Democratization in the Arab World?

THE TRAP OF
LIBERALIZED AUTOCRACY

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Over the past two decades, the Middle East has witnessed a "transition" away from—and then back toward—authoritarianism. This dynamic began with tactical political openings whose goal was to sustain rather than transform autocracies. Enticed by the prospect of change, an amalgam of political forces—Islamists, leftists, secular liberals, NGO activists, women's organizations, and others—sought to imbue the political process with new meanings and opportunities, hoping that the "inherently unstable" equilibrium of *dictablandas* would give way to a new equilibrium of competitive democracy.[1]

It is now clear, both within and far beyond the Middle East, that liberalized autocracy has proven far more durable than once imagined.[2] The trademark mixture of guided pluralism, controlled elections, and selective repression in Egypt, Jordan, Morocco, Algeria, and Kuwait is not just a "survival strategy" adopted by authoritarian regimes, but rather a *type* of political system whose institutions, rules, and logic defy any linear model of democratization.[3] And while several of the authors who write about the Middle East in this issue of the *Journal of Democracy* argue that political liberalization is moving forward, Jillian Schwedler's essay on Yemen and Jason Brownlee's article on Egypt—as well as the recent experience of Jordan—suggest that in fact *deliberalization* may be underway.

Perhaps these states will join the ranks of Bashar Assad's Syria, where the door was opened a crack and then quickly closed, and countries such as Iraq, Tunisia, and Saudi Arabia, where the rulers have never

risked even the most controlled liberalization. Certainly, the outrageous August 2002 decision of Egypt's Supreme Court to uphold the conviction of Saad Eddin Ibrahim and his young colleagues appears to support the notion that Middle East regimes are becoming less rather than more autocratic. Yet what we are witnessing is probably *not* a return to full authoritarianism, but rather the latest turn in a protracted cycle in which rulers widen or narrow the boundaries of participation and expression in response to what they see as the social, economic, political, and geostrategic challenges facing their regimes. Such political eclecticism has benefits that Arab rulers are unlikely to forgo. Indeed, over the next few years Bahrain and Qatar may swell the ranks of Arab regimes dwelling in the "gray zone" of liberalized autocracy.[4]

In the Arab world, a set of interdependent institutional, economic, ideological, social, and geostrategic factors has created an adaptable ecology of repression, control, and partial openness. The weblike quality of this political ecosystem both helps partial autocracies to survive and makes their rulers unwilling to give up *final* control over any strand of the whole. But there is more to the story than wily rulers and impersonal "factors," for the governments of Algeria, Morocco, Jordan, Kuwait, and even Egypt receive a degree of acquiescence and sometimes even support from both secular and some Islamist opposition groups. Such *ententes* can take the form of arrangements that give oppositionists a voice in parliament or even the cabinet, and may also involve a process of "Islamization" by which the state cedes some ideological and institutional control to Islamists.

This ironic outcome reminds us that while liberalized autocracies can achieve a measure of stability, over time their very survival exacts greater and greater costs. Because they have failed to create a robust *political* society in which non-Islamists can secure the kind of organized popular support that Islamists command, these hybrid regimes have created circumstances under which free elections could well make illiberal Islamists the dominant opposition voice, leaving democrats (whether secularist or Islamist) caught between ruling autocrats and Islamist would-be autocrats. Hence the great dilemma in which substantive democratization and genuine pluralism become at once more urgently needed and more gravely risky.

While the solution to this dilemma may lie in gradualism, any reforms worthy of the name must address the weakness or even absence of political society in the Arab world. This will mean promoting independent judiciaries; effective political parties; competitive, internationally observed elections; and legislatures that represent majorities rather than rubber-stamp the edicts of rulers. Such changes will demand bold initiatives from Arab rulers, as well as U.S. readiness to support a policy of democratic gradualism whose purpose is to help liberalized autocracies carefully move beyond the politics of mere survival.

While it is true that the Arab world boasts no democracies, some of its autocracies are decidedly less complete than others. To understand this variation, and to grasp why some partial autocracies are better than others at sustaining survival strategies, we must ask how the rulers perceive the threats they face, and we must look at the institutional, social, political, and ideological conditions that tend to intensify or reduce such threats. The importance of threat perception lies in the very logic of partial autocracies: To endure, they must implicitly or explicitly allow some opposition forces certain kinds of social, political, or ideological power—but things must never reach a point where the regime feels deterred from using force when its deems fit. If a regime can keep up this balancing act, reformists within the government will find it easier to convince hard-liners that the benefits of accommodation outweigh the costs. Conversely, where it is hard to make this case, rulers will prefer total autocracy. As to the conditions that encourage a choice in favor of one or the other, these can be summarized as follows: States that promote competitive or *dissonant* politics will tend to feel surer that Islamist ambitions can be limited and so will be more willing to consider accommodating opposition, while states that promote hegemonic or *harmonic* politics will tend to invite more radical "counterhegemonic" Islamist opposition movements whose presence increases the expected cost of political liberalization.

The Dead End of Hegemony

Iraq, Saudi Arabia, and Syria are total autocracies whose endurance is often attributed to three conditions, each of which bears a word of comment. The first, oil money, is necessary but not sufficient: Some other Arab countries receive oil income but are not *total* autocracies. The second condition is the "harmonic" foundation of legitimacy: Total autocracies spread the idea that the state's mission is to defend the supposedly unified nature of the Arab nation or the Islamic community (the danger that Islamists might "outbid" the regime on the second score should be obvious). The third condition is the hegemonic reach of state institutions: Total autocracies create powerful organizations whose main job is to absorb or repress rival political voices. Here too there is a potential danger for the regime. As the ambivalent alliance between the House of Saud and the Wahabi religious establishment shows, state control of Islamic institutions is both central to this hegemonic strategy and a threat to it. Because Islam is a transcendent religion that can never be fully coopted, governments must cede some autonomy to state-supported religious institutions or elites, thereby raising the prospect that elements of the religious establishment could defect to the Islamist opposition.

To deter this and all other possible rebellions, total autocracies have large and brutal security agencies. Yet the more force is used, the longer

grows the list of revenge-seeking enemies—a drawback that is especially acute when the rulers belong to ethnic or religious minorities (in Syria, Alawites; in Iraq, Sunni Arabs). Harmonic ideologies and their pretenses of "Islamic" or "Arab" unity may aspire to hide such narrow power bases, but the reality of minority rule is apparent enough, further alienating key religious groups and making the expected costs of reform that much higher.

One way out of this vicious circle might be to emphasize instrumental over symbolic legitimacy—by handing out more oil rents to key groups, for instance. Such strategies have obvious limits. An alternative (or complementary) approach is to rob your neighbor's bank, as Iraq tried to do by invading Kuwait in 1990. But barring such desperate measures, some leaders might conclude that a limited political opening is worth the risk. After all, what value is there in maintaining decades of hegemonic rule if the instruments of domination cannot be used to ensure the ruling elite's continued good health?

This was certainly the motive behind Algeria's dramatic political opening in 1989. At the time, Algeria was a classic harmonic state. For nearly 30 years, its generals and ruling-party hacks had been absorbing all potential opposition into a quasi-socialist order that celebrated the alleged harmony of "the Algerian people." Islamic leaders and institutions were drafted into this hegemonic project, thereby ironically ensuring that, in the wake of liberalization, populist Islam would emerge as *the* counterhegemonic force. The Islamic Salvation Front (FIS) and its revolutionary—if nebulous—vision of an Islamic state galvanized an estranged generation which had come to believe that the rhetoric of unity spouted by the ruling National Liberation Front (FLN) was mere window-dressing for the corrupt rule of a minority that was more French than Arab, or more Berber than Muslim. Despite this growing estrangement, in 1991 the FLN foolishly wagered that it could reproduce its hegemony through competitive elections. While a proportional system might have limited the FIS's electoral gains and thus made some kind of power sharing possible, the FIS's revolutionary ideology created so grave a perceived threat that no such arrangement could likely have survived the military's quest for total certainty, or the preference of many secular would-be democrats for the protection that the generals promised.

This illusory quest for safety set the stage for a civil war that has claimed some 100,000 lives. In the wake of this disaster, Algeria's leaders tried to put together a power-sharing system in which the identity claims of Berbers, secularists, Islamists, and (implicitly) the military would be recognized, institutionalized, and perhaps negotiated. But the mixed system that was born with the 1997 parliamentary elections produced mixed results. It certainly provided unprecedented opportunities for elites with opposing ideologies to pursue dialogue.[5] But to give such a system

credibility, regimes must promote genuine (even if circumscribed) representation, while leaders must project an understanding of the populace's elemental fears and aspirations. President Abdelaziz Bouteflika got off to a good start in 1999, but the high abstention rate in the 2002 parliamentary elections suggests that much work remains to be done if the regime is to consolidate whatever gains it can claim.

Algeria's recent experience suggests that leadership and political learning can play a role in helping regimes and oppositions to exit autocracy, but the lesson seems lost on some. Syria's brief opening is a case in point. When President Bashar Assad assumed the reigns of power from his late father in June 2000, observers wondered if the son would honor his public promises to open up the system.[6] The answer was clear by the autumn of 2001, when some liberal intellectuals were arrested for holding informal meetings to discuss democracy. Thus was the door slammed shut on the briefest Arab-world political opening to date.

What did Assad fear? His security chiefs probably convinced him that the tiniest reform was a slippery slope to oblivion. While the regime had decimated its radical Islamist opposition in 1982 by massacring 10,000 citizens in the town of Hama, and while it had coopted some businessmen from the Sunni merchant elite, a combination of economic crisis, anger at corruption, and a growing contempt for "Baathist socialist" ideology and Assad's contrived cult of personality all gave the regime reason for concern.[7] In the face of these and other worries, the new president could not pin his hopes on a few liberal intellectuals with no organized following. These knowns and unknowns, as well as the imposing shadow of his late father, proved far more relevant than Bashar's optometry studies in London or his exposure to the Internet. With oil rents still flowing in, it seems a wonder that it took so long for him to conclude that full autocracy was the only option.

While Tunisia's President Ben Ali has reached a similar conclusion, the origins of total autocracy in his country differ from those in Saudi Arabia, Iraq, or Syria. Instead of oil money and ideology, there is Ben Ali's obsession with power and the determination of business interests and the ruling elite to emulate the Asian model of state-driven, export-oriented industrialization. With a small population whose well-educated workers and professionals include a large percentage of women, Tunisia had significant constituencies *within and outside* the regime that chose not to contest the "nonideological" hegemony of the ruling Democratic Constitutional Rally (RCD). The spectacle of the bloodshed next door in Algeria helped to cement this tacit consensus against rocking the boat.

By the late 1990s, the effort to create an "Asian-style" economic miracle in North Africa had run into many obstacles, not least of which has been the regime's abuse of civil and human rights. Moreover, in the absence of accountability and the rule of law, state-driven industrialization was feeding rent-seeking and corruption.[8] By 1999 there was clearly

a demand for political opening, but the voting that year ended with the RCD controlling 92 percent of the seats in the Chamber of Deputies and Ben Ali winning another term with a claimed mandate of 99.4 percent of the vote. Islamists remained banned, revealing the regime's continued anxieties about threats from that quarter. Since then, Ben Ali has rammed through a set of constitutional amendments to extend his term from four to six years and arrested human rights activists, thereby signaling his determination to maintain total power.

Why "Dissonance" Is Good

Total autocracy is the exception rather than the rule in the Arab world. Most Arabs live under autocracies that allow a measure of openness. Three factors have generated and sustained such regimes. First, the rulers of Morocco, Egypt, Jordan, Kuwait, and Lebanon have not tried to impose a single vision of political community. Instead, they have put a certain symbolic distance between the state and society in ways that leave room for competitive or *dissonant* politics. By not nailing the state's legitimacy to the mast of one ideological vessel with a putatively sacred national or religious mission, they have helped to short-circuit the growth of counterhegemonic Islamist movements. Second, partial autocracies are *nonhegemonic*. Within limits, they allow contending groups and ideas to put down institutional roots outside the state. This ensures competition not only between Islamists and non-Islamists, but among Islamist parties as well. The more such contention there is, the likelier it is that rulers will risk an opening. Third, partial autocracies have enough economic development and competition to free the state from obsessive concern with any single interest, class, or resource. In many such regimes, for instance, one finds public-sector employees and bureaucrats vying with independent professionals and private businessmen for the state's political and economic support.

Such economic and political dissonance facilitates the juggling act that is central to regime survival. Rulers of liberalized autocracies strive to pit one group against another in ways that maximize the rulers' room for maneuver and restrict the opposition's capacity to work together. Yet such divide-and-rule tactics also give oppositionists scope for influence that they might not have in an open political competition that yields clear winners and losers. Consensus politics and state-enforced power sharing can form an alternative to either full democracy or full autocracy, particularly when rival social, ethnic, or religious groups fear that either type of rule will lead to their political exclusion. In Kuwait, Lebanon, Jordan, Morocco, and to some extent Egypt, the peaceful accommodation of such forces depends in part on the arbitrating role of the ruler.

No ruler is completely autonomous in relation to society. The kings of Morocco and Jordan may have a better perch from which to arbitrate

conflicts than do Arab presidents, whose fates are usually tied to a ruling party or its interests. But since both monarchs derive their legitimacy at least *partly* from their purported lineage ties to Mohammed, they are, as Abdeslam Maghraoui notes, at once modern leaders of a nation *(watan)* and traditional patrons of the Islamic community *(umma)*. Similarly, while Egypt's rulers long ago distanced themselves from the Arab-nationalist rhetoric of Gamal Abdel Nasser, they have not fully repudiated the basic ideological premises of the populist state that he founded. The legitimacy of the Egyptian state still rests partly on its role as a defender of communal Islamic values.

That the rulers of some liberalized autocracies are both the chief arbiters within society and the major patrons of religious institutions is central to these regimes' survival strategies. As arbiters, those who hold power in Egypt, Morocco, and Jordan use cultural, religious, and ideological dissonance to divide the opposition. As patrons of religion, these same powerholders use their ties to Islamic institutions to limit the influence of secular political forces. Over time, this Islamization strategy has led to acute dilemmas. For in their efforts to coopt conservative Islamic ideas these regimes have hindered the creation of alternatives to the illiberalism that is characteristic of *mainstream* (and not merely radical) Islamism.

Consider the case of Egypt, where indulging Islamist sensibilities is an old art form. With parliamentary elections looming in the fall of 2000, the culture minister, backed by the top religious authorities at the leading state-funded Islamic university, banned the obscure Syrian Haidar Haidar's novel *A Banquet for Seaweed* on the grounds that it dangerously departed from "accepted religious understanding" and threatened "the solidarity of the nation." Having thus defended the faith, the government then shut down the very opposition newspaper that had exposed the offending book![9] However cynical, the move made perfect sense. The political party that published the paper had close ties to the mainstream Muslim Brotherhood, and the state was out to underscore its own role as the supreme arbiter of matters Islamic (for good measure, the authorities had two hundred Muslim Brothers arrested). In a stinging judgment that actually understates the problem, Max Rodenbeck observes that the cumulative effect of actions like this has been to "compel an 'orthodoxy' that is both amorphous and restricted, preventing Islamist thought from moving beyond denunciation of heresy and repetition of formulas from the Koran."[10] Even El-Wasat—a party led by Islamists who advocate a more pluralistic vision of Islam—has had its application for party certification repeatedly turned down. Egypt's rulers are not interested in promoting a liberal Islamic party, either because they fear that radicals might capture it or because they do not want a successful liberal Islamist party to ally with secular parties in ways that might undermine the regime's strategy of survival through a delicate balancing act.

Variations of this Islamization strategy can be found in other regimes

which, unlike Egypt's, permit legal Islamist parties. Partial inclusion is a more useful way of buttressing liberalized autocracies because it requires Islamists to renounce violence, act openly, and most importantly, play by what are ultimately the government's rules. Yet the Islamists may reap advantages, since even limited participation in parliaments or cabinets gives them means to extend their influence. Following the 1991 unification of North and South Yemen, for example, the General People's Congress (GPC) became the ruling party by cutting a deal with the tribal-cum-Islamist Islah party, whose religious wing thereby gained control of public education. Indeed, in 1994 President Ali Abdallah Salih "gave money to Sheikh Abdel Meguid al-Zindani, an Afghan veteran and former associate of Mr. Bin Laden's, to build Al Eman University on government land near Sanaa."[11] Still, once the deal with Islah had served the purpose of marginalizing the South, the GPC engineered an election in 1997 that ushered many of Islah's Islamists out of parliament while leaving the tribal members with their seats. More recently, the government has tried in the wake of September 11 to assert more control over Islah's schools.

By comparison with other hybrid regimes, Yemen's experience is unique. While a patrimonialist vision of authority colors public education in much of the Arab world, there is little evidence that the governments of Egypt, Jordan, Morocco, and Kuwait promote a particularly radical or anti-Western vision of Islam. Yet neither do they imbue their curricula with anything like liberal democratic values. Absent such a positive effort, the state-sponsored "traditional" view of Islam (with its emphasis on state authority and the claims of community) will remain vulnerable to the allure of radical Islam. Periodic attempts to placate Islamists by unleashing state-subsidized clerics against "apostates" can produce the same result. Apart from the danger that such efforts may backfire—as they did when the ceding of the Jordanian education ministry to Islamists in 1994 provoked an uproar from liberals—over time Islamization strategies undercut the careful juggling acts at the heart of regime survival strategies.

The Need for *Political* Society

One way of escaping the dilemmas created by partial autocracies might be to advocate liberal Islam. But no leader has embraced this option, for obvious reasons. Liberal Islam, moreover, constitutes a limited intellectual trend that has thus far not sunk organizational roots in Arab societies. Nor have civil society organizations been able to pierce the armor of liberalized autocracy. On the contrary, in Egypt, Morocco, and Jordan the sheer proliferation of small NGOs—riven by fierce ideological divisions and hamstrung by official regulations—has made "divide and rule" easier.

By themselves, civil society organizations cannot make up for the lack of a functioning political society, meaning an autonomous realm of self-regulating political parties that have the constitutional authority to represent organized constituencies in parliaments.[12] Autocratic rulers know this, of course—their survival strategies are designed to *prevent* the emergence of any effective political society. Partial autocracies use patronage as well as laws governing parties and elections to stop opposition elites from creating organic political parties. As a result, most Arab-world political parties are better at negotiating with powerful rulers than at articulating the aspirations of each party's disorganized followers. Under such conditions, apathy reigns, while elections rarely attract more than 35 percent of the potential voting public.

As for legislatures, constitutions hobble rather than bolster their authority, as does the lack of a rule of law (which is not the same thing as a state that makes lots of laws). Such constitutions are rife with loopholes that "guarantee" freedoms of speech and assembly so long as such liberties do not infringe upon "national" or "Islamic" values. Indeed, what used to be said of the old Soviet Constitution can be said of most Arab constitutions: They guarantee freedom of speech, but not freedom *after* speech. Arab "reformers" since Anwar Sadat have been great advocates of "a state of laws," by which they have meant laws passed by compliant legislatures and upheld by compliant judges in order to legitimate the regime's survival strategies. Such laws not only inhibit democratization, they give legal sanction to forms of economic corruption that only further delegitimate the so-called capitalism of liberalized autocracies.

Because the absence or presence of political society is largely a function of official policy, it will not emerge unless Arab leaders redefine the relationship between citizen and state. Sadly, it is now clear that the new generation of leaders in Jordan and Morocco are not up to this task. Indeed, insofar as survival strategies have increased the perceived costs of democratization while not providing for effective economic development, the young kings of these lands have shown themselves unwilling or unable to cross anxious hard-liners in the military, the security forces, and the business community. Thus while Morocco's King Mohamed VI spoke early on of shifting to a "new concept of authority," he soon fell back on one of the hoariest defenses of partial autocracy, pleading lamely that "each country has to have its own specific features of democracy."[13]

"Reform" versus Democratic Gradualism

If an exit from liberalized autocracy to competitive democracy is improbable, can we detect movement in the opposite direction? As noted above, events in Egypt and Yemen as well as Jordan—where there has

recently been a crackdown on the press—seem to suggest that the answer is unfortunately "yes." This "deliberalizing" trend, as Jason Brownlee calls it, has at least four causes. First, there is the decline in external rents. This process has pushed regimes to adopt the kinds of structural economic reforms that they had previously skirted in their efforts to accommodate key constituencies. But such reforms have not produced enough "winners" to defend them successfully under conditions of open political competition, so rulers see a need to clamp down on previous political openings. Second, there is the growing influence of *mainstream* Islamism. Radical Islamism may be declining in some quarters of the Arab world, but Islamist movements that seek *peacefully* to advance illiberal cultural projects by playing according to the rules of partial autocracy are getting stronger.[14] Although these movements may not command electoral majorities, the disarray besetting secular democrats means that Islamists would certainly win at least powerful pluralities in any open election. Third, the failure of the Palestinian-Israeli peace process has not only given Islamists across the Arab world a powerful symbol, it has also facilitated the forging of ideologically heterogenous alliances between secularists and Islamists that rulers find increasingly threatening.[15] Finally, in the context of a U.S.-led war on terrorism that requires the support or good will of many Arab leaders, Washington has until very recently evinced a certain tolerance for democracy.

Yet past experience suggests that the deliberalizing trend we are seeing is an inflection point in a long-term cycle. Perhaps the current shift toward tightening will be more protracted than previous ones, but in the longer run rulers and oppositionists are unlikely to forgo the advantages that partial autocracy offers to both. Even in Jordan, with its volatile combination of a Palestinian majority whose most effective leaders are Islamists, a new king who is still establishing his authority, a fragile economy, and the looming prospect of a U.S.-led regional war, it is unlikely that either King Abdullah or the Islamists (who won 20 of the parliament's 50 seats in the 1999 elections) will give up a tradition of uneasy but mutually beneficial accommodation.[16]

Indeed, while Egypt and Jordan may be moving, for the time being, in a more authoritarian direction, there is some evidence that liberalized autocracies might be growing *more* rather than less common in the Middle East. As Michael Herb notes, in 1999 and 2000, respectively, the leaders of Qatar and Bahrain initiated political openings after years of full autocracy. Bahrain will hold parliamentary elections in October 2002 while Qatar will hold parliamentary elections to replace its 35-member Consultative Council in 2003.[17] Morocco, which will be holding parliamentary elections as this article goes to press in September 2002, might also expand the boundaries of liberalized autocracy by creating more space for Islamist opposition. It is not a coincidence that all these countries are monarchies. Arab monarchs have more institutional and

symbolic room to improvise reforms than do Arab presidents, who are invariably trapped by ruling parties and their constituencies. That said, and as I have argued, not all monarchies are equally capable of promoting political reform. Totalizing monarchies that rule in the name of harmonic ideologies—one thinks of the House of Saud—engender radical oppositions and thus are unlikely to countenance more than the slightest opening.

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As for kings who rule partial autocracies, those who serve as both arbiters of the nation and spokesmen for the Islamic community find themselves constrained by the very Islamic elites whose teachings the kings often echo or encourage. As Abdeslam Maghraoui notes, Morocco's Mohamed VI might confront this paradoxical fact of life as a result of the coming elections. If the Islamist Justice and Development party makes major gains in the upcoming election but does not overplay its hand by rejecting membership in a multiparty majority coalition that limits its ideological reach, Morocco might follow the lead of other Arab states by allowing for partial inclusion of Islamists in a mixed system. But if the Islamists score a large victory and then challenge the king's *religious* authority, Morocco's leaders may eventually decide to move toward less rather than more political openness.

There is no doubt, as Jean-François Seznec observes, that one factor pushing Arab regimes to engage in even modest political openings is that oil just does not pay the way it used to. With external rents declining, the implicit bargain by means of which rulers bought popular acquiescence in return for various forms of petroleum-funded largesse has fallen on hard times. Yet we should be careful not to lapse into structural determinism, for social, institutional, and ideological factors can raise or lower the expected costs of political change in dramatic and unexpected ways.

None of this excuses partial autocrats, of course. After all, they have embraced only such "reforms" as *hinder* the emergence of an effective political society. Moreover, because their survival strategies have often boosted Islamists rather than an expanded political arena as such, these rulers have sustained a cycle of conflict, stalemate, and reform. This makes it hard for even reformers with the best of intentions to envision a different future, and easy for the most cynical to rationalize their opposition to anything deeper than cosmetic reforms. Given the paucity of will and the imposing constraints, there is not likely to be much substantive change until the United States presses its Arab allies to transcend an involuted gradualism whose small steps trace the sad contours of an

unvirtuous circle rather than the hopeful lineaments of a real path forward. Such a policy of *democratic gradualism* must not only push for the creation of effective political parties, representative parliaments, and the rule of law; it must also be accompanied by international support for effective monitoring of local and national elections. Without international observers, the silent pluralities of the Arab world—large groups of people who often have little sympathy for illiberal Islamism—will never be able to make their voices heard.

NOTES

1. Adam Przeworski, "The Games of Transition," in Scott Mainwaring et al., eds., *Issues in Democratic Consolidation: The New South American Democracies in Comparative Perspective* (Notre Dame: Notre Dame University Press, 1992), 109. Przeworksi argues that "what normally happens is . . . a melting of the iceberg of civil society which overflows the dams of the authoritarian regime." While he later observes that "liberalization could substitute for genuine democratization, thereby maintaining the political exclusion of subaltern groups" (111), the thrust of his conceptualization is that transitions move forward or back to reach a new equilibrium.

2. Thomas Carothers, "The End of the Transition Paradigm," *Journal of Democracy* 13 (January 2002): 5–21. Carothers (9) notes that "of the nearly 100 countries considered as 'transitional' in recent years, only a relatively small number—probably fewer than 20—are clearly en route to becoming successful, well-functioning democracies or at least have made some democratic progress and still enjoy a positive dynamic of democratization."

3. For several excellent discussions of this phenomenon see the essays in the section on "Elections Without Democracy?" by Larry Diamond, Andreas Schedler, and Steven Levitsky and Lucan Way in the April 2002 issue of the *Journal of Democracy*. These articles highlight the *exceptional* character of democratic transitions.

4. Thomas Carothers, "End of the Transition Paradigm," 9. He defines the "gray zone" as one in which regimes are "neither dictatorial nor clearly headed toward democracy."

5. The interviews that I conducted in Algiers in May and June 2002 with members of the 1997 parliament, Islamist and non-Islamist alike, suggest that political learning beyond the merely tactical level took place.

6. See Scott Peterson, "The Grooming of Syria's Bashar al-Assad," *Christian Science Monitor,* 13 June 2002; Susan Sachs, "Bashar al-Assad: The Shy Young Doctor at Syria's Helm," *New York Times,* 14 June 2000. See also "Democracy Glimpses at Syria's Parliament," 27 June 2000, *Arabia.com (http://www.arabia.com/article/print/ 0,4973,23698,00.html).*

7. Bassam Haddad, "Business as Usual in Syria?" MERIP Press Information Note 68, 7 September 2001.

8. Christopher Alexander, "Authoritarianism and Civil Society in Tunisia," *Middle East Report,* October–December 1997 *(http://www.merip.org/mer/mer/mer205/ alex.html.)*

9. The party was the Labor Socialists and its newspaper was *Al-Shaab,* which in fact got Haidar's book wrong. See Max Rodenbeck, "Witch Hunt in Egypt," *New York Review of Books,* 16 November 2000, 39. The quotes condemning Haidar come from

Al-Azhar University's Islamic Research Academy and can be found in the first note to Rodenbeck's essay.

10. Max Rodenbeck, "Witch Hunt in Egypt," 41.

11. "Yemen's Religious Academies: From Defender of the Faith to Terrorist," *Economist,* 1 June 2002, 48.

12. See Manuel Antonio Garretón and Edward Newman, eds., *Democracy in Latin American (Re)Constructing Political Society* (New York: United Nations University Press, 2001).

13. Lisa Anderson, "Arab Democracy," 55–60. Quote from page 58; originally cited in Roxanne Roberts, "Morocco's King of Hearts," *Washington Post,* 23 June 2000.

14. See Gilles Kepel, *Jihad: Expansion et déclin de l'islamisme* (Paris: Gallimard, 2002).

15. See Dina Shehata, "The International Dimensions of Authoritarianism: The Case of Egypt," paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Political Science Association, Boston, 28–30 August 2002.

16. Citing the current political situation in the region, King Abdullah has once again postponed parliamentary elections, which were scheduled for the fall of 2002. It should be noted that the elections were first supposed to be held in November but were postponed because of the second Intifada. Clearly, the failure of the peace process has reinforced the regime's fears about the consequences of further liberalization.

17. The recent decision by the main opposition groups in Bahrain to boycott the parliamentary elections due to the government's failure to address concerns over the narrow boundaries of political reform indicates that a transition to liberalized autocracy is far from inevitable.