Lessons of Experience in International Democracy Support

Implications for Supporting Democratic Change in North Africa

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Abstract

The so-called 'Arab spring' in North Africa and the Middle East in early 2011 took many political commentators by surprise. It challenged international democracy support to learn from its own limitations while potentially offering exciting new opportunities. The global momentum of democratization, which had appeared to run out of steam, could be reinvigorated. The decline in fortunes that democracy support had sustained in recent years might be reversed. The recent development could place in new perspective the growing challenge that countries like China and Russia seemed to be presenting to the spread of liberal democracy because of their increasing role in international politics and the developing world's rapidly expanding economic ties with China. If international democracy support is to respond constructively to the still evolving political trajectory of countries like Egypt and Tunisia it must reflect on its own past engagement in the world generally and North Africa specifically. It should also take account of what .../

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... the experience of democratization elsewhere tells us and the distinguishing features of individual countries in the region. Reporting lessons about what not to do is easier than drawing up strategies of democracy support that are guaranteed to succeed. However this need not prevent analysis from identifying lessons of assistance and, probably even more important, the international conditions that will strongly influence whether democracy promotion succeeds or fails.

1 Introduction

This paper examines lessons of experience in international democracy promotion and the implications for support to democratic change in North Africa. Written in mid-2011 the paper is prompted by the dramatic political events in the first few months of 2011 in Egypt and Tunisia, the foremost examples of the so-called Arab spring where large-scale protests demanded changes of ruler, government and type of political regime. Even though some Arab commentators had long been saying the former regimes were unsustainable, the timing of the 2011 events and their origins in mass protest took many commentators by surprise, especially in the West. Presidents Ben-Ali and Mubarak respectively were forced from office. Steps to initiate constitutional reform followed soon after. These examples inspired demands for change elsewhere in North Africa and the Middle East. Protest movements in Bahrain, Libya, Syria, and Yemen encountered brutal resistance. The royal rulers in countries like Jordan, Oman, and Morocco—the last viewed before the Arab spring as having the most liberal political system in the Arab world but not moving further forwards—attempted a more skilful political response to managing and containing change. In Algeria, demands for reform remain somewhat muted by memories of bloody civil conflict in the 1990s. The chances of significant progress towards democracy appear to be greatest in Egypt and Tunisia, who form the paper's primary terms of reference, although they should not be completely dismissed elsewhere in the region.

Democratic progress in the region potentially has huge implications both for political rights and civil liberties and for the prospects of better governance and sustained development too. It could have significant consequences for relations with the West and for the security interests of European countries especially. Israel's relations with some of its neighbours have already been affected. In their own reaction to the shifting regional dynamics—as well as to demands from Palestinian youth—the leaders of Hamas and Fatah in Gaza and the West Bank reached a reconciliation accord in May 2011. This has added a new twist to the dilemmas of Middle East peace, even if, as seems likely, the accord produces only a very marginal improvement in relations (International Crisis Group 2011). Hitherto the Arab world has been the most resistant to democratic change of all the world's regions, just as it has been slow to make progress in economic and human development with the exception of some Gulf states. But there is no inevitability about this rooted either in culture, religion, or economics. And, as Diamond (2010) argued, key pillars of authoritarianism in the region are political structures and statecraft. The events of 2011 create opportunities to move beyond this. The international desire to support democratic change in the region must be accepted as genuine even if the underlying motives raise difficult questions concerning the pace of reform, how much and what kind of democracy its supporters in the West feel comfortable with.

In rising to the challenge of offering support now the merit of applying lessons gained from past experience of supporting democratic breakthroughs elsewhere seems self-evident. But the application of past lessons about democracy promotion to this region should also consider how closely the pattern of political change taking place there resembles the events that took place in the earlier breakthroughs. Not all political transformations are the same, and achieving a correct understanding of what is happening in this particular instance can be as important to determining an appropriate

response by democracy promoters as is offering advice on democracy promotion's previous failures and successes (an early example being Youngs 2011b).

Democratic transformation encompasses distinct stages—opening to democracy, democratic transition, and democratic consolidation—and several questions stand out when trying to make sense of other countries experience. Where did the demands for change come from and what issues lay behind them? How were changes made (and resisted), and by whom? Why did some examples move forward, others proceed no further than reach a limited or hybrid form of democracy, while yet others slipped back? Backsliding has been common. 'Democratic revolutions' are made on the street but a basic finding is that they can easily be lost in the corridors of power, afterwards. Forms of rule that drew strength from patronage, as has been common in the Arab world, can quickly re-emerge and thwart more meaningful political transformation. This could be a particularly strong possibility where civil society has been co-opted or fragmented and the demands for reform lacked strong political organization. Another commonplace is that protracted socio-economic difficulties increase the hazard rate facing new democracies. Such difficulties can be fertile ground for aspiring populist dictators, even in countries like those in North Africa where the old style of politics can be held responsible for development failings in the past. However, not every attempt to democratize in recent times can be expected to generate insights that will have direct relevance to countries in North Africa and the Middle East. The countries of that region have their own distinctive political and associated characteristics. There is considerable diversity; for example, Egypt has many more non-governmental actors than Libya even if in many cases their autonomy in the past has been questionable.

So if the object is to select relevant examples of democracy promotion to compare and learn from, then it could be important to assess the origins of the Arab spring that lay in popular protest. This driving force differs from change that comes about as a result of military defeat, or implosion within the governing elite, or as a strategy initiated and managed by the rulers. An appreciation of what is distinctive about the origins of change could be just as relevant to decisions on how best to support the progress of democracy than is the fact that the now discredited regimes in Egypt and Tunisia shared similar properties of repression with regimes that have fallen in other parts of the world. Of course even selecting relevant examples to learn from places a premium on describing political events correctly; moreover there can still be no presumption that even benign models from history are easy to repeat in new and different environments. What is certain, though, is that calls for political change have varied across the Arab region: divisions of opinion are stark; not all demands are very coherent; even now commentators differ over what they really amount to or what lies behind them. So unlike events in Egypt and Tunisia, that initially conjured up memories of the 'colour revolutions' in Europe (notably Georgia, Serbia and Ukraine) that too were driven by popular demonstrations against leaders who had lost legitimacy, events elsewhere in the region have been more confused or more confusing. Bahrain's disturbances for instance acquired a sectarian flavour, coloured by government accusations of Iranian interference. Yemen's were fuelled by entrenched inter-regional tensions. Protesters in Syria did not at first appear to command majority support for forcing President Assad from office, which looks very different from Egypt and Tunisia, and only escalated when the regime used extreme force to respond. The political goals of Libyans who took up arms against Gadaffi loyalists were unclear at the time, except for wanting Gaddafi out. Even in Egypt and Tunisia modern communications technologies made a

greater contribution to shaping the course of events (through 'online activism') than anything seen in the popular movements of the 1990s or the early years of the current millennium.

These differences are important to note when examining initiatives in democratic reform elsewhere in places where international democracy support has played a role, with a view to informing choices over democracy support to the Arab region now. It is also important to note that politics in the region is still very fluid. This means that while there are opportunities to try to influence change in a pro-democratic direction it also makes the business of keeping abreast of what is happening and making appropriate adjustments to strategy and tactics very difficult.

2   Democratization discourse

Contemporary discourse is characterized by overlapping accounts of the meaning of democracy, ideas of human rights and the notion of (good) governance, but it is important to respect their differences too. Democracy is not synonymous with 'good governance'. It can be valued for its own sake and for the surety it brings to fundamental human rights, even if it is also deemed good for governance and, hence, for development too. Naturally policies for democracy support should prioritize democracy. They should also be aware that tensions can exist with for instance governance assistance, such as where state capacity-building proceeds at some cost to democratic accountability (Rakner et al. 2008). In reality international actors commit far fewer resources to democracy assistance than to helping governance work more effectively for development. This should come as no surprise. International development co-operation has a long history. Economists drive the reform debate of aid agencies. The benefits of democratization for development may be less obvious than the significance of governance. They could be much less certain, and take longer to materialize. The benefits may appear only indirectly, by working through democracy's contribution to better governance. Of course this does not make them less real or unimportant but it helps explain why the global sum of US$5-10 billion that is spent annually on democracy assistance remains so small compared to international development assistance and debt relief.

Democratization means far more than the introduction of free and fair elections, especially in societies where institutional development in the party system and civil society has been repressed. It usually involves processes of cultural and social change involving attitudes, norms and values, as well as institution-building. Informal politics can be as important as the formal structures in determining where political power really lies, how it is exercised, and to what ends. Clearly there are continuums from less to more democracy and freedom; several intermediate types of regime exist between the poles of autocracy and democracy. Electoral democracy is minimalist; the focus is on elections that give the people a chance to determine who shall rule. In practice the elections may not be very competitive and the electoral process hardly free or fair. Liberal democracy in contrast not only embraces elections but also puts a high value on respect for civil liberties and political rights for groups and individuals, and on constitutionalism and the rule of law. It is generally considered a more developed—more desirable—version of democracy. Although democracy promotion tends to take liberal democracy as the objective there are legitimate questions to ask about whose understanding of democracy should prevail and whether one single idea can be

appropriate to all societies (Kurki 2010). These questions could be especially relevant to the Arab world where the culture and majority religion are different from the West. Also, because of a past history of foreign imperialist intervention there is acute sensitivity to external involvement in the internal political affairs of today's sovereign countries (Kodmani 2010).

3   Democracy promotion landscape

In totality democracy promotion refers to a range of different strategies, forms and modalities directed at supporting movement towards (liberal) democracy: indirect approaches address democracy's requisites, which can include economic and social requisites; more direct approaches, including democracy assistance, concentrate on political objects. Strategies range from soft to hard power and can include attaching democratic conditionalities to diplomatic and official trade and aid arrangements. A seminal contribution to comparing different options for promoting democracy is Levitsky and Way's (2005) distinction between leverage (government's vulnerability to external pressure, including political conditionalities) and linkage to the West (the density of a country's economic, geopolitical, social, communication and transnational civil society ties, inclusive of democracy assistance which is a source of soft power or influence). Democracy assistance, which is one approach to promoting democracy, comprises concrete projects and programmes many of which take the form of institutional support in political and civil society and the state. In addition they might attempt to influence the political culture in the direction of embracing liberal democratic values and beliefs. Other manifestations of support engage more directly in political struggles, taking the side of pro-reform actors. This paper dwells largely on democracy assistance, but it is important to note that this rarely exists in a vacuum; at minimum political support tends to range over both assistance and diplomatic strategies. Strategizing policy to promote democracy should consider alternative approaches and employ different combinations as seems appropriate in the light of the political situation in the country. It should be prepared to alter the mix as political developments unfold and create new opportunities or give rise to new challenges. For example assistance may be sufficient where a strong momentum for reform already exists and has solid support from the political elite. But other measures might be considered where holders of power are determined to reverse recent democratic gains or seem likely to veto further advances.

There are different interest-based policy drivers behind democracy promotion, in addition to any more idealistic concerns. These include the benefits that political liberalization and democratization are believed to mean for economic development and more broadly for human development. The driver can exercise strong influence on the level of commitment to promoting democracy, the strategy, and the constancy over time and consistency across countries. The degree to which democracy support is mainstreamed into policy-making for the entire gamut of foreign relations, including international economic co-operation, can be critical to its chances of success. Where democracy promotion seems a marginal activity the foreign perceptions about the policy drivers as well as the likely durability and sincerity of the commitment may be soured. The confidence of foreign partners and their willingness to co-operate will be affected. This can have unfortunate consequences for the advance of democracy.

Democracy assistance projects and programmes can be grouped by sector, including: constitutional reform; electoral support; support for capacity-building in civil society; support for legislative strengthening; support for political party development; judicial autonomy and rule of law assistance. The political empowerment of women cuts across sectors. Lessons of assistance at the sectoral level can be distinguished from the lessons at the level of general strategy or overall policy towards promoting democracy. But one finding common to all levels is that learning from experience has been hindered by the lagging refinement and application of evaluation methodologies, especially for outcomes and, most significant of all, for impact. Measuring the financial inputs is relatively easy, assessing the value of diplomatic and other support more difficult. But establishing how assistance left its mark and what that did for democratic trends overall in a country seems to be problematic, as is the idea of estimating a rate of return on the investment (Burnell 2007; Burnell 2011a: ch. 6). A strong case exists for greater linking of *expost* assessments of discrete assistance projects and programmes to the *ex ante* appraisal of democracy promotion strategies in their entirety (Burnell 2011: ch. 7). History also tells us that political pressure from law makers and budget officers on the supply side often expects to see evidence of favourable results from assistance in a much shorter time frame than the long-run tasks of democracy-building can reasonably furnish (Rakner et al. 2008). This is made more problematic by the proneness of democratization to setbacks and reversals in the early years.

The many supply-side actors in democracy assistance include organizations that are governmental (both departmental and non-departmental), inter-governmental, non-governmental/NGOs (formally autonomous but usually publicly-funded and enjoying varying amounts of independence) and for-profit private contractors. While some organizations are primarily a source of finance others arrange projects and programmes. Yet others are more akin to an advice centre or knowledge bank, an example being the Stockholm-based International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance. Soon after the Arab spring began International IDEA's technical assistance was already featuring in national discussions on key reforms to electoral and party laws, in several Arab countries.

Three contrasting supply-side sources of assistance stand out because of their size, distinctive features and past involvements in North Africa. They are: first, the United States (US), including the United States Agency for International Development/USAID but also the National Endowment for Democracy/NED and its grantees like the National Democratic Institute (NDI), loosely labelled as NGOs. Second, the European Union (EU), whose democracy support instruments are supplemented by the efforts of member states' own actors such as the German political foundations that are affiliated to Germany's political parties. Third, the United Nations; the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in particular has a substantial programme of support to what is called democratic governance that ranges over electoral systems and processes, human rights, parliamentary development, access to justice and rule of law, and female empowerment, all considered as a significant contribution to the UNDP's overall efforts to achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The US, EU and UN are referred to almost exclusively in the rest of this paper, owing to space constraints. Some of the lessons from past experience are generic to these and a number of other actors too while others are more specific, as will become clear.

Finally, it is perhaps worth mentioning that democracies among the rising powers in the world such as Brazil and India are generally rather lukewarm in their support for international democracy promotion (Carothers and Youngs 2011). And they are not very much more supportive of US and European initiatives to condemn human rights abuses, when votes are taken on high profile cases in the UN. Moreover there are many other states with diverse political systems, headed by China and Russia, for whom the UN principle of non-intervention in the internal affairs of sovereign states is a barrier to the very idea of international efforts to promote democracy in foreign countries.

4   General lessons from democracy support

Over two decades of international support for democratic change in many countries should produce lessons concerning what (and what not) to attempt, how (and how not) to do it, the chances of success (or failure), and the conditions that influence performance. Whereas some findings might be almost universal others might not apply in straightforward fashion to North Africa, for a variety of reasons. First, they might relate to special political circumstances, for example the success of democracy support to European countries formerly in the Soviet orbit owed much to the determination of those countries to be free from Soviet/Russian domination. Second, something different about the countries of North Africa could affect their potential to benefit from democracy support, as the arguments about 'Arab exceptionalism' might suggest. Third, the global challenge of promoting democracy may now differ from previous experience. One possible reason is that the established democracies and their ideals are now facing increased competition from powers like China and Russia that reject liberal democracy and actively insist on national sovereignty as a bar to international involvement in domestic politics, anywhere (on autocracy promotion see Burnell 2011a: chs. 11, 12). Fourth, democracy support in the Arab world may encounter distinctive issues such as those about whether—or how far—to engage with political Islamists, whose numbers are substantial. In the past the West has been wary about supporting democracy in countries where Islamists might come to power through the ballot box, just as during the Cold War the West seemed willing to prop up developing world military and other dictatorships if communist insurgency seemed the most likely alternative. The overarching point then is that the search for lessons about democracy support that can travel safely from other places at other times should proceed with care, especially if it is true that in some important respects the situation in North Africa and the Middle East today looks unique. Furthermore, the ability of democracy assistance to learn from the lessons that could be drawn from examining past performance and then improve its performance is not something that has been strongly demonstrated so far in the literature, in part due to the difficulties of evaluation mentioned earlier.

Separating out findings from democracy promotion from the ways in which our understanding of democratization itself has changed over time is not straightforward. Only a selection of major lessons of experience can be noted below. Moreover views among democracy practitioners and analysts are bound to differ on their relative importance, such as between what to do (and not to do), where (and where not), when (and when not) and how (or how not).

Ironically the first is a lesson from the backlash that democracy promotion has incurred during the current millennium. The entitlement of particular actors to support democratic progress abroad and the legitimacy of democracy promotion overall appear

to be accepted less now than when McFaul (2004-5) said democracy promotion has achieved 'world value' status. The invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq provoked nationalist sensibilities around the world, and eroded support. There is no international legal right to promote or defend democracy. The UN still struggles just to achieve Security Council authorization of initiatives aimed at stopping governments killing peaceful pro-democracy demonstrators, in Syria for example. UN democracy support must operate on a request basis. The mood now is that democracy promoters must expect to have to argue their case and tread carefully—a moral that is somewhat at odds with the hubris of the 1990s (Burnell 2011a: ch. 8). The point has special resonance for the Arab world, especially a country like Egypt where strong nationalist sentiments against external political interference persist even as signs of intra-societal divisions grow stronger in today's freer political climate.

Second, commitments to support democratic progress can fall foul of foreign policy goals that seem to point in contrary directions, at least in the short term. Put differently, democracy promotion's power is contingent on wider policy frames and international developments. This point is critical: it will be elaborated more fully later in the context summarizing the democracy promotion efforts of the US and EU in the region to date.

Third, although democracy promotion aims to help make democratization happen, in practice much democracy assistance seems to run behind events. Often, projects and programmes are reactive, seeking to take advantage of opportunities as they arise. Arguably, detailed planning in advance offers too little flexibility to make a difference in the capricious world of political change.

Fourth, the wide range of approaches to promoting democracy—from using soft to hard power, from constructing linkage to leverage—means not only that different combinations and calibrations are optimally suited to the political situation and dynamics presented by different countries, but also different supply side actors vary in their comparative advantage. Where governments might be able to threaten economic sanctions and some inter-governmental organizations can offer politically conditioned aid, non-governmental (NGO) actors can do neither. But in spite of having negligible or very limited financial resources of their own NGOs might be able to offer extra political options, much practical experience and valuable technical expertise. For example the Netherlands Institute for Multiparty Development has pioneered the establishment of Centres for Multiparty Development in countries like Malawi and Zambia, bringing together rival and sometimes hostile political parties in continuous civilized dialogue over how to move a new democracy forward. The take-up of this model has spread; for example Ghana went on to share its successful experience of inter-party dialogue with the parties in Uganda as that country moved from being a 'no-party' state towards plural politics.

Among the various approaches democratic conditionality is reckoned by some analysts to be not normally a very potent instrument. This is partly because of inconsistency in its use and especially when not linked to more positive measures of engagement, notably strong incentives like EU accession (Schimmelfennig and Scholtz 2008; Youngs 2010b). A very stringent judgment is that any serious attempt to operationalize conditionality through benchmarking performance 'requires a clear definition of concepts, objectives, processes, strategies and incentives, as well as the political will of the parties engaged in the benchmarking exercise to take seriously their mutually agreed

commitments' (Del Sarto and Schumacher 2011: 948)—a combination of conditions that for various reasons is hard to meet in practice. The democratic consolidation of EU accession candidates who met political criteria enshrined in the EU's Copenhagen criteria (1993) does not necessarily contradict this picturet, for the attraction of EU membership was irresistible and their transition to democracy seemed to be secure already. The literature has consistently doubted the EU's chances of influencing similar democratic achievements in other countries where it can offer trade deals and market access, investment and financial laid but definitely not a chance of EU membership. This point has particular relevance to countries in North Africa (the EU is Tunisia's largest export market for instance), and will be returned to later.

Also Levitsky and Way's (2005) judgment that leverage generally, unlike linkage, cannot produce sustained and consolidated democracy also has wide support in the literature. The notion that democracy can be imposed by force (occupation) is typically derided: democracy's progress in Germany, Italy and Japan after 1945 is considered irrelevant, especially in today's world. External pressure can bring down a dictator and may be critical at certain key moments (President Obama's withdrawal of US support from President Mubarak being a possible example). Such 'tipping points' can enable new sets of possibilities, but they neither make transition to democracy inevitable nor democratic consolidation very much more likely. In fact democracy support seems to be more effective where democratic progress is occurring or is likely to happen anyway— in other words, where the momentum comes from within. Domestic forces and events will determine a county's political future in the long run. They are not determined by external democracy support; indeed, other kinds of international influence may be far more consequential (on this too, more later). That said, yet another inference that is often drawn in the literature is that democracy support must be prepared to commit for a long haul. And this commitment must stand firm even if the investment seems to produce poor returns in the early years or when a country suffers democratic interruptions or reversals, which can generate political opposition inside the country against receiving more democracy support or erode the political will to keep financing it in the supply-side countries.

Fifth in the list of general lessons from democracy support, several findings apply to democracy assistance projects and programmes specifically. Some, such as the importance of being sensitive to local context and establishing local ownership are familiar from the experience and discourse of international development co-operation. But any compilation of practical tips should acknowledge that there is still much we do not know or understand about how (and how well) it works, that is the causal connections (if any) between the expenditures of time, money, advice and technical expertise on the one side and democracy on the other. There are not enough credible evaluations covering assistance as a whole. Finkel et al. (2009), the most ambitious statistical assessment, examines only USAID democracy and governance assistance worldwide over 1990-2003. It reaches modestly positive findings that turn negative for human rights assistance. However there is no shortage of critical commentary, based on intensive scrutiny over many years in the case of Thomas Carothers who leads the way (his 1999 book remains foundational; see also 2006a, 2010). Carothers has consistently questioned the usefulness of the familiar menus of technical advice, financial and material support, training and exchange visits. The last two in particular are sometimes seen as patronizing and a waste of expenditure, by the partners they are supposed to benefit. A frequent argument is that more attention must be paid to understanding the

deeper incentive structures that explain why people in politics behave the way they do. And that careful thought should then be given to inventing ways of trying to influence these. This is easier said than done, not least because of the depth of political intervention that might be needed. Nevertheless democracy assistance can reflect on the design of fundamental political institutions and help design reforms to the architecture. Reducing the powers that are concentrated in the hands of the chief executive and strengthening instruments of accountability that can check the abuse of power, stand out —and have strong application to the Arab countries. But exploring ways of preventing informal institutions such as clientelism and corruption from harming democracy's progress, and exploiting any positive force they might exercise, is more challenging for democracy assistance specifically and promotion more generally.

This introduces the role of socialization into attitudes, norms and beliefs that are consistent with the values and principles of freedom and democracy, and weakening the hold of opposing inclinations. Democracy support's ability to contribute to processes of cultural change has been assessed most closely in connection with the EU, whose efforts to influence the hearts and minds of governing elites in particular, in potential accession countries, is often contrasted with what is occasionally dubbed the more 'muscular approach' of the US government. This means giving practical support to the struggles of political activists against the powerholders and using tough diplomatic language. These efforts may be able to achieve surface results more quickly than the exercise of normative influence. But where institutions understood as informal practices are deeply-rooted, and widely-shared too, then the democratic gains might be hard to sustain in the absence of more profound changes in the political culture.

A final general observation on assistance is that co-ordination weaknesses are routinely noted, just as they have been in the case of international development assistance. For example the UN Secretary-General's *Guidance Note* (United Nations 2009: 8) deems it 'critical' to improve 'coherence among UN initiatives' in democracy assistance, meaning interactions with stakeholders, partners and the wider international community. In fact several notable shortcomings exhibited in development aid's past have featured in the more recent debates on democracy assistance. The importance of ownership and genuine partnership to achieving effectiveness is illustrative. Although the 2005 *Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness* that cemented this perspective addressed the needs of international development co-operation, it also called on partners to strengthen as appropriate their parliaments' role in national development strategies and to reinforce participatory approaches to policy (OECD 2005: section 'Mutual Accountability', 48). The *Declaration's* premise here is that democratic accountability and ownership are two sides of the same coin: each one is precondition of the other. This way of thinking has added to the case for supporting democratic processes in aid receiving nations. And yet over a long period the recipients of civil society support for instance routinely voiced their concern about the unequal relationship in their international partnerships and about the donor-driven nature of the support agendas. The fact that a substantial canvass of the views of assisted partners about their democracy assistance took so long to occur is symptomatic (IDEA 2009 canvassed Europe's partners; a World Movement for Democracy survey of 14 countries including Egypt and Morocco is reported in Youngs 2010a). This delay contrasts with the efforts to measure support for democracy in emerging democracies and developing regions (opinion 'barometers'). These have been well institutionalized for many years and long used as proxy evidence for assuming the demand for international democracy support is high. The moral then is that democracy

support should continue to work on acquiring knowledge and sensitivity to the views that partners have about the support they think is appropriate, especially in the case of civil society.

5   Sectoral lessons from democracy assistance

Findings from the design, delivery and evaluations of democracy assistance projects and programmes can be surveyed at the level of the individual sectors previously identified, as the following examples illustrate.

For elections observation and technical support to elections, electoral law, electoral management, and voter education, where the UN's Electoral Assistance Division of its Department of Political Affairs and the UNDP's Democratic Governance Group have considerable experience (especially in conflict-prone environments, where some day Libya and Yemen might be candidates even if Syria avoids civil war and partial state collapse), attention must focus on far more than just events on polling day. Efforts should try to deter partisan political manipulation during the electoral stages that precede the actual day when votes are cast, to prevent the election result being determined long before the first ballot is cast (Elklit and Reynolds 2005). Extensive guidance on this compiled from widespread experience is freely available from organizations like the International Foundation for Electoral Systems among other sources. Investing in building the institutional capacity for managing electoral processes free from arbitrary political interference, and for elections observation by civil society over the long term, emerges as crucial lessons. It merits more support compared to sending international missions to observe an election. The distinctive political challenges posed by 'post-conflict' elections, where the security environment could still be fragile and the election result only rarely confers legitimacy on the government that follows (Gillies 2011), have generated their own literature. The objectives of support in these situations can come into conflict, for example securing peace versus building democracy. But in all places the electoralist fallacy tells us that elections—even free and fair elections—are not a sufficient condition for democracy. And the same claim must be true of international electoral support too (Burnell 2011b). Indeed, the recent history of fraudulent elections in the region makes democracy activists there somewhat dismissive of placing high hopes on election observation missions.

For civil society capacity-building, which has loomed large in democracy assistance budgets, the twin challenge of identifying suitable partners without encouraging donor dependency is familiar from development aid too. It is a sector where NGO providers have focused much effort, supplemented by the more recent development of the United Nations Democracy Fund/UNDEF (the Arab word claimed an unprecedented 15 per cent of all new projects approved under UNDEF's fifth funding round, July 2011). Morocco offers an example of where local stakeholders seem to view international involvement as largely positive, but not without drawbacks (Khakee 2010: 9). Coming to terms with the fact that the often narrow selection of partner organizations who donors feel most comfortable with may have few or no deep roots in society poses problems that are particularly pertinent to North Africa, where support has often been lavished on local NGOs that enjoyed little true autonomy from the government. A lack of internal democracy in partner organizations, and risks that competition over support will deepen fragmentation and polarization within civil society, create further issues. Although labour organizations have not typically been among the main recipients of

technical aid to civil society the potential for this to be developed in Egypt and Tunisia exists now. Experience from elsewhere shows that heaping support on civil society can stunt the development of political parties, although scaling up assistance to parties from historically modest levels could encounter major political problems too.

For political parties then, despite growing international recognition of their importance to the development of democracy and of the contribution that constructive party politics can make to better governance too, political sensitivities pose a big impediment (Carothers 2006a; Burnell and Gerrits 2011). These include hostility from governments to external involvement with opposition parties and the indifference of party leaders. Different international providers of assistance have contrasting views on the relative merits of offering partisan versus multi-party and cross-party, or all-party, support. Additional complications arise where parties lack full commitment to liberal democracy's values such as tolerance of diverse ethnic, racial or religious groups. Party support seems particularly prone to failure. But an important finding is that efforts aimed at helping bring parties together to reach agreement on the rules of political competition and foster a willingness to play by the rules can be especially appropriate in divided societies or where an atmosphere of deep suspicions and mistrust exists among politicians. The Netherlands Institute for Multiparty Development (NIMD) for instance has a distinctive reputation for its work in this regard in countries in sub-Saharan Africa and Latin America but has no background in the Arab world. Similarly the UN Secretary-General's *Guidance Note* (UN 2009: 6) says the UN has a 'unique comparative advantage' in supporting the development of strong, transparent and inclusive multi-party structures. But this has not been a major UN commitment hitherto; UN work for parties has been mainly indirect such as through electoral support and conflict management (Democratic Governance Group 2006).

As long-time president of the NED Carl Gershman (2004), while noting that different actors as different as parties and civil society organizations both are constituent parts of democracy and play different roles as agents of change, depending on the point in the cycle of political development, draws out implications for supporting parties as well as civil society. Thus where political pluralism is suppressed there is no alternative but to try to help civil society make peaceful protest against the regime. In an emerging democracy, however, the aim should be to help civil society adapt its behaviour to new needs, such as demanding transparency and accountability from the evolving apparatus of government, and socializing citizens into the values and obligations of freedom and democracy. In what Gershman calls post-dictatorial situations (hybrid or competitive/semi-authoritarian regimes), helping civic groups and pro-reform parties to co-operate is deemed essential both for their own mutual interests and so as to advance democracy—just as it is in societies trying to leave intense inter-communal violence behind. But civil society and parties will play different roles once democracy is established. On the one hand outside support should not try to broker artificial ties between institutions in the two sectors and on the other hand must give to neither sector the impression that it should dominate the other.

For legislative (or parliamentary) strengthening, which too has been less favoured as a sector, a flurry of recent evaluations sheds some light (see Burnell 2011a: ch. 9). It is increasingly coming to the attention of international development organizations like UNDP and the World Bank Institute, as well as bilateral aid agencies such as the UK's Department for International Development (DfID), especially in connection with

improving fiscal scrutiny and financial oversight. A prominent observation is that the institutional fix common in top-down approaches may be largely ineffective, especially where there is strong resistance from the government. Instead, bottom-up approaches to legislative strengthening may be more productive, by encouraging society to apply pressure on their parliamentary representatives to call the executive to account. However, although not disagreeing with this it is worth mentioning that a different change in expectations might be needed too. This would mean a shift in emphasis towards pressing government to deliver public goods that will benefit society as a whole, and away from the private or semi-public goods that typically feature strongly in the culture of patron-client relations. But while important for improving the prospects of both development and democracy this shift is another of those areas where democracy assistance so far has seemed unable to offer good solutions. Moreover the empowerment of society as a vehicle for strengthening legislatures does not necessarily appeal to international development partners. For they must place a high premium on maintaining good working relations with governments—an example being Ethiopia, where major bilateral donors like the UK have seemed willing to ignore strong doubts about the government's commitment to democracy. An alternative approach to strengthening legislatures then is to gear the effort to assisting elected representatives organize themselves around the deliberation of substantive issues, policies for poverty reduction for instance. But this too can have drawbacks, if the objective of furthering democracy becomes subordinated or is then sidelined.

For judicial empowerment and strengthening the rule of law more generally a similar story can be told. Progress over curbing the abuse of power will remain uncertain if the executive retains key powers in relation to matters like appointments and dismissals to the highest courts, determines the judges' remuneration or ignores their findings with impunity, where examples abound (Carothers 2006b). Technical and material support to the courts may do little to help poor people access the system or eliminate the influence of corruption, or make much difference in cultures where opposing customary norms still prevail. The chances of strong societal support mobilizing on the side of the judiciary in its struggle for increased autonomy of the political executive could increase if the judiciary takes a close interest in issues of social justice. This might provide some avenues for innovative programmes of democracy assistance. But in regard to civil-military relations, democracy assistance and international support for security sector reform (SSR) have typically operated in separate worlds. This has been true of North Africa, where outside SSR help has concentrated on professional training and technical support. Although in line with the West's priority of co-operation in countering terrorism and preventing mass outward migration, this approach has actually benefitted state agencies that then went on to bear down upon democracy activists. This makes Sayigh's (2007) solution look even stronger. He argues that much closer integration with democracy assistance, for instance strengthening parliamentary oversight, would be more helpful to democracy, while noting that the security forces (including police and intelligence agencies) will be placed under democratic (and not simply civilian) control with help from international partners only where the political commitment to do this exists. He calls for international support for a new 'security culture': the *human* security needs of the people (a notion familiar to UNDP, for instance) take precedence over the power-holders' interests in deterring peaceful opposition and stopping legitimate dissent.

Other observations

Finally, and pointing forward to the account of supply side actors in the next section, even if the US, Europe and UN continue to be at the forefront of democracy promotion worldwide it is important to note the regional dimension to explaining democracy's spread. There is evidence to suggest that living in a 'good neighbourhood' (near to other democracies or democratizing countries) is advantageous to the diffusion of democracy: thus for example Doorenspleet (2005: 160) in her statistical analysis of 'democratization waves' concluded 'Geographical diffusion matters'. There are several ways in which democratic 'snowballing' can take place: cross-border support between civil society actors is one possibility but others include imitation and the product foreign government meddling. Conversely in a region where political instability exists in neighbouring countries or they have reform-resistant governments that feel threatened by changes on their doorstep a successful transition to democracy will be that much harder, notwithstanding support from the West. Kyrgyzstan's failed 'tulip revolution' (2005) is illustrative. Emulation clearly played a major part in the way popular protests spread around North Africa and the Middle East in early 2011, but while advances for freedom and democracy seem to have resulted in some places brutal repression was triggered in some others. The role played by regional inter-governmental organizations could make some difference. The EU and Organization of American States (OAS) for instance have both been instrumental in supporting democracy in their own region. In contrast the Arab League has been said of all regional organizations to be 'the most bereft of democratic norms and means for promoting or encouraging them' (Diamond 2010: 102), which made its decision finally to condemn the Syrian government's bloody response to the demonstrations held at the start of Ramadan in August 2011 all that more surprising. The African Union and the establishment of a peer review mechanism for improving governance among African states, in 2003, have yet to prove their worth for serving democracy. By comparison the foreign policies of major powers outside the region and support from the UN could potentially provide a more decisive contribution, although consequences following from the evolution of bilateral relations among the states within the region should not be ignored either.

6   Democracy support in the region pre-Arab spring

Democracy promotion in North Africa has a history. The failure of the policy thinking that underpinned past democracy promotion in North Africa to anticipate the political events of 2011 underlines the need to understand the reasons for this now, if democracy support going forward is to become fit for purpose. Of course precisely because the political situation inside the countries has changed so dramatically attempts to promote democracy now must take account of the changes, in addition to incorporating lessons from the shortcomings that it betrayed in the past. North Africa's developmental limitations are generally reckoned to have been a major contributor behind the Arab spring, especially the high levels of youth unemployment (including among youth with tertiary education) in societies with a large proportion of young people. Economic growth has not benefitted a majority of Egyptians, and even Tunisia, which has been exceptional in sustaining growth and structural economic change over the period since 1960, saw social discontent that was fuelled by economic difficulties precipitate its 'jasmine revolution'. As has long been clear, then, economic growth alone is not a panacea for political stability and it does not make liberal democracy inevitable either, which means that some combination of economic and political initiatives from the

outside world may well be needed if democratic reform is to have the best chance of moving forwards now.

Moreover it would be unwise to conclude that the West's democracy promotion agenda played no role at all in generating the Arab spring. Indeed, before the events of 2011 even happened Bassma Kodmani, Executive Director of the Arab Reform Initiative judged that the agenda 'undeniably triggered a change of attitude in the Arab world by governments and societies alike' (Kodmani 2010: 153). Exactly what form the influence took is open to debate. Was Arab civil society emboldened by the limited support that it had already received from outside? Or were local perceptions of the feebleness of external pressure on the regimes more important? That is to say they caused rulers to be complacent while at the same time leading the 'Arab street' to the conviction that if change was to come then the people themselves would have to assume the responsibility for making it happen—a fortuitous development that bestows domestic ownership and legitimacy on the demands for change. This improves the chances of making a successful transition to democracy, and in turn strengthens the case for outside actors to advance democracy support wholeheartedly now.

Historically the main sources of democracy promotion in the region have been the US and Europe. The efforts of both have attracted much criticism, for reasons that have implications for democracy support going forward. That the UN should now take a clearer lead than it has, and act more fully on the comparative advantages claimed for it (United Nations 2009) is one possible inference. In regard to the US there is a strong case for making as much use as possible of the democracy endowments and institutes (in loose terms, the NGOs) that are formally separate from government departments. For both the US and the Europeans the option of continuing to discriminate against political Islam and to exclude Islamists from full political participation is no longer realistic; the situation requires an inclusive approach to building democracy.

7   United States democracy support in the region

Beginning in 2002 President Bush's administration in the US started paying 'unaccustomed attention' to the issue of democracy in the Middle East (Ottaway 2005b: 173). Its cautious Middle East Partnership Initiative (MEPI) promised modest funding for civil society and education programmes. A more ambitious proposal for a Greater Middle East Initiative, in 2004, is said to have caused 'outrage' among Arab commentators including liberal commentators who read it as code for regime change (ibid.). Diplomatic pressure seemed to secure some modest political results in 2004-5, when Mubarak's government in Egypt relaxed its grip somewhat and the Egyptian Movement for Political Change (Kifaya) began to organize (Kausch 2010: 16), but the electoral gains made by Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood (2005) and Hamas in Palestine (2006) brought a sharp reversal in US policy. US commitment to promote democratic change in the region has repeatedly been said by Americans and others including Arab reformers to have a major credibility problem (Ottaway 2005b: 173–92; Carothers and Ottaway 2005: ch. 13; Hawthorne 2005; Durac and Cavatorta 2009). This predates even the US invasions of Afghanistan (2001) and Iraq (2003), or 'regime change' understood as the unauthorized removal of a government by foreign whim: in 2000 Al-Sayyid (2000) for instance voiced civil society's deeply-rooted suspicions of the US. Overcoming the credibility problem could be essential if the US government is to maximize effective support for reform now.

First there is the perception that a considerable gulf existed between the Bush administration's high rhetoric of support for change and the timid reality of its modest efforts to assist democratic breakthrough, which stepped back when faced by objections from the likes of President Mubarak. Second is the maintenance of friendly relations with and support to autocracies in the region, in Saudi Arabia for example, in return for co-operation over issues central to US national interests: counter-terrorism, reliable oil supplies, and security of US military assets in the region. Third, US governments in recent times are judged to have given one-sided support to Israel in its disputes with the Palestinians. This too undermines US claims to be committed to advancing freedom and democracy in the Middle East. Like the second point above, it will not be countered simply by increasing the amounts of US democracy assistance to countries in the region now. The refusal of the US (and the EU) to endorse Hamas's victory in the 2006 elections to the Palestinian Legislative Council appeared to signal that western support for the democratic process is conditional on who takes office, even when the election meets most international standards. The priority assumed by US foreign policy objectives in the region has meant that the maintenance of peaceful Egyptian relations with Israel (dating from the 1978 Camp David Accords) exercises an enormous influence on US diplomatic relations. This still served Mubarak's relations with the White House well at the time of his official visit to President Obama in August 2009, albeit at the cost of increasing his unpopularity at home. The ratio of US military aid (including security assistance) to democracy aid for countries with authoritarian or semi-authoritarian regimes in the Arab world has been higher than the ratio for any other world region (Bermeo 2010: 81 lists Bahrain, Oman, Morocco, Jordan and Egypt in the top five places). It also exceeds the ratio for countries that went on to become democracies. In total Egypt has consistently received over a billion dollars in foreign aid annually and been one of the top recipients of all US aid including military and security assistance. OECD-DAC data place US development assistance to Egypt of US$552 million in 2008-9 at over twice the sum provided by the next largest donor (Germany).

The US's presence in the region and it potential to influence politics there is far greater than that of any other outside actor, but the US faces the biggest challenges in making its potential work to the benefit of democratic progress. The challenges are more political and diplomatic than anything to do with technical expertise or the funds earmarked for democracy assistance. They are probably harder to counter for that reason. The election of President Obama in 2009 undoubtedly helps; he quickly sought to distance his intentions from the legacy of ill-feeling surrounding his predecessor's efforts to promote democracy in the Arab world. But the stake the US has in political continuity in places like Saudi Arabia and Bahrain (cemented by a shared concern about Iran's role in the region, among other things) and domestic political constraints on the president's freedom of manoeuvre towards the region will continue to hang over US democracy support there. So although behind-the-scenes diplomacy from Washington possibly was (and may still is) a positive influence on the seemingly benign stance that Egypt's armed forces have taken in the country's recent political developments, very substantial US government engagement with societal actors that are struggling to move democracy forwards now could hinder their chances of making further gains. In Syria President Assad's tactic (which seemed quite successful early on) of portraying Syrian demonstrators as allies of foreign subversion, Israel specifically, illustrates the point. The US then must find ways of framing its efforts to support democracy in the region in ways that can disarm critics who doubt US credibility and see either or both their own

national (democratic) self-determination and the legitimate interests of the entire Arab peoples under some kind of attack. In theory then organizations like the National Democratic Institute should be at an advantage compared to USAID. By providing assistance at arms' length from the government, and also by not claiming credit for democratic progress in the region, the value of US democracy support will be maximized even as it risks undermining political support at home for making funds available. This last observation gains added purchase as a result of the agreement reached between US Congress and the administration in August 2011 to reduce the government's deficit.

8   European Union democracy support in the region

Democracy promotion in the region by the EU dates from the 1990s and consists of three main vehicles. First, the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership (EMP) (or Barcelona Process) was established in 1995, involving the 15 EU governments and Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Egypt, Jordan, Syria, Lebanon, Israel, the Palestinian Authority, Turkey, Cyprus and Malta. Closer economic co-operation and democratic reform were part of the vision. Following a French initiative this was relaunched with a less multilateral character as the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM), in 2008. UfM embraces 43 countries. It has yet to demonstrate its worth; bad Arab-Israeli relations have been very disruptive. Second, the European Initiative for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR) was created by the European Parliament in 1994, giving way to the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights in 2006. This offers funding for projects that promote democracy and human rights, worldwide. Non-governmental and civil society organizations are the main beneficiary. The EIDHR is unusual in that in principle the consent of the relevant government in countries where partners are selected is not a requirement. In practice implementation has proceeded very cautiously. In 2004 Tunisia's government for instance banned programmes receiving EIDHR support. Third and more recent than EMP and EIDHR is the European Neighbourhood Policy, or ENP (2004), a set of bilateral relationships between the EU and close neighbours that include Algeria, Egypt, Tunisia, Morocco and Syria as well as Ukraine, Georgia and some others. The ENP claims to be a mutual commitment to common values of democracy and human rights, rule of law, good governance, market economy principles and sustainable development.

An early judgment—but one made more than a decade after the fall of the Berlin wall and both the democracy wave and the surge of democracy promotion that ensued in the 1990s—was that the EU has for long proceeded 'too timidly with North Africa on the democracy front' (Gillespie and Whitehead 2002: 196). In fact all three EU institutions have consistently been criticized as instruments of democracy promotion (Pace et al. 2009; Durac and Cavatorta 2009; International IDEA 2009; Schlumberger 2011; Del Sarto and Schumacher 2011; Committee on Foreign Affairs of the European Parliament 2011). The common theme is that although the arrangements formally present opportunities to employ both positive and negative conditionalities for pressing governments to pursue political reform, as well as funding citizen groups, European security and trade interests and the objective of pushing economic liberalization have taken priority. In attaching overriding value to political stability Europe's leaders seemed to accept the regimes' arguments that significant democratic innovations could endanger Europe's core interests, such as by handing electoral success to political Islamists. This, rather than too few resources or technical flaws in EU democracy

assistance, lies behind the pervasive judgment that EU strategy for promoting democracy in the region has been ineffective. Just as the idea of partnership enshrined in the structure of the EMP ruled out putting pressure on governments to undertake political reform right from the start, so Europe's increasing anxiety to secure North Africa's co-operation in preventing mass migration from Africa northwards has been a recent major determinant of relations with governments, including even Libya (a formal Treaty of Friendship, Partnership and Co-operation between Libya and was made in 2008). European funding of civil society has been criticized for favouring larger transnational NGOs and individual human rights causes at the expense of support to indigenous groups struggling to put democratic reform on the national agenda.

The EU's record on democracy promotion in the region actually seemed to deteriorate in the years leading up to 2011. Immediately before the Arab spring the EMP's political ambitions centred on democracy and human rights were said to have been 'largely abandoned' (Bicchi 2011: 14) and the dialogue on democracy and human rights 'silenced' (ibid.: 17). Indeed, according to Schlumberger (2011: 147) the UfM's creation was a 'triple victory' for the political preferences of authoritarian Arab rulers in their relations with Europe, and cast serious doubt on the EU's pretensions to be a norm entrepreneur (scepticism shared by Youngs 2010c). An EU review of the ENP commissioned in 2010 and reporting in May 2011 acknowledged that its support to political reforms had 'met with limited results', saying that a new approach is now needed (European Commission and High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy 2011: 1). Following up on new 'Partnership' proposals that the European Commission made in March 2011 the May review added support for the establishment of a new European Endowment for Democracy, which would help political parties and civil society actors in monitoring democratic reforms.

In its defence Europe's approach to supporting democracy in this region and elsewhere is sometimes said to show a relevant and greater (compared to the US) awareness of the requirement for there to be social and economic progress, that is to say an indirect (and non-confrontational) approach to promoting democracy. This claim is however rather crude unless it pays sufficient attention to the question of who in society benefits from reforms to the economy and growth and whether increased public provision of goods like education translate into sought-after gains like adequately rewarded jobs. Other more detailed comparisons of assistance contrast an EU's bias towards a top-down approach that places emphasis on reforming governance with a more evenly balanced top-down/bottom-up approach by the US. Thus in Egypt USAID support such as for decentralizing state institutions in parallel to US NGO support to society including some political parties (Huber 2008; Kausch 2010: 4), albeit in a climate for supporting civil society that turned increasingly restrictive after 2005. Although the effectiveness of none of these efforts was subjected to rigorous evaluation (Huber 2008: 58) the events of 2011 might be thought to offer an adverse comment on all of them, given that timing of the Arab spring was not foreseen and it now challenges the US and EU to think afresh about their democracy support and their larger political engagement with the region. Suspicions about where empowering the people might lead—once called a 'major flaw' in the West's commitment to promoting democracy in the Arab world hitherto (Kodmani 2010: 165)—have to be addressed more broadly now that policy must adjust to new realities. For the US especially it could mean reassessing core interests and their order of importance, while weighing up different time horizons. But compared to the US the EU faces the additional challenge of harmonizing initiatives

among its members and the bilateral relations they choose to conduct with the region. This has been problematic in the past. Southern EU states feel more exposed to the dangers that new policy initiatives might bring about, for example larger influxes of migrant labour..

So, foreign policy decisions will determine the chances of turning democracy promotion into a more effective instrument than hitherto, but even so the contents of democracy assistance are not irrelevant. Their reconfiguration could also make a worthwhile difference, for instance in relation to executive dominance, civil society and political parties, and female empowerment.

9 Sectoral assistance and democracy post-Arab spring

If previous attempts to promote democracy were never likely to bring significant changes in the distribution of power in Arab countries very quickly then efforts to help build democracy now must encompass what Carothers and Ottaway (2005) called 'getting to the core'; namely, supporting institutional changes that will curb excesses of executive power and make government more accountable to society and to the rule of law. A complementary requirement is support for the development of arrangements for representative government that are sufficiently inclusive to enable all social groups to feel they are stakeholders in the new democracy. By helping to allay fears that support for political Islam at the ballot box might give rise to 'one person, one vote, one time' (fears similar to those which led the West to acquiesce in the military coup that followed the unexpected success of the Islamic Salvation Front in the first round of Algeria's parliamentary elections, in 1991) institutional reforms that check the power of government in advance should make all-inclusive empowerment more acceptable to opinion within Arab societies and in the West that fears radical Islam. Democracy assistance can try to help here, in the countries already showing some democratic momentum, in several ways.

9.1 Power of the executive

First there is the advice that democracy promotion can and should do more to help counter executive dominance vis-à-vis other parts of government and society (Cranenburgh 2011; Rakner et al. 2008). Egypt has seen some constitutional changes but more are awaited, as they are in Tunisia, and resistance to more permanent reductions in the power of the executive (and to the military's prerogatives, in Egypt) can be expected. Of course the writing of a constitution is essentially a domestic matter and in any case must carry the support of the people. But external actors can press for compliance with international standards on human rights and share technical advice on how various institutional arrangements fare elsewhere. They can offer to help build the institutional capacity to implement changes to the constitution: constitution-building does not cease with the passing of a new constitution into law (International IDEA 2011). In the short term they can lend support to the civic education that must accompany exercises in popular consultation, so as to ensure a wide and proper understanding of the process by which the new constitution will be determined as well as the details of proposed contents. Keeping these constitutional matters separate from the question of the role the state as a whole should play in the economic life of country could be essential to the credibility of external advisers, although maintaining a clear separation can become difficult where discussion touches on the rule of law and for

instance property rights. Similarly, opportunities for exploring beneficial international co-operation in relation to electoral support that goes well beyond arranging election observation should be seized. Support for extending media freedoms can be vital here. Improving the capability of legislatures however looks less straightforward. In the past, UNDP claims to have made a pronounced impact on the parliaments in Morocco and Algeria for instance are hardly borne out by evidence to show the executive became more accountable or that governance was improved. Rather, Murphy and Alhada's assessment (2007: 26) of ten years of involvement there shows how tricky securing parliament's ownership of a legislative reform can be. And in Morocco, which 'in principle should be a priority country for UNDP' (ibid.: 69-70), disagreements over the UNDP's social policy agenda undermined its relations with the parliament (ibid.: 65-6) and illustrate the difficulties of organizing legislative support around a major theme in human development. There has been no meaningful impact evaluation (ibid.: 66). In Egypt external support to the judiciary's case for claiming powers of electoral oversight, which were severely infringed by the government in the past, could now help inspire greater confidence among the political parties that electoral fraud will not be tolerated. This in turn creates an incentive for parties and their followers to participate in elections instead of threatening to boycott them (a familiar tactic that does not serve democracy's progress well) or resorting to extra-constitutional action.

9.2 Civil society and political parties

Civil society and political parties are two more sectors where lessons from past assistance including in North Africa should inform efforts that are undertaken now, especially Tunisia where suppression stunted civil society and party development independent of the former regime. In Egypt 'political civil society' has depended heavily on foreign financial support, creating divisions and feeding corruption (Kausch 2010: 9-10). These failings attach more to the older generation of groups (which include 'donor darlings') than to the more recent explosion of grass-roots organizations and social movement, that may well need international support to survive. The potential now exists to extend technical and other support to independent labour movements or organizations too, but the merits of this should be explored first with specialists who have detailed local knowledge. For while on the one hand strengthening these organizations might be productive for valuable social or economic gains but not advance many political benefits, on the other hand some thought must be given to how such support fits in with the advice the West gives on economic restructuring and reducing public sector employment in particular. There is a chance that external objectives, or internal perceptions, or both could become confused.

In general experience elsewhere shows that ending support to civil society early in the transition process can be a mistake, even if the alternative of directing attention more at the reform of government institutions begins to look more promising than before and if opportunity to help build a multi-party system also starts to look more feasible. That party support does not itself guarantee democratic advance has been well documented (Burnell and Gerrits 2011), including in Morocco where Bolleyer and Storm (2011) show that the country's 'hybrid' regime vesting great power in the monarch has gone undisturbed. In both Egypt and Tunisia there are now significantly greater opportunities to support parties as well as civic associations, than before. Previously banned parties like Tunisia's al-Nahda Movement Party, and in Egypt the new Freedom and Justice Party put forward by the Muslim Brotherhood, can move closer to the centre stage.

Precisely how much popular support they will mobilize in free and fair elections is not yet clear. But equally uncertain is which of the non-Islamist political groupings will emerge as viable and durable forces able to claim strong parliamentary representation.

Encouraging constructive links across civil and political society and developing their autonomy of the state, along with helping to strengthen the several actors' pro-democracy credentials, have all long been identified as important goals for democracy support in the region (Hawthorne 2005: 92). But new thinking is needed in international circles about their choice of partners. Previous dispositions to select on the kind of NGOs that were least likely to upset and extract political concessions from the rulers and the discrimination against working with Islamists, in both civil and political society, are now even more questionable than before.

9.3 Inclusionary approach

Arguments for a more inclusive approach to offering assistance that deems moderate and, perhaps, some more radical Islamists eligible have been circulating in the critical commentaries for several years (an early critic of exclusionary support is Al-Sayyid 2000); crucially, calls for a more inclusionary approach have come from liberal voices within the region (International IDEA 2009; Kodmani 2010). Recent years did see some exploratory approaches to 'moderate Islamists' by US NGOs (Carothers and Ottaway 2005: ch. 13) but at the cost of reaping reprisals from the regimes (Bishara 2007; Kausch 2010: 4). A major departure now could require not just a more flexible attitude among supply-side providers of assistance but a willingness by Islamists to engage with international supporters of democracy too. But in the new context of building democracy the time has come for the debate to be not about the principle of inclusion but the precise conditions that should be attached and the incentives that will help make it work. Diamond (2008: 337) for instance made support for inclusion in dialogue conditional on a commitment to equal rights for women and peaceful relations with Israel. The combination of illiberal social values with pro-democracy beliefs found among some Islamists presents a dilemma to opinion in the West. But at minimum democracy assistance from the West must learn to recognize the diversity within political Islam, distinguish the range of views it presents and identify groups with the potential to be flexible. Thus Wegner and Pellicer (2009) for example show how the leadership of Morocco's Party of Justice and Development has become more accommodating to democratic principles. However this has been achieved by the leaders increasing their distance from the party's social base, which is a development that sends out mixed messages for democracy and democratization. Moreover it is a moot point whether the necessary knowledge and skills sets to work with Islamists are yet present in international circles; developing them further should be considered a priority. Help with designing of sustainable structures such as for electoral systems that make it attractive for political Islamists to take part even without guarantees that their substantive policy preferences will prevail presents further opportunities for democracy support to share insights and expertise.

Democracy support both to civil society and the party sphere can continue to work hard on trying to allay suspicions, that are held both about foreign involvement and those that exist between different secular and non-secular groups. Diamond (2008: 286) rightly says 'one cannot know what evolution Islamic-oriented parties are capable of until they are tested with some degree of power'. In the meantime the building of trust or social

capital─here meaning a shared acceptance of the rules of the game of democratic politics and willingness to play by those rules, plus a preparedness to believe that all competitors will keep to their commitments—could be vital. In Egypt the political manoeuvring by Islamist and secular political groupings over the timing of elections that will determine the assembly that decides a new constitution for the country show all too clearly the possibilities for suspicions to escalate. Outbreaks of inter-communal violence like those between Muslims and Christians in Cairo in May 2011 expose the risks. By destroying social peace they make it more likely that the authorities will return to former habits of strong-arm rule. By helping with the design and implementation of regulatory frameworks for media conduct and political competition that maximize the stakeholders in peace, international democracy support would be making a more effective contribution to building democracy than any amount of direct aid it chooses to give to individual parties or civic groups—especially if the allocation is done ill-advisedly along highly partisan and anti-Islamist lines, in other words taking sides. Where a decision to offer international financial or material support to groups is made then an approach worth considering is to charge local co-ordinating or umbrella organizations with the task of determining allocations that will be acceptable to local partners, after guidelines have been agreed, even if one consequence is some loss of direct accountability to the donors.

9.4 Female empowerment

A cross-cutting issue that involves civil and political society and the institutions of government too is women's rights. Much of the academic literature on democracy promotion like that on democratization is gender-blind. But the necessity of addressing the entitlements of women to help shape decision-making in the formal processes of constructing new political architecture, as well as full representation in the institutions that emerge after, looks particularly salient in Islamic societies. In Egypt as well as Tunisia, where women's rights were already among the most advanced of anywhere in the Arab world, women came to be marginalized from the high-level deliberations that took place once the former presidents were removed. One view is that gender concerns should be 'mainstreamed' in all programmes throughout every sector of democracy assistance; the very idea of democratization seems to demand nothing less. This is hugely challenging. At minimum democracy assistance should not make the mistake of confusing the promotion of women's rights with securing democracy─a mistake explained by Ottaway (2005a: 115–29). First, as Sater (2007) for instance has shown in Morocco the reservation of quotas for women to participate in the national legislature may contribute little to empowering women, let alone to advancing democracy in one of the more politically liberalized Arab countries, so long as the executive retains a firm grip on power and social attitudes do not change. Second, and as is true for civil and political society support more generally, international efforts could reach out more beyond the main cities and try to engage with partners in the hinterland, where pre-existing attitudes and patterns of behaviour relating to gender are more rigid and resistant to change.

Issues of gender equality and female empowerment make democracy support confront the wider argument that up until now democracy promotion has limited itself too narrowly by basing its idea of democracy almost exclusively on western liberal conceptions, and made few if any concessions to the possibility that alternative

conceptions might resonate more strongly in non-western societies (Kurki 2010). Just as Kodmani (2010: 162) says many Islamists genuinely believe they can offer an alternative model to western democracy, so the implications for democracy support are worth visiting before moving to discuss democracy support's future in the region. Put differently, would a more effective approach to promoting democracy in this region be one that supported democracy with Islamist or some other special local characteristics.

9.5 Assistance and ideas of democracy

Kurki's (2010) implicit reasoning is that if democracy support made adjustments to accommodate alternative non-liberal or extra-liberal dimensions of democracy then democracy promotion could gain in acceptance, and that would make it more effective. Although raising only briefly the possibility of competing models of democracy derived from Islamist perspectives on gender, Kurki mentions ideas that are based on communitarian rather than individualistic notions of society. Kurki also hints at models that incorporate a strong social welfare dimension, which may have strong appeal in many parts of the Arab world. Pace (2009) too argues that democracy assistance should now support forms of social democracy containing a substantial public welfare dimension specifically for the Islamic world. There is a pragmatic argument that if the alternative is the emergence of market democracies with strong liberal economic policy leanings that do not resolve social and economic grievances, then sooner or later this will create circumstances that the more radical Islamists can exploit to their political advantage. That poses risks to freedom and the endurance of democracy.

How far the democracy support industry already recognizes these arguments is debateable. Youngs (2011a) for instance believes that European partners are willing to countenance 'alternative' forms of representation including religiously-based representation. And he says they do support measures of social democracy to advance health and education, without insisting on priority for democracy's more procedural aspects. This claim looks more persuasive once we look at the funded projects and programmes in development co-operation more generally, rather than simply democracy assistance as such. A more political illustration comes from Bolivia, where Wolff (2011) shows how democracy support from both Germany and the US has adapted to the distinctive political institutional innovations of President Morales, even as his government's approach to managing the economy worries them by abandoning neo-liberal maxims (but note that the recent decline in US democracy support there owed to disagreements over policy towards cocoa production, not broader economic or political issues). But all this falls short of saying that international donors would extend their support to building a kind of democracy that expressly renounced the economic benefit of encouraging economic markets, let alone one that has pronounced Islamist characteristics such as by giving complete legal supremacy to Sharia law (potentially a very divisive issue in Egypt but not present in the new Moroccan constitution adopted in July 2011).

Anyway the precise form democracy that Arab societies will feel comfortable with and can maintain is not known right now. And the fact that Arab history offers no living role models to borrow from provides no pretext for trying to impose outside conceptions, whether liberal, non-liberal or extra-liberal. But, needless to say choices over what concepts or models the direct promotion of democracy should promote does have implications for indirect democracy support too, that is to say for efforts to help the

sustained socio-economic and human development of countries in the region. The converse is true too. Here, an immediate emphasis on meeting popular aspirations for employment, education and welfare has consequences for economic management and so for the economic policies that international development co-operation partners will expect to see pursued in return for contributing the financial or economic support and wider co-operation in development that is badly needed. The relevance to deliberating how to support democratization in North Africa in the future is obvious.

10 Democracy's future in the region: challenges for support

An interpretation of the Arab spring sees it as demonstrating the irrelevance of international democracy promotion, whose presence in the region had been patchy, inconsistent and generally weak. However a different response sees it as creating both challenges and opportunities for democracy support to emerge from a generally troubled recent past and play a more effective role in the future. In the short term, democracy promotion may have more to gain from recent events in the region than what democracy in the region will gain from it. The strong incentives to offer generous support are self-evident. But contrary to the notion that better co-ordination among donors must always be part of the solution, the tendency for different sources of democracy promotion to proceed separately could still have advantages in a region where the emergence of a more uniform front could heighten sensitivities about foreign intervention. The different supply-side actors may all have 'baggage' but they vary in their latent strengths and weaknesses.

10.1 Supply-side actors

The US faces its own challenges of reconciling on the one side its high profile in the Middle East, Egypt especially, and its undoubted capacity to influence democratic prospects through diplomacy, economic and security assistance and other aid, with on the other side the negative perceptions hanging over from the past and the competing policy interests that it has in the region. By comparison the EU and UN enjoy some comparative advantages. Indeed the Arab spring gives the EU a chance not only to show that it really means what it says about wanting to support democracy abroad but that it can be a major player in international politics, at least in its own backyard. This would be an appropriate response to US demands that Europe now take a lead there, and would help refute jibes that Europe is facing 'inexorable decline' (Youngs 2010c)—a jibe that the 2011 debt crisis for member countries in the Eurozone single currency does nothing to dispel.

The European Commission and High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy responded to the Arab spring in March 2011 with proposals for a Partnership for Democracy and Shared Prosperity with the Southern Mediterranean, spurred on by demands for action from some governments in northern Europe and the European Parliament. There is also now a formal acknowledgment that the ENP must be up-rated (for instance ENP Action Plans concluded with Jordan and Tunisia in 2004 were judged completely incapable of leveraging political reform there, by Del Sarto and Schumacher 2011: 939-40). The EU is now promising 'more for more (democracy)', hinting at moves to reconsider the possibility of making concessions on market opening, labour movement and other sought-after gains, in a more generous light (European

Commission and High Representative 2011). If in the new political climate the linking of positive conditionalities in these areas to democratic progress can make a constructive difference, perhaps by including civil society in consultations over how to frame the conditionalities and then in assessing the performance, then the failure of conditionality to work effectively in the past may not be damning (in assessments made by Schlumberger 2011: 144 and others, the UfM in 2008 abandoned conditionality not because it deemed conditionality useless but because the EU backed away from promoting democracy more generally). Only time will tell what the words will mean in practice. Going on past experience achieving consistency of purpose among the different EU institutions and instruments and among the different member states will be problematic. And for there to be credible implementation of the 'more for more' formula the EU machinery will first have to install a more robust approach to benchmarking, measuring and monitoring democratic progress than the 'arbitrary and largely useless selection of pseudo-benchmarks' of the ENP (Del Sarto and Schumacher 2011: 935). Even then 'many Arab intellectuals' are said to agree that even EU support for democratic change in the region is 'doomed to failure as long as European countries continue unconditionally to favour Israel' (International IDEA 2009: 70).

So even if it is true that the UN too has a problem of 'credibility and moral authority in the region' (United Nations Development Programme 2011: 24), because of dissatisfaction with the role of the 'Quartet' in the Middle East peace process (the UN Secretary-General being a member along with US, EU and Russia) and with the performance of the Security Council, the UNDP still remains one of the most politically acceptable sources of democracy support in the world today. And as its Administrator, Helen Clark (2011) made clear early on that there is much potential for the UNDP to increase support for democratization in region (Clark 2011), along lines long envisaged from the time of the very first UNDP *Arab Human Development Report* (2004). UNDEF offers a second route, new 2011 examples being a project to involve Egyptian youth in democratic participation and support to women's political participation in Algeria, Morocco and Tunisia illustrate. The culturally sensitive area of female empowerment is just one area where UN engagement could claim a comparative advantage vis-à-vis many bilateral western agencies. Helping to advance an inclusive approach to national dialogue on political transformation is another area where strong UN credentials are claimed (UNDP 2011: 30).

In the wider corpus of expanding democracy actors, the scope for Turkey to share the benefits of its experience of building democracy in a secular state should not be ignored, especially given that the ruling Justice and Development Party has Islamist roots (Carothers and Youngs 2011: 15 say that the contrast between Turkey's relatively successful political incorporation of political Islam into a pluralistic society with the experience of many Arab states has been embraced by Turkish leaders as 'an important source of soft power and an opening to promote democratic ideas'). That Turkey might soon engage on constitutional reform at home and try to address historical political demands of its Kurdish people could make it an even more useful source of instruction, rather than present a major distraction from engaging with the region. The deterioration in Turkey's relations with Israel in recent years probably improves its credentials as a partner in democracy-building in Arab eyes. And it can play a strategic role in encouraging peaceful reform in neighbouring Syria, with who it has strong trade ties and where it is judged to have 'generally played a positive role' (Yassin al-Haj Salih in Heinrich Böll Stiftung 2011: 174). Turkey's ability to support processes of

democratization in the region will gain from avoiding the unhelpful stigma (in both its own eyes and the eyes of the Arab world) of appearing to do the work of the West. At the same time the incentives for Turkey lie in the chance all this might give of boosting its claims to be offered full EU membership and of restoring good relations with the US, as well as enhance its status as a regional power by capitalizing on Arab desires for Turkey to be a bridge to the West. Although of the other rising democracies India too might be thought able to offer good advice from its experience of managing deep religious and other social cleavages, India shows few signs of proactive engagement with political trends in the region.

A common objective that should frame the democracy promotion efforts of all the international actors must be to give no encouragement to either of two adverse political scenarios that have afflicted democratic openings in other parts of the world. These are, first, subversion of the 'democratic revolution' by self-serving elites especially the economic interests personally connected most closely with the former regime. And second, hijacking of the revolution by social and political forces wedded to values and beliefs contrary to freedom and democracy, which is what happened in Iran after the Shah's fall (1979). Emerging democracies can find it difficult to navigate around and against these potentially very threatening scenarios. And so as Adib Nehme (in Heinrich Böll Stiftung 2011: 104-5) has argued, building a credible and sustained institutional expression for social forces, the 'Arab street' that made the Arab spring possible is now a critical undertaking. Inappropriate policy choices by external actors whether in their democracy promotion or in terms of advancing their more self-serving national interests in the region will only increase the difficulties. So for example in regard to democracy assistance this must avoid being seen to take sides in political contestations inside the countries in any way that risks undermining the domestic legitimacy and standing of pro-democratic groups and parties. When faced very suddenly with the need to work out how to react to events in North Africa in 2011 precisely because the events had not been anticipated and prepared for in advance, the immediate response which took the form of casting around for democracy support models from experience in other regions is not good enough now. This is because in certain important respects both the Arab world as a whole and the countries individually were different then (Carothers and Ottaway 2005: final ch.) and they are still different today; they are also different from how they were before, and events continue to move on.

10.2   Larger international environment important

No assessment should ignore the potential for any positive effects from what will probably be modest amounts of democracy assistance or broader democracy support to be overwhelmed by the consequences of negative fall-out from US/European foreign policies in the region, and from weak human development inside the countries.

Policy on foreign affairs and diplomatic relations, security and military assistance, economic and financial support by the West must all now pay more heed than before to considering the likely consequences for democracy in the region and its requisites. Democracy promotion will be served best when anchored in a firm acceptance that constructing stable democracies sooner rather than later is more likely to satisfy the overall conspectus of foreign and international policy goals towards the region over time, compared to the most likely alternatives—political instability and return to

authoritarian or semi-authoritarian rule. A second feature of the mindset that is needed is the belief that significant progress towards democracy really is possible now, and not either a very slim or extremely high risk possibility. Taking these points on board would be a departure from previous thinking in the West. Perhaps even more significant, then, than ensuring that new arrangements for democracy assistance show respect for interdependences within a multi-sectoral approach, is to bring coherence between democracy support and the larger context of international engagement by major foreign powers and international organizations (the mainstreaming of democracy, human rights, democratic governance and the rule of law in all EU external relations being one of the recommendations of the Committee on Foreign Affairs of the European Parliament 2011, for instance). This probably means thinking harder in the West about the trade-offs and their shifting dynamics over time, wherever the long range goal of democratic progress (and hence support for democracy) seems to run up against the appearance of conflicting or more immediate and short-term foreign policy goals.

The impact that today's democracy promotion policy choices make is both likely to be secondary to the main engines of political change that are internal to the countries of the region and dependent on the course of other international factors that potentially could be far more influential. Two factors stand out. First, Israel's policies towards Palestinian aspirations and the positions taken by the US, Europe and the United Nations towards the issues lying at the heart of the 'Middle East peace process' may well be pivotal, even as the need for reassessment is already becoming necessary as a consequence of the Arab spring. Over time failure to make progress on these issues could prove a heavier drag on democratic progress—and on the ability of international partners to contribute to democracy's progress—than any fillip that democracy assistance might be able to give now. The influence wielded by the so-called Israel lobby inside the US on US policy will be a significant determinant (see Walt and Mearscheimer 2007).

The second factor refers to the importance of sustained socio-economic development in the region benefitting the great majority of society, not primarily the few who are well-connected to government, and to the governance improvements needed to achieve that development, especially in countries like Egypt and Tunisia where popular grievances target the high-level corruption of the ousted leaders. This factor lies at the confluence of the domestic and the international. International actors ranging from the EU to the Bretton Woods institutions have the capability to contribute to improving the economic outlook. And arguments (ably reviewed by Carothers 2010) for building bridges between direct assistance to democracy (the 'political approach') and indirect democracy assistance, meaning development aid and commercial and economic co-operation, strike a major chord here. Carothers' findings (ibid.: 19-20, 23-5) drawn heavily from observing US experience suggest that deep-seated reasons including institutional resistance from both sides will continue to get in the way; Meijenfeldt (2011: 7), chief executive of NIMD until 2011 sums up a European perspective with the understated remark there is still 'some road to travel' before democracy support will be seen as the 'natural and indispensable ally of development co-operation'.

One of the closest things to an iron law in democratization is that stable democracy benefits from development. So at least as important as any number of democracy assistance projects and programmes are offers of enhanced co-operation for development through trade (access to international markets) and non-speculative capital flows as well as aid, so long as human security and human development can then move

forward in countries where social inequality has been high. So in addition to the provision of external incentives that can be linked to political conditionalities (suitably benchmarked and enforced) there are questions for international development co-operation about the preferred role of the state. For the UNDP (2011: 5) it is important not to deny 'the role of the state in socio-economic development' and instead to help shape 'a strong and capable state that is responsive to popular aspirations and focused on societal and inclusive development' Clumsy attempts by the West to exercise undue influence on national economic policy could risk undermining the constituencies for democracy support, in the same way that undue pressure intended to influence Arab countries' policies towards Israel could have. So although effective development co-operation will be extremely important, pressing hard on the neo-liberal agenda carries significant political risks. Further economic liberalization beyond the progress already made by Egypt and Tunisia may well be essential to growth in the long run, and so ultimately would have the potential to serve democracy in that way. But mingling democracy support with attempts to influence national foreign or economic policies of high national political salience could be a recipe for failure: the damage that could be done now by sowing confusion over the main objectives of external support must be considered very carefully. Wolff's (2011: 17) conclusion from Bolivia that 'an unambiguous U.S. attitude of respect for sovereign democratic decisions would have been crucial for U.S. democracy assistance to play a credible and constructive role in the ongoing transformation of Bolivia' is instructive.

Put in more specific terms for North Africa, mixing in (negative) conditionalities tied to faster and deeper economic liberalization, and economic policy advice that delivers economic changes that many in Arab society perceive as benefitting largely the privileged few, could jeopardize transition to democracy. Naturally this does not mean stalling on the abolition of regressive measures like fuel subsidies, which account for around one fifth of the government budget in Egypt. And of course the possibility that reforms to the political institutions will actually harm the economy, such as by deterring foreign investors, must be taken into account too. For as Addison and Baliamoune-Lutz (2006: 1032) explain economic reform in the presence of political uncertainties is 'a perilous undertaking, notwithstanding the potential longer-term benefits of reform for growth and development'. To make a distinction between the process of political change, which perhaps unavoidably creates uncertainty, and the pro- or anti-market leanings of the institutions and polices that come to be embedded later, is important here. Clearly there are complex sequencing issues. All the signs are that ordinary people in Egypt and Tunisia are looking to see a sizeable democratic dividend in the form of early improvements in their basic material well-being—jobs, affordable food and so on. One way of reading the situation then is to say that making haste with the political transition is imperative, both to maximize the chances of there being a successful transition to democracy and so as to minimize the negative economic externalities of the transition process in the meantime.

A further and related point that can call on a broad base of evidence is that democracy assistance on the one hand and support for institutions of governance that are transparent and accountable ('good governance') on the other are compatible and can be made complementary, as the term 'democratic governance' implies. Indeed if Diamond (2008: 294) is right then the quality of governance understood in terms of integrity (extending to how all types of international assistance are handled) and capability to deliver the basic entitlements of ordinary people could be the most crucial ingredient, if

new democracies in the developing world are to move forward. In the Arab world Iraq, where government is paralysed by political stalemate, looks a good test case. This reasoning in relation to governance does not mean that democracy promotion should concentrate on improving the developmental powers of the state. Rather it means respecting that entitlements to social improvement are a core part of the demands for dignity and freedom that made the Arab spring: 'In our part of the world, the cause of democracy will only be advanced if it is committed to social justice' (Ibrahim Awad in Heinrich Böll Stiftung 2011: 128). So, international support for governance improvements that enhances the capacity of 'democratic governance' to advance 'social justice' will be extremely valuable. In contrast, the pioneering academic notion of a 'governance model of democratic governance promotion' (Lavenex and Schimmelfennig 2011; Freyburg 2011) that dwells on the way functional co-operation in concrete policy sectors with the EU can introduce democratic norms and practices into the administrative workings of the state, is completely different. The model is so new and untested as to lie beyond this paper's remit. Although it is intended for authoritarian contexts the chances that it could be permitted space look greater in semi-authoritarian contexts and regimes in the midst of transition, like Egypt and Tunisia. However its advocates admit that this governance model does not touch the core institutions of the polity, the distribution of political power; 'it is no panacea and no substitute' for leverage (Lavenex and Schimmelfennig 2011: 904); and if used intentionally for political purposes could prove counterproductive (Freyburg 2011: 1017), all which means the governance seems to have very real shortcomings as a force for promoting democracy.

11 Final conclusions

Lessons about what makes democratization happen and lessons about democracy promotion are not the same thing, but general examples from both and the interconnections among them must be supplemented by more particular evidence from North Africa when trying to promote democracy there now.

The political future of countries in the wake of the Arab spring is hard to predict. Events will have moved on from the time of this paper's writing to the time of its publication. But although different outturns still seem possible it would be a mistake to exaggerate the power that democracy promoters can exercise in the meantime: too many of the influences that shape politics are domestic. The main democracy promoters harbour their own broad visions of a desirable outcome but these and the underlying reasons are not necessarily all the same, and they cannot be an authentic representation of diverse opinions in Arab society. They offer only limited guidance to how democracy can be promoted. And the reach of democracy support is contingent on the larger ambitions of foreign policy and on international development, geopolitics and geo-economics more generally.

Practical lessons learned from democracy assistance elsewhere contain some useful tips already familiar from development assistance. They include the usual mantras that disparage the idea of a 'quick fix' and a 'one size fits all' solution. They counsel modesty in expectations for what democracy assistance can achieve, and even then only after making sure to acquire a good understanding of the political situation and its dynamics—a requirement that time and again has seemed hard to master. Better impact evaluation is another desirable feature that even stakeholders in North Africa claim to

want to see. In countries that are already democratizing, grounding democracy assistance on an 'as and when asked for' basis works best, allowing democracy-inclined stakeholders to decide the main agendas even if the fine details of projects or programmes are worked out through joint negotiation (resentment at the external control of decisions has been a major issue for non-governmental and governmental recipients of democracy aid in Egypt, according to Kausch 2010: 12 and echoed in the case of Morocco by Khakee 2010: 9). As became evident very soon in 2011 the countries in the Arab world vary in what they say they want from friends in the outside world, even if there is common cause over what they do not want.

However, if significant opposition to democracy from the power-holders does now arise and seriously jeopardize the gains that have been made, as has happened in other countries, then one of the key lesson as shared by the democracy activists in a 14-nation survey of 'recipient attitudes' towards democracy assistance should come to the fore. This states that democracy's supporters in the world outside must get away from the disconnection 'between project funding and diplomatic relations'—meaning the West has often turned a blind eye to regime backpedalling on promises of reform, which 'is almost universally seen as a major cause of democracy assistance's increasingly disappointing record' (Youngs 2010a: 10). Egypt is a strong case in question (Kausch 2010: 15). Morocco is another example: a country where international democracy promoters almost unanimously find it easy to operate but, because of weak interest in democracy at the highest levels in Morocco and the West's commitment to overriding foreign policy goals the efforts to promote democracy have made little real impression (Khakee's 2010: 18). It remains to be seen whether the constitutional changes agreed to by popular referendum in Morocco in July 2011 will open a new chapter.

Reconciling the belief that it is important to be flexible and tailor democracy support to the specific circumstances of individual countries (or what the EU's March 2011 'Partnership' proposal calls a 'differentiated approach') with the plausible demand that the West must be consistent in its policies towards all the countries in the Arab world, rather than make exceptions for 'friendly autocrats' with strategic assets like oil or the financial power to aid Egypt and Tunisia, will continue to pose major difficulties for policy makers in the West. Making the idea of rewarding democratic progress with increased support of various kinds (or 'more for more') truly credible will be challenging too, both because scope exists for arbitrary political interference in how democratic progress is measured (where verdicts are bound to differ) and due to overall resourcing constraints, made worse by the deteriorating economic outlook in Europe and then US. An imperative for assistance in the short term is to build more contacts with the politically mobilized youth, helping them to avoid being marginalized from the political process as time goes by. Looking further ahead, the likelihood that democratization in the wider Arab world will be a 'long and uncertain journey' (Carothers and Ottaway 2005: 267) means having to maintain constancy of purpose for an indefinite length of time, even if setbacks occur along the way. This could be asking a lot of the political leaders in the West.

Both the US and the EU have their own problems of credibility that stem from their involvements in the region in the past; the United Nations claims some comparative advantages in supporting democracy. For now there are good grounds for all assistance providers to focus selectively on just a few countries most notably Egypt and Tunisia. The first of these two probably poses the bigger challenge; indeed, according to

Schraeder and Redissi (2011: 15) 'Several early signs suggest that Tunisia's Second Republic will be marked by strong prospects for democratic transition and consolidation'. But Egypt has long been at the centre of the Arab world and sustained democratic progress there now would improve the outlook for democratic diffusion in the region in a way that Saddam Hussein's military defeat in Iraq never could. The seemingly endogenous nature of the Arab spring should make a major backlash against democracy promotion similar to what happened in Russia following the colour revolutions in Europe less likely in other Arab countries such as Jordan and Morocco, even if the promises made by the rulers of those countries to press on with reform are viewed with scepticism. The recent events in the Arab world have certainly made the idea that democracy is a 'universal value' (Sen 1999) more plausible, and they help balance the recent rise in concern in the West about the emergence of autocracy promotion. The opportunity the Arab spring now offers for international democracy promotion to overcome its troubled recent past could exceed anything that democracy promotion ever did to help bring about the Arab spring. This window of opportunity should not be wasted.

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