and Fatah will really be

able to cooperate together in forming a national government as being envisaged in the present-future as the two parties have never had a history of collaborating effectively with each other and indeed have only had an experience of intense political and sometimes fratricidal rivalry and conflict.

ROLE OF THE UNITED STATES

The best examples of the US Government's support for dictators and unsavoury rulers were witnessed in its own backyard of Latin (Central and South) America. Western nations have long been acting under the false assumption that their interests are best served across the non-European and Anglo-Saxon world under autocratic regimes and not democratic establishments. Another misconception that was long prevalent in the West (something that the Arab Spring has hopefully corrected) was that Arabs and Muslims cannot establish democratic governments and societies as their political culture is incompatible with modern norms of democracy. There are two schools of thought that are dominant in the debate over the predicament of democracy in the Arab world. One is known as the 'exceptional' and the other is known as the 'compatibility' discourse. The 'exceptional' discourse recommended the thesis that the Arab Middle East was largely immune to democracy because of the incompatibility of the Arab-Islamic political culture with the universal values of democracy. Arab political culture and Islam were held responsible for the democratic 'gap' in the region. Samuel P. Huntington along with others was the main advocates of this view. Their writing dominated the intellectual discourse of the 1990s. Huntington's 'Clash of Civilisations' was taken for granted in Orientalist scholarship towards the region. The 'compatibility' discourse or school of thought led by area specialists to the region presented the thesis that Islam and Arab political culture were no less compatible with democracy than other cultures and religions. The main scholars who advocated this view were Esposito, Hudson, Ibrahim, Norton, Richards and other scholars.¹²

Much of the literature about democratization in the Middle East that came out before the Arab Spring, sought to explain the 'why' aspect rather than the 'how' aspect, that is, researching why the countries of the region and the greater Islamic world are undemocratic instead of trying to investigate how to bring about a successful transition to a democratic set-up for these particular countries. Huntington's writings as well as those of Bernard Lewis and Francis Fukuyama reflected this position. Tim Niblock attempted as early as 1998 to change the dialogue by calling for an investigation of the instruments of democratization, instead of investing decades in a fruitless search for the reason why Arabs can never be democrats. His call fell on deaf ears. It would appear that the Orientalist main aim was to discourage endogenous democratic forces or external voices from proceeding in their struggle for democratization



in the region.¹³

It was in the aftermath of the September 11, 2001 attacks on the United States that the Bush Administration reversed the policy of 'democratic exceptionalism' in the Arab world and started to strongly call for democratization in the region. This was again a policy change that was undertaken as it gave the best excuse for intervention in the internal affairs of many Arab nations, predominant among which was Iraq. It was also a policy that was directed against the various despots and autocratic regimes of the region. The Bush administration publicly stated that democratization was the best instrument for stability and coexistence, as well as the best answer in dealing with terrorism.¹³

Following the Bush administration's invasion of Iraq in 2003, there was hope that the winds of change would spread through out the region. However those who felt so were disappointed as even the Bush administration's crusading desire to democratize the Arab-Islamic worlds seem to fade in the light of the intransigence to true democracy shown by two key leaders of the Arab world at that time, namely Hosni Mubarak of Egypt and King Abdullah of Saudi Arabia. President Obama in his speech to the Islamic world in Cairo on June 2nd, 2009 also made it clear that democratization in the Islamo-Arab worlds would be very high in his foreign policy agenda.¹³ It is probably significant that change when it happened in the Arab world through the medium of the Arab Spring took place during the US Presidentship of Barack Obama, a President who himself embodied the principle of change in Washington, D. C.

It was the obstinate and obdurate nature of the leadership and government of many Arab states that caused the change that occurred to be revolutionary and violent. These uprisings in the Arab world were not surprising to Area specialists who had for the last thirty odd years been warning of the dangers of ignoring popular demands for change and freedom in the Arab world. However, the Arab Spring came as a shock to policy-makers and leaders in western capitals who had for so long ignored such demands. Not only that, they had openly supported tyranny in the region and had provided local despots with the military, political, diplomatic, and financial aid necessary to strengthen their autocratic regimes, and simultaneously weakened democratic forces and the emerging civil service institutions in the Middle East. The uprisings in the Arab world indicate one thing that at last the Arab people have realized that any democratic change must come from within the civil society system and not without.¹³

FACTORS HINDERING GROWTH OF DEMOCRACY IN THE ARAB WORLD

What are the main factors that hinder the growth of democracy in the Arab and Islamic worlds? The first and most important issue that one has to deal with from a global perspective is the issue of oil and energy resources in

the Arab Middle East. Global interest in the oil-producing countries was the main factor in the West propping up and supporting tyrants and despots in this region. Oil producing countries tended to be countries where small elites controlled the entire economy and skimmed off the profits from the oil industry as well. Oil consuming countries also believed that their interests were best protected by autocrats, and felt threatened by democratic governments, should democracy indeed triumph in the region. Oil consuming countries need to realize that democratic countries will sell oil as well and will be more stable and free-market oriented. Free governments are more likely to abide by market mechanisms in terms of oil production, pricing, supply, demand, and marketing. Such free trade mechanisms would reduce the heavy investment in armaments to protect oil routes and the need to maintain a military presence in the Middle East, especially for the United States. The US security support of Saudi Arabia, Iraq, Kuwait, Oman, Bahrain, Qatar, the UAE, and other oil-producing countries can only be understood from an oil perspective. Therefore, democratic authority would free both producers and consumers from unnecessary fear over the flow, pricing, and marketing of oil, within the context of free trade that protects the interests of both sides.¹³

ISLAMIST POLITICAL MOVEMENTS

The second factor that hinders the growth of democracy and democratic institutions in the Arab and Islamic worlds deals with the issue of Western fears of Islam and Islamists as a political force in the region. The West continues to hold unfounded imagery about Islam as a religion, and Islamists as a political force in the region over the past millennium. The most misunderstood movement, and by far the most popular, is the Muslim Brotherhood, a mainstream reform movement established in 1928 by a schoolteacher named Hasan Al-Bana.¹⁴ The movement has been an integral part of the socio-economic and political struggles of the region since then. Its marginalization from politics is unrealistic and counter-productive. The aim of the Muslim Brotherhood was to restore God's sovereignty, aspiring for a government that operated on the basis of Muslim values and norms.¹⁵ Its landslide electoral success in several Arabs and Islamic countries is a testament to popular support and trust placed in this Islamic current. Therefore, instead of excluding Islamists from politics, they should be assured of their right to participate in politics, and engage in constructive dialogue with the West; its members should be trained in parliamentary processes, and assisted in moderating their platforms to better serve the cause of democracy.¹³

While Arab ruling elites and military dictatorships understand the Islamic movement and its goals and methods very well, the West in particular needs to better understand Islamists. Regimes exploit this gap by exaggerating the threat of Islamists to western interests. Therefore, they present



themselves as a better alternative to Islam. The burden of taking steps to ensure mutual understanding lies on the shoulders of both sides. Islamists must make themselves known to and well understood by the entire world. They must initiate and accept an open dialogue with the West. They must work openly, as secrecy only creates an atmosphere of suspicion, mistrust, and antagonism. Islamists need to realize that there are no divine or scriptural impediments to accepting western initiatives for such dialogue. There are no religious impediments to talking with the United States in particular on formal or informal levels. Islamists must know that the current world operates under the rules of compromise, openness, dialogue, mutual understanding, mutual interests, globalization, multiculturalism, cultural dialogue, interfaith dialogue, and Civilisational dialogue. There is no room in the current world for clandestine behaviour, isolationism, or self-imposed confinements as long as individuals seek an active participation in the political life of their nation. Islamists must also modify their political discourse, tactics, and strategies in dealing with local, regional, and international affairs.¹³

By the same token, rather than viewing them as foes, the West ought to accept Islamists as active participants in the political milieu of the region, and deal with them on equal footing, as partners in the process of transition to democracy. Islamists platforms are similar to Christian Democrats in Europe and Republicans in the US as they are inspired by faith, but are practical enough to ensure good government, such as in the case of Turkey and Malaysia.¹³

Another element in the democratization process deals with the War on Terror. Lack of democracy is fully responsible for terrorism, extremism, and instability in the region. Prior to the momentous changes in the Arab Middle East of the last two years, Western policy-makers continued to hold Islam and Islamists fully responsible for terrorism, while autocrats in the region were considered close allies. However, a closer examination reveals that the direct response to tyrannical rule was the radicalization of segments of Muslim society. Dictatorial regimes create terrorism, extremism, and violence, and democratization is the best way to combat them. In Egypt, state tyranny has been a major element in radicalizing mainstream Islamists and moving them toward extremism and terrorism.¹³

The security of Israel and its survival is another element in the current democratization debate in the West Asian region. The US and the Israel government were concerned that if the governments of Egypt and Jordan fall, Israel will have to shoulder the burden of securing hundreds of miles of borders. However even after the change of regime in Egypt, no radical change has taken place in Egypt's relation with the Zionist state. Therefore, the Israeli government should view democratic change as a positive force, and attempt to build on it. In fact, democratic forces in Israel, as well as the Israeli civil society, are in a better position to build bridges

of friendship, peace, and coexistence with their neighbours. Democracies do not fight each other, and democratic people aspire to similar sets of values and goals.¹³

Overall, democratic change in Egypt, Jordan, Syria, and other countries in the region would provide both Israelis and Palestinians with confidence and an incentive to engage in serious negotiations to resolve the Arab-Israeli conflict. Israel would be more inclined to accept the two-state solution, while Palestinians would be more willing to accept an independent and democratic state of Israel that lives in peace with its neighbours. In the long run, Israel would be more secure in a democratic context than in an autocratic neighbourhood.¹³

Case 1: Algeria again

While international concerns are legitimate, so are the concerns and the ambitions of the Arab people as well. The revolutions occurring in the region represent the yearning of the Arab people for freedom and dignity. For so long, the world has ignored the wishes of the Arab people prolonging the reign of dictatorship in the region.

A cursory look at the situation of various countries in the region will be enough to illustrate this point. The present situation varies from country to country in the region. Let us start with Algeria. In the post-Arab Spring era, what we saw was the old political-military elite exerting its influence again by nipping the people's protests that broke out in the early part of the last decade. The Algerian deep state took rapid steps to boost internal employment opportunities while seeking to publicly act against official corruption and increasing subsidies that seek to cushion the day to day existence of the common people.¹⁶ Algeria is the largest African state by area with a relatively small population of around 38 million, when compared to other populous African states like Nigeria, Egypt or Ethiopia. With large hydro-carbon reserves and production that amounts to 34 percent of GDP and 65 percent of government revenues and 98 percent of exports.¹⁷ Algeria has a state-dominated economy and the private sector has a very limited role due to excessive state control. The Arab Spring protests in Algeria in February and March of 2011 prompted the Algerian government to pump in \$23 Billion into the internal economy in the form of public grants and retrospective salary and benefits. This was in addition to the extensive system of subsidies that are provided by the Government which are in turn funded by the extensive oil revenues of the state.¹³ This has helped the Algerian Deep State to ride over the regime-destabilising effects of the Arab Spring and achieve status quo in the present context.

Case 2: Tunisia

Turning to Algeria's north-eastern neighbour Tunisia, where the Arab Spring started way back in December 2010 when



Mohamed Bouazizi, a 26-year old vegetable vendor who set himself alight in protest at bureaucratic highhandedness on the part of a certain Tunisian government official who was harassing him. Tunisians took the suicide of Bouazizi to heart, thereby forcing the long-ruling despot Zine El Abidine Ben Ali to flee from power and the country. Tunisia is today considered one of the few African and Arab nations that can be classified as a relatively free semi-liberal democratic state. Tunisia has had its fair share of internal strife and conflict as a result of the authoritarian tendencies of its rulers, post-independence, the country was ruled by just two rulers over a fifty-year period.¹⁸ Currently of all the MENA (Middle East & North Africa) countries, Tunisia is the only country that has actively embraced the reforms that were championed by the masses during the Arab Spring. The country has conducted regular Presidential and Parliamentary elections since the events of 2011. A new constitution was ratified for the country in 2014.¹⁵ Unfortunately Tunisia also has had its fair share of internal unrest and terrorist attacks in the last ten years. These attacks have been primarily directed at the North African country's lucrative tourism industry.¹³ It is significant that the Tunisian National Dialogue Quartet, the umbrella group of four Civil Society organisations were awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for the year 2015.¹⁹

Case 3: Egypt

The case of Egypt, as the most populous and militarily the strongest Arab state, was quite different from that of Tunisia. While Tunisia was able to ride the waves of its Jasmine Revolution to lasting political change, Egypt found itself revolving around the same political quagmire. The departure of Hosni Mubarak as a result of the protests that took place in Tahrir Square in Cairo during the Arab Spring failed to ensure that his successor regime would be one that was acceptable to the main power-broker of Egypt, namely the Military. The Army ensured that the Freedom & Justice Party, a front political organisation of the banned Muslim Brotherhood of Egypt, and its leader, the democratically elected Mohamed Morsi would not remain in power and would be replaced by a military-supported Civilian President, the retired former Field-Marshal and Defence Minister under the now discredited Morsi regime, General Abdel-Fattah El-Sisi.¹⁶ He has since been very successful in containing militant Islamist politics in Egypt, resulting in the revival of the lucrative international tourism industry in the nation.

Case 4: Saudi Arabia

Saudi Arabia adopted a 'carrot and stick' policy, broadly similar to the approach of Algeria, pumping revenues into massive state subsidies, strengthening the 'nitaqat' system of labour substitution in more and more fields, while at the same time adopting a firm and retroactive stand against

any indications of greater political aspirations and freedoms on the part of the general population.¹³ The Saudi regime went through a process of generational change during the last ten years with the ascendancy of Mohammed Bin Salman (MBS) as the undisputed leader behind the throne, while his ailing father King Salman is on the throne in Riyadh. The Sunni fundamentalist Wahhabi nation has been busy renewing its conservative image in the world's eyes by following an activist foreign policy replete with armed interventions, especially in the neighbourhood, such as in Yemen and Bahrain. Internal domestic reforms are also taking place within the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, whilst being the custodians of the two holiest shrines of Sunni Islam namely the Grand Mosques at Medina and Mecca.

CONCLUSION

Certainly in the case of Syria and Yemen, we see the repercussions of the Arab Spring going on through a long-drawn Arab Winter, where in the case of both countries, movements to displace long-ruling authoritarian regimes have evolved into extremely debilitating Civil Wars with the active involvement of neighbouring hostile and other great powers. What we see is the abdication of responsibility for the region by the United States and the rise of new actors like Russia and China. Coupled with this is the rise of the Shia Crescent as epitomised by the increasing power and clout that the Islamic Republic of Iran is able to command and played out in a number of conflicts, both hot and cold, that the region, such as the on-going Yemeni Civil War involving the Shia Zaidi Houthis and Hezbollah's 'State within a State' existence as an Iranian-backed proxy force in Lebanon.

If we scrutinize the developments of the last couple of years, Western decision-makers seemed traumatized by the developments occurring in the Arab world. The former Obama Administrations response to the Egyptian Revolution changed in a week's time from support of Mubarak to an 'orderly change' to pressuring Mubarak to resign. In other parts of the Arab world, the administration was clear in calling and acting for regime-change especially in Libya. While the Obama administration seemed to understand the necessity for change in the region, it remained reactive rather proactive, and lagged far behind the developments in the region. The next Trump administration adopted an isolationist posture while selectively interfering in the various conflicts in the region. The issue of understanding the depth of resentment to some regimes still seems too difficult for some Western governments to comprehend. In the present situation, managing Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Libya, Yemen, Syria, Iraq, Jordan, Bahrain, Kuwait and Qatar will be the real challenge. In the long run, the solution to world stability vis-a-vis the West Asian/North African region seems rather simple: promoting democratization and political development, accommodating all political forces in the region including Islamists and resolving the Arab-



Israeli conflict. The main instrument for such stability is democracy, the rule of law, transparency, employment, and good governance.

Unfortunately the present status of the region leaves much to be desired. Chronic instability, lack of transparency in governance, skewed economic policies, insufficient capacity-building in durable liberal democratic institutions, lack of an effective Western-educated intelligentsia that can govern these countries and directly influence the development of these nations have all contributed to keeping the nations of the 'Arab Spring' in a state of seemingly permanent instability.

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