

# The Fourth Wave of Democratization

*Muhamad S. Olimat*

## **Abstract**

The tragic events of 9/11 provided the impetus for a fourth wave of democratization in the Arab world. This new phase contains a democratic opportunity that is gathering momentum and, if managed well, will materialize into a genuine transition to democracy across the region. Under this wave, democratization is a matter of security, necessity, and moral imperative. The long-term western policy of “order” at the expense of “change” has proven detrimental to world peace. In this wave, Islamists seem to be leading the way in landslide electoral victories. Dealing with them is unavoidable if democratization is to succeed. Simultaneously, Islamists must reciprocate pragmatically, conducting themselves as reliable partners or else their political demise is imminent.

I examine the post-9/11 predicament of democracy in the Arab world and discuss its strengths, weaknesses, achievements, and failures in comparison with previous attempts. Elections are perceived as necessary – but not necessarily – sufficient, steps for regimes to qualify as democratic. Elections that result in substantive institutional reform certainly enhance the prospects of such a transition. Some intellectual contributions continue within the trend of the third wave’s “exclusionary” thought, thereby creating a sort of “gap” vis-à-vis incorporating the region within the global trends of democratization. This article remedies that deficiency.

## Introduction

In 1989, Arabs and Muslims watched the Berlin Wall collapse with joy and envy. While they celebrated the end of the agonizing cold war, they envied the German people's triumph of uniting their homeland. This event led to a wave of democratization across Eastern and Central Europe. Like dominoes, communist regimes crumbled one by one. Arabs watched this indescribable transformation with cautious optimism, hoping to be part of the "third wave of democratization." Their hopes were in vain, for Arab regimes resisted change, cracked down on democratic forces, and enhanced their grip on power as never before. Arab-Islamic democratic forces looked to the West for support, but did not find any. External support was not feasible, and the autocratic ruling elites were unwilling to share power or allow any significant political change.

In addition, the West has shown no serious commitment to reform or democracy in the region, as its interests are best served by authoritarianism. At that time, Algeria was the test case. In 1992, the Algerian junta decided to organize elections to secure a dignified exit from power. When the Islamist-led democratic opposition won the first round, however, the army canceled the elections and jailed the Islamic Salvation Front's leaders. The "democratic West" sided with the junta for one reason: the winners were "Islamists." The United States went along with France's opposition to the Islamists' political participation, while France maintained its tradition of opposing freedom in the region. Once again France destroyed a promising Arab experiment, just as it had done in 1920 with the Syrian Arab Kingdom, a constitutional monarchy established by the "Free Arabs." Algeria soon plunged into the darkest chapter of its modern history. The tragic confrontation between the Algerian military and the Armed Islamic Group (GIA) in particular resulted in a decade of civil war leading to more than 150,000 civilian deaths, most of whom were literally slaughtered by murderers from both sides using axes, daggers, knives, and all forms of brutality. They showed no reverence for anything sacred in Algerian culture and tradition.

Among the Islamists, the Algerian case enhanced the belief that bullets, rather than ballot boxes, make the difference. Within the discourse of a lack of interest in the cause of freedom in the region, the "democratic West" supported – and still vehemently supports – Tunisia's autocratic regime that has held power since the 1987 coup. Egypt pursued its brutal treatment of the opposition, both Islamic and secular. Saad Eddin Ibrahim, a secular modernist, was jailed, tortured, and accused of being a CIA agent because he once received some American funding for the Ibn Khaldoun Center. Suffice

it to say that the state targets Islamists, especially the Muslim Brotherhood. Its repeated attacks on Islamists radicalized a segment of the movement, as happened in the Algerian case. The tragic outcome of the regime's rejection of political accommodation produced a generation of extremists who went to Afghanistan, received weapons training, and was turned loose on Muslims and non-Muslims, in many cases indiscriminately.

Syria maintained its brutal extermination of the opposition, regardless of ideological tendencies. Its secret police tortured, murdered, or disappeared thousands of opponents. Jordan, which has had the region's most hopeful democratic experience, found its democratic march curbed when the army crushed the popular uprising in the south in the summer of 1989 onward. Morocco also reversed a promising democratization trend, while Mauritania continued to experience frequent military coups. Libya had showed no sign of change as regards its disastrous policies since 1969. In the aftermath of the 1991 Gulf War, Kuwait underwent remarkable socio-economic, political, and demographic changes. Saudi Arabia allowed no sort of dissent, while Qatar, Bahrain, Oman, and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) showed no serious change in their governance practices. Yemen went through a brutal civil war until unity was restored, Lebanon was recovering from a vicious sixteen-year civil war, and the Palestinian National Authority failed to build a functional government despite enjoying unprecedented worldwide support throughout the 1990s. Iraq continued to live under stringent international economic sanctions until the American invasion of March 2003.

On the intellectual scene, two schools of thought dominated the debate. The "exceptionalist" discourse stated that the Middle East is an exceptional case and immune to democracy due to the alleged incompatibility of its political culture with modern norms of democracy. Samuel Huntington (1991, 1993), Yehuda Mirsky (1993), Bernard Lewis (1993), Glen Dealy (1992), Howard Wiarda et al. (1992), Larry Diamond et al. (1989), Diamond and Marc Plattner (1993), Jonathan Paris (1993), and Manus Midlarsky (1998) hold Arab political culture and Islam responsible for the democracy gap.<sup>1</sup> On the foreign policy level, "Ambassador Richard Haass acknowledged in a speech on December 4, 2002, that for decades the American government has practiced 'democratic exceptionalism' in the Muslim world as it did in other regions and countries after the fall of the Soviet Union."<sup>2</sup> Other western democracies never deviated from this rule.

On the other side, the "compatibility" school of thought advocated that Islam and Arab political culture are no less compatible with democracy than other cultures and religions. Michael Hudson (1991, 1994), John Esposito (1994), Richard Norton (1993), Alan Richards (1993, 1994), Saad Eddin

Ibrahim (1993), and other scholars and area specialists represent this trend.<sup>3</sup> However, the most noticeable aspect of the third wave literature, as Tim Niblock neatly puts it, is that it has extensively researched the “why” aspect of democracy rather than the “how.”<sup>4</sup> In other words, it has researched “why” the region is undemocratic instead of investigating “how” to bring about a successful process of transition to democracy in the Middle East and the Islamic world. This very element distinguishes the fourth wave from the third wave.

The fourth wave’s literature is more hopeful and relatively optimistic about democracy’s status and future in the region in comparison with the third wave’s intellectual discourse. Several trends can be identified within its framework:

- The literature questioned the very nature of the third wave’s assumption and rationale for exclusionary thought. Saad Eddin Ibrahim (2003), Steven Fish (2002), Sandrof Lakoff (2004), Alfred Stepan and Graeme Robertson (2003, 2004), Daniela Donno (2004), Mark Tessler and Eleanor Gao (2005), and Andrew Enterline and Michael Greig (2005), as well as others, provide a more in-depth analysis of the process of democracy, one free from the dogmatic constraints of the “clash of civilizations” thesis and those of the third wave.<sup>5</sup>
- An active Islamist-intellectual involvement in the global debate over the universality of democratic values and Islam’s compatibility with democracy and modernity. Anwar Ibrahim (2006), Tassaduq H. Jilani (2006),<sup>6</sup> and others represent this trend. In particular, Turkey’s Islamists have implemented the Islamists’ political discourse into governance, and Islamists across the Islamic world have scored stunning electoral gains.
- Examining the impact of external factors on democratization in the region and American involvement in transitioning to democracy in particular. Jon Pevehouse (2002), Lorne Craner (2006), Steven Levitsky and Lucan Way (2005), Andrew Enterline and Michael Greig (2005), the Congressional Quarterly’s policy oriented paper (2005), and Barry Rubin (2006) represent this trend.<sup>7</sup>
- Quantitatively measuring the region’s advancement toward democratization. Several polling centers frequently measure public opinion, while such scholars as Saliba Sarsar (2006), Abdeslam Maghraoui (2002), Michael Herb (2002), Jillian Schwedler (2002), Jean-Françoise Seznec (2002) and others provide an in-depth quantitative analysis of democracy in the region.<sup>8</sup>

- Questioning the impact of the Arab-Israeli conflict on political reform. Over the past fifty years or so, Arab ruling elites have postponed reform on the grounds of the existing state of war between Israel and the Arab world. James Lebovic and William Thompson (2006), David Unger (2002), Seznec (2002), and others question the rationale and validity of such a postponement.<sup>9</sup>
- Examining the linkage between democracy and terrorism. Within this framework, the United States and the West have viewed democratization in the region as a matter of national security. The Bush Doctrine and the Mediterranean Partnership represent this trend, as do George Gause (2005), Frank Gardner (2006), Karl Meyer (2004), Sherle Schwenninger (2003), and others.<sup>10</sup>
- Devoting special attention to the role of indigenous democratic arrangements and their impact on democratization. Charles Boix and Susan Strokes (2003), Valerie Bunce, (2003), Herb (2002), Seznec (2002), Rubin (2006), and others represent this trend.<sup>11</sup>
- Investigating the impact of the American invasion of Iraq and the consequences of the American setbacks in Iraq on democratization. Adeed Dawisha (2004, 2005), Kanan Makiya (2003), Eric Davis (2005), Jamal Benomer (2004), Rajiv Chandrasekaran (2006), and others represent this trend.<sup>12</sup>

### **The Third Millennium and the Fourth Wave**

Arabs approached the third millennium with no prospects of hope, as the 1990s, the decade of hope, had delivered no salvation. This trend continued until the tragic 9/11 terrorist attacks and their aftermath. I refer to this phase as the “fourth wave of democratization” in the Arab-Islamic world.

By all standards, 9/11 was a defining day in modern world history. Arabs were stunned to realize that nineteen of their sons had carried out horrific attacks on peaceful civilians in the United States. Arabs at large dismissed the idea that nineteen Arab terrorists could carry out an operation of this magnitude.<sup>13</sup> Saudi Arabia, home to fifteen of the terrorists, still lives in a state of denial. The United States and Saudi Arabia had enjoyed a long and distinguished friendship in which the former provided the latter with security, up-to-date technology, and the latest military hardware. In return, Saudi Arabia provided access to oil at reasonable prices as well as military bases. The United States was shocked to learn that terrorists came from its closest Arab ally in the region. After six decades of close cooperation with Saudi Arabia,

the United States realized just how little it knows about Saudi Arabia and its people's religion and culture. Shocked at the level of resentment that some Saudis and Arabs harbor toward the United States, Americans began a new trend: the "why do they hate so much?" discourse.

Suddenly, the United States was confronted by a dreadful new reality: oceans could no longer guarantee its security or safety. The United States itself, freedom, the American way of life and its values were "under attack" by an enemy who was different from all of its previous foes.<sup>14</sup> Suddenly, the country found itself compelled to alter its foreign policy toward the world, as it found itself to be unsafe, insecure, and vulnerable. Washington had to develop new foreign policy doctrines and carry out "the long, long war on terrorism," which is unconventional by all means. Washington realized that it could not secure the country by military means alone; rather, it had to promote change and democratization in the Arab-Islamic world. The long-term policy of "order" at the expense of "change" was rendered irrelevant, as it could not provide the United States and the world with security. Therefore, in the post-9/11 era, democratizing the Arab world in particular is the declared central goal of American foreign policy toward the Middle East and the Islamic world.

### **The Fourth Wave: A Historical Overview**

Four waves can be identified in Islamic history with regard to constitutionalism, reform, liberalization, pluralism, and democratization – or to the lack thereof: the pre-World War I liberal tradition, the inter-war period, the post-World War II period, and the post-9/11 era. In the first stage, Muslim political philosophers conceptualized a liberal line of thought in the Islamic tradition. Such prominent classical-era scholars as al-Farabi (d. 950/51), al-Mawardi (d. 950), Ibn Zafar al-Siqilli (b. 1104), Ibn Taymiyyah (d. 1328), Ibn Sina (d. 1037), Ibn Rushd (d. 1198), al-Ghazzali (d. 1111), al-Shatibi (d. 1388), Ibn Khaldun (d. 1406),<sup>15</sup> and others built upon the Islamic experience of governance. This stage, especially in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, witnessed the emergence of liberal Islamic reformers who were educated in western countries and attempted to revive the classical liberal tradition. Rifa`ah Tahtawi (d. 1873), Muhammad Abdu (d. 1905), Khayr al-Din al-Tunisi (d. 1889), Jamal al-Din Afghani (d. 1897), Rashid Rida (d. 1935), Abd al-Rahman al-Kawakibi (d. 1902),<sup>16</sup> and others reintroduced classical liberal thought to the Islamic world.

The major dilemma confronting them was the "democratic-colonial" West's disservice to the cause of constitutionalism across the Arab-Islamic

world. In the inter-war period, Arab-Islamic subjugation to colonialism was enhanced, and Kemal Ataturk officially abolished the caliphate (1923). But this stage also witnessed the establishment of the short-lived Arab Kingdom of Syria (1918-20) and the emergence of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt (1928), which made parliamentary government and political freedom its central goals.<sup>17</sup> Hasan al-Banna's (assassinated in 1949) reformist thought spread rapidly, for the Muslim masses were stunned by the caliphate's absence and the Muslim world's fragmentation. At the same time, Abul Al al-Mawdudi's (d. 1979) reformist thought swept the Indian subcontinent and other parts of Muslim Asia.

After World War II, Islam was utilized in the wars of independence as a coalition of Islamists, socialists, and nationalists forces that managed to liberate most of the Islamic world from western colonialism. Out of their ensuing anti-West sentiments, Arab nationalists and socialists attempted to conceptualize a form of indigenous democracy, while Islamists were violently marginalized, although they had been instrumental in the wars of independence. Unfortunately, the new constitutional governments established in Algeria, Sudan, Syria, Somalia, Iraq, Egypt, Jordan, Pakistan, and elsewhere were swiftly replaced by military dictatorships and autocracies.

Tragically, constitutionalism was defeated on the West's watch and with the close coordination of its democracies. Under military dictatorships and despotic monarchies, Arab-Muslim intellectuals, leaders, intelligentsia, scientists, journalists, human rights activists, and similar groups were targeted by state terrorism. Some were hanged, disappeared, imprisoned, or exiled indefinitely. The most striking case was that of Sayyid Qutb (executed in 1966), as it continues to impact modern Islamic thought and the Muslims' psyche, as well as Islamic movements throughout the world and their views on violence and coexistence with the state. Qutb was bewildered by the dilemma of a brutal ruler who murders his fellow Muslims and continues to claim to be a "Muslim." Therefore, he declared Gamal Abdel Nasser an apostate and a society that tolerates such a ruler as an "ignorant society."<sup>18</sup> The military used massive violence to consolidate its grip on power under the banner of Arab nationalism, which was discredited by the humiliating defeat of the 1967 war with Israel. This defeat led to the Arab masses' disillusionment; a sense of powerlessness, mass alienation, and disbelief; and an overall frustration with the nationalist state's performance. It was also one of the main causes for the Islamic awakening and the ensuing Islamic resurgence.

The Islamic awakening was by far the third wave's most significant event. This period set forth solid grounds for political Islam and the Islamists' electoral successes after the late 1980s. This awakening was attrib-

uted to nationalism's failure, rather than to being a trend toward fundamentalism, fanaticism, or extremism in the Islamic world. The alienated masses saw Islam as the only way out of their hopelessness. Arabs blamed the nationalist state for fragmenting the Arabs, an agonizing Arab cold war, civil wars, failing to use the region's oil wealth to develop the Arab world, centralizing power in the hands of an unquestioned leader, state repression, institutional corruption, mismanaging national resources, and widespread violation of human rights by the (secret) police state. Such factors inflamed the masses, compelling them to search for an alternative: Islam.

Yusuf al-Qaradawi, a leading figure in the awakening, attributes this phenomenon to the activities of Muslim reformers and reformist movements from the seventeenth century onward.<sup>19</sup> He gives major credit to the Muslim Brotherhood. Within the awakening paradigm, the mosque became the center of life. Skillfully capitalizing on popular discontent with the status quo, the Muslim Brotherhood, along with such other Islamic groups as ad-Da`wah wa Tabligh (Propagation), mobilized a massive process of return to the mosque. Various slogans began to appear: "Islam is the Solution, No East [USSR], No West, Islam, Islam, Islam," "Islam is Religion and State," and "Allah is our Aim, the Prophet is our Example, the Qur'an is our Constitution, and Martyrdom for the sake of Allah is our ultimate goal" were designed to rally the masses to restore the lost dignity and glory of Islam's golden age.<sup>20</sup>

Benefiting from a sort of political space on all scenes, the Islamists, as a conservative force, enjoyed a period of relative peace with existing regimes, as the latter mostly feared the political left, especially the traditional monarchies and Israel. The world was still engaged in the cold war, some of the most decisive episodes of which occurred in the Islamic world, such as the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan (1978), the ramifications of which continue to impact the world. The United States and the West embraced Islam, nurtured the Islamic resistance, re-conceptualized jihad, and supported Afghanistan's "freedom fighters."

The Islamists, viewed as a stabilizing force, were permitted to function relatively free from state harassment. They established welfare organizations, youth and sports clubs, day-care centers, schools, handcraft factories, health clinics, women's associations, and food banks; provided marriage loans and organized mass wedding parties; and established a modern banking system. By far, the most effective institutions they established were the relief organizations designed to meet the needs of the poor, the deprived, the destitute, and those forgotten by the state. At times of crisis, Islamic disaster relief efforts were unmatched not only by their relief counterparts, but also by the state.

Establishing modern banking systems enabled the Islamists to build a solid economic base for the movement. Islamic banks funded social programs and major socioeconomic developmental projects. For example, the Islamic Bank of Jordan made loans for marriage, small businesses, and mortgages and also funded the building of hospitals, community colleges, and universities. Educational institutions built day-care centers, kindergartens, elementary schools, junior and high schools, community colleges, and universities. The goal was to produce the “liberation” generation that would build an Islamic society. Such efforts evidently paid off later in the form of landslide electoral gains across the board. On the cadre recruitment level, the Islamists began a massive mobilization membership campaign at mosques, schools, colleges, universities, and workplaces as early as the 1970s.

### **The Fourth Wave Begins**

In its first eight months, the George W. Bush administration displayed no apparent interest in issues related to the Middle East or the Islamic world, such as continuing the Clinton administration’s quest for a permanent solution to the Arab-Israeli conflict, and prospects of an Israeli-Palestinian peace seemed slim.<sup>21</sup> It also showed no desire to change its cozy relations with the region’s autocracies. On the global scene, there was a sort of leadership vacuum as the country was recovering from its internal strife over the 2000 presidential election results.

However, 9/11 drastically changed the American discourse, for the country and the world rallied behind President Bush, who vowed to go after terrorists wherever they were, exterminate them, and preemptively attack nations that harbor and give sanctuary to what his administration considered to be terrorist organizations. Jean-Marie Colombani of *Le Monde* captured this global sense of solidarity by declaring that today “we are all Americans.”<sup>22</sup> Bush’s determination, known as the “Bush doctrine,” was clear: “Every nation, in every region, now has a decision to make. Either you are with us, or you are with the terrorists. From this day forward, any nation that continues to harbor or support terrorism will be regarded by the United States as a hostile regime.”<sup>23</sup> In the “war on terror,” there is no room for neutrality. In his crusade against al-Qaeda and the Taliban, Bush enjoyed the support of the world, including Arabs and Muslims.

Hence, Bush declared his initiative to democratize the region. This represents an exclusive fourth wave of democratization, an important political

aspect of which is security. In effect, it seeks to transform the Islamic world in general, and the Arab-Middle East in particular, into a region of democracy. The neoconservative movement that provides the administration's backbone support supplied the intellectual foundations: Paul Wolfowitz, Robert Kagan, Donald Rumsfeld, Richard Perle, Zalmay Khalilzad, Peter Rodman, and others, all of whom advocated the inevitability of western-style democracy's triumph in the region, similar to what had happened in Japan, South Korea, Taiwan, and Singapore. "Regime change" became the terminology of the day. Viewed as the last obstacle to the triumph of western values, the Islamic world must be subdued and brought under western values by force, if necessary. Unfortunately, the neocons sought to implement their thesis in the least conducive Arab country: Iraq.

### **The Fourth Wave's Pillars**

Shortly after 9/11, a common theme dominated the American intellectual, policy, and media debate deals with such questions as: "Why do they hate us so much?" and "How can this alleged hatred and resentment of western values be altered?" Bush said that

Americans are asking, why do they hate us? They hate what we see right in this chamber – a democratically elected government. Their leaders are self-appointed. They hate our freedoms – our freedom of religion, our freedom of speech, our freedom to vote and assemble and disagree with each other ... these terrorists kill not merely to end lives, but to disrupt and end a way of life. With every atrocity, they hope that America grows fearful, retreating from the world and forsaking our friends. They stand against us, because we stand in their way.<sup>24</sup>

In the following months, the urgency of change in the Middle East grew steadily along the lines of combating terrorism and peaked in Bush's speech on 6 November 2003, marking the twentieth anniversary of the National Endowment for Democracy. In his speech, he laid out the foundations for the fourth wave and the American-Middle Eastern Partnership, as follows:

- Making democracy a defining element of American foreign policy toward the Middle East: "Our commitment to democracy is also tested in the Middle East, which is my focus today, and must be a focus of American policy for decades to come."<sup>25</sup>
- Questioning the very nature of the exclusionary thought: "The questions arise: are the peoples of the Middle East somehow beyond the reach of liberty? Are millions of men and women and children condemned by

history or culture to live in despotism? Are they alone never to know freedom, and never even to have a choice in the matter? I, for one, do not believe it. I believe every person has the ability and the right to be free.” He added that “more than half of all the Muslims in the world live in freedom under democratically constituted governments. They succeed in democratic societies, not in spite of their faith, but because of it. A religion that demands individual moral accountability and encourages the encounter of the individual with God is fully compatible with the rights and responsibilities of self-government.”<sup>226</sup>

- Attributing societal failures to political stagnation and misguided socioeconomic developmental policies rather than culture or religion: “This freedom deficit undermines human development and is one of the most painful manifestations of lagging political development. The freedom deficit they describe has terrible consequences, for the people of the Middle East and for the world. In many Middle Eastern countries, poverty is deep and it is spreading, women lack rights and are denied schooling. Whole societies remain stagnant while the world moves ahead. These are not the failures of a culture or a religion. These are the failures of political and economic doctrines.”<sup>227</sup>
- The role of the military in politics: “As the colonial era passed away, the Middle East saw the establishment of many military dictatorships.”<sup>228</sup> So, replacing military dictatorships with democratically elected governments is a central goal of the fourth wave, especially in Syria and Iraq.
- The lack of democracy is responsible for terrorism, as despotic regimes’ “support for terrorists who arm and train to murder the innocent”<sup>229</sup> is responsible for international terrorism.
- Confidence in the people of the Middle East and their ability to establish democratic governance: “Instead of dwelling on past wrongs and blaming others, governments in the Middle East need to confront real problems and serve the true interests of their nations. The good and capable people of the Middle East all deserve responsible leadership. For too long, many people in that region have been victims and subjects – they deserve to be active citizens.”<sup>230</sup>
- Realizing the importance of indigenous political arrangements and the importance of preserving national cultures: “As we watch and encourage reforms in the region, we are mindful that modernization is not the same as Westernization. Representative governments in the Middle East will reflect their own cultures. They will not, and should not, look like

us. Democratic nations may be constitutional monarchies, federal republics, or parliamentary systems. And working democracies always need time to develop – as did our own. We’ve taken a 200-year journey toward inclusion and justice – and this makes us patient and understanding as other nations are at different stages of this journey.”<sup>31</sup>

- Realizing the difficulty of the road ahead: “This is a massive and difficult undertaking – it is worth our effort, it is worth our sacrifice, because we know the stakes. The failure of Iraqi democracy would embolden terrorists around the world, increase dangers to the American people, and extinguish the hopes of millions in the region. Iraqi democracy will succeed – and that success will send forth the news, from Damascus to Teheran – that freedom can be the future of every nation. The establishment of a free Iraq at the heart of the Middle East will be a watershed event in the global democratic revolution.”<sup>32</sup>

Europe was terrified by the thought of a 9/11 occurring on its soil. Such fears proved well-founded, as terrorists struck Madrid in 2004 and London in 2005. After centuries of both a lack of interest in the cause of freedom in the region and actually opposing it, Europe realized the necessity of change in the Middle East. In 2003, the European Union (EU) expanded the scope of its Mediterranean Partnership to include the entire Middle East. The partnership was declared strategic to Europe’s stability, security, and well-being. The EU provided bilateral as well as multilateral initiatives with Middle Eastern countries in such areas as political reform, democratization, peace, and economic development.<sup>33</sup>

From a comparative perspective, the most noticeable common denominator of the two “Atlantic” democratization initiatives is that they originated in an atmosphere of catastrophe and are driven by fear rather than hope. This fear explains the rickety grounds of such initiatives, as there is no solid commitment to their success.

## **Regime Response to the Fourth Wave**

Regime responses to the fourth wave differ widely. The test cases are Egypt and Saudi Arabia, as both countries represent the depth of the Arab-Islamic culture, tradition, and complexity. Any success in these two countries will eventually have a spillover effect on the entire Middle East, the Islamic world, and Africa. Failure to do so will also have an equivalent negative impact on these regions.

The Saudi system is based on a state-clergy alliance, for the Saud family enjoys undisputable political leadership and the Al-Ashaykh family is

entrusted with education, Islamic endowments, and religious leadership.<sup>34</sup> In response to pressure to reform, in early 2005 Saudi Arabia conducted its first municipal elections in nearly three decades. The outcome was a sweeping countrywide victory for the Islamists. The Saudi Majlis al-Shura (the Consultative Council), established in 1992, has no significant impact on the decision-making process, although “Saudi Arabia’s rulers have allowed for more consultation with those whom they rule.”<sup>35</sup> Council members are selected, rather than elected by popular vote. Freedoms are still restricted, and political dissent is not tolerated. The current surge in oil prices provides the state with more resources to exert total control.

Far-reaching hopes within the fourth wave discourse seem slim at best. The post-9/11 pressure on the royal family to reform the monarchy is losing momentum. Miraculously, the monarchy managed to survive 9/11 and its aftershocks. Saudis were right when they stated that the American pressure associated with 9/11 was merely a “storm” and that all they had to do was to bow down to it a little until it passed, which would be soon. After six years, “the damage that was done by 9-11 has largely been repaired in the government-to-government relationship; the relationship between the American people and the Saudi people has suffered what may be permanent damage.”<sup>36</sup> In general, Saudis view King Abdalla’s reign positively in both regional and international terms. The monarch has expressed his genuine commitment to reform, curbing corruption, expanding freedoms, and playing an active role in regional politics, especially the Arab-Israeli conflict. He has also proclaimed his willingness to reform the Majlis al-Shura and institute an electoral mechanism for its membership. However, the ranks of the royal family and the religious hierarchy, fearing the loss of their powers and privileges, oppose his ambitious reform program.

In Egypt, the Mubarak regime continues to oppress all opposition.<sup>37</sup> Mubarak claims that Egypt enjoys “all kinds of democracy,” but in reality political participation is at the lowest level since he took over in 1981. As Brownlee put it, the regime has progressively limited power-sharing opportunities and reversed the already tenuous period of political opening that had begun in the 1980s and very early 1990s. If any form of freedom has been expanded, it is the presidency’s freedom from the informal constraints that had limited its authority.”<sup>38</sup> In response to increased American pressure, Mubarak has allowed a limited degree of contestation for parliamentary and presidential elections. The Muslim Brotherhood was allowed to compete in 150 districts in the December 2005 elections and won 90 seats. Alarmed by the Islamists’ success in Egypt and Palestine, the government postponed the 2006 National Assembly’s elections until 2008, fearing that they might take

over, on the grounds that the secular political parties needed time to mobilize and organize to compete with the Islamists.

Egypt's political process is a troubling matter, as Mubarak's son Jamal, who is also viewed as a leading figure of corruption in the country, is most likely to claim the presidency. Mubarak has publicly dismissed this idea, even as he works tirelessly to enhance his son's presence within the ruling party. Egyptians at large seem certain that Jamal will assume the presidency upon his father's departure, which enhances the nature of Egypt as a Pharonic dictatorial oligarchy and a country successively ruled by tyrants over many centuries. A related factor impeding democracy is American military aid, which now exceeds \$2 billion a year. This sort of assistance only strengthens the state security apparatuses, weakens civil society, and discourages any tendency toward reform. Human rights activists say that ending this aid would improve the prospects for democratization. Devising a working relationship between the West and the Muslim Brotherhood would also enhance the cause of democracy. Over all, the positive impact of the fourth wave on Egyptians is boosting popular confidence in confronting the government and the Egyptian secret police through mass demonstrations calling for reform and freedom. The Kifayah (Enough) movement, in reference to the persistence of Mubarak's rule, is an indication of such a trend.

The State of Bahrain has transformed itself into a kingdom. While its king continues to dominate the kingdom's political affairs, the parliamentary elections conducted in 2002 and 2006 were viewed as more representative than ever. Bahrain has conducted three elections since its independence: the 1972, 2003, and 2006 parliamentary and municipal elections. Its people overwhelmingly (94.8 percent) approved the national charter drafted in early 2000, according to which the king reinstated Parliament, pardoned political prisoners, legalized political societies (parties), allowed civil society institutions to function legally, and struck a sort of national reconciliation process between the ruling Sunni minority and the Shi'i majority. Bahrain seems to be utilizing the democratic moment well and to be on the right track, should the momentum of the democratic opportunity continue its gains. However, its democratic peace is contingent upon the outcome of the dynamics between the Sunni ruling elite and the Shi'i majority.

However, nowhere is the fourth wave's impact as genuinely felt as in Kuwait.<sup>39</sup> In 2003 and 2006, the country conducted by far some of the region's freest elections ever. Its National Assembly is the Arab world's most vibrant, lively, and active Parliament. In its 29 June 2006 parliamentary elections, for the first time women were allowed to vote and run for office. Although no woman made it to the Parliament, women succeeded in mak-

ing their voices heard. Their substantial presence in the last election will most definitely contribute to a more promising future for democracy in this country.

Kuwait seems to be on the right track as well when it comes to the regime's accommodation with the country's different political forces. Its accommodation to Islamists in the government, granting a cabinet portfolio to a woman, and constitutionally managing a peaceful political succession are all vital steps toward a genuine transition to democracy within the fourth wave framework. As of 2007, this democratic experiment is responding to both domestic and external challenges. On the domestic level, the constant tension between the government and the Parliament and regional instability, especially the war in Iraq, complicates its democratic experiment.

Jordan conducted parliamentary elections in 2003 and, on 20 November 2007, elected a new 110-seat Parliament, 6 of which are reserved for women, 9 for the Christian community, and 3 for the Chechen-Circassian communities. The outcome of the 2003 election was far below expectations. Parliament members were elected on tribal platforms with very few exceptions pertaining to the Islamic Action Front. Tribal allegiance, rather than modern political party affiliation and platforms, was the primary grounds for the 2003 elections. The 2007 elections continued the same trend.<sup>40</sup> This explains the current Parliament's weakness and ineffectiveness in dealing with the major challenges currently facing the country, namely, the economy. As Robinson put it, "the regime undertook sufficient reform to ensure its political longevity, but without altering the core structures of power in Jordan. I term this 'defensive democratization'."<sup>41</sup>

Tragically, the state of democracy in Jordan has deteriorated since the reinstatement of pluralism in 1989: municipal elections have been replaced by the appointment of mayors, and even university and college student organizations have been appointed rather than contested. By far, the country's political environment is ripe and conducive to genuine democracy, but the government is not. The opposition has been calling for a fair election law for at least ten years. The existence of functioning political parties, civil society institutions,<sup>42</sup> diversity, high literacy rates, a vibrant population, and a growing middle class are all factors that contribute positively to a genuine transition to democracy, should the government realize the importance of reform.

Syria has made no substantial progress when it comes to reform, pluralism, or democratization. In spite of the spurious hopes given by Bashar al-Assad when he took over in June 2000, "business as usual" remains the norm. On the regional and international levels, Syria is viewed as a destabilizing force and a supporter of international terrorism. The country seems

to be totally devoid of the democratic opportunity. Its 2003 parliamentary elections were staged, and its Parliament has no significant impact on the decision-making process and is not representative of the people. On 27 May 2007, in an uncontested referendum, al-Assad won 97.29 percent of the vote for a second seven-year term. The opposition strongly condemned this. Popular resentment of the regime does exist, but its popular appeal is weakened by the sectarian violence in neighboring Iraq and Lebanon. Syrians would rather live under al-Assad than slip into a state of violence like Iraq or Lebanon. Currently, both the Islamists' and the nationalists' opposition to the regime is centered in the West. Although the Islamists has suffered the most over the past thirty years, they seem to have recovered from the 1982 Hama massacre and its aftermath. The opposition has received noticeable material and political support, from the United States in particular; however, the American setback in Iraq has complicated the prospects of change.

Lebanon is still recovering from the turmoil of its sixteen-year civil war, continued Syrian intervention in its politics, the consequences of Syria's withdrawal, its fragile domestic peace, the assassination of Rafik Hariri, and the constant clashes between Israel and Hezbollah. All of these have combined to create the current state of instability. Lebanon seems ready for a genuine democracy; however, it lacks a leadership figure of Hariri's stature, a leader capable of transcending sectarian loyalties. Lebanon conducted parliamentary elections in 2005, and its citizens enjoy a wide range of freedoms. They express their views freely and mobilize and introduce change into their country. Students are leading the process of change, and civil society institutions are intensifying their role, which is necessary for advancing democracy in the region.

The United States has invested heavily in building a civil society in Lebanon, but the 2006 war between Israel and Hezbollah threatened the very stability of the Lebanese state and government. Currently, Lebanon is potentially regressing into a state of lawlessness and civil war. A sense of militancy can easily be noticed by analyzing current political debates. On 24 September 2007, the Parliament was supposed to elect a new president, as President Emile Lahud's term was set to expire on 24 November 2007. The United States, France, and other players are actively participating in the process, which will complicate Lebanese politics. However, the message coming out of Lebanon is that the country is committed to electing a new president on time.

Algeria is currently recovering from its decade-long civil war. The country organized its presidential election on 8 April 2004 and its National

People's Assembly elections on 30 May 2003. However, Algeria remains an unfree nation in which the state and the army dominate social affairs. Social peace and political reconciliation remains fragile. On 17 May 2007, Algeria organized its second election within the fourth wave discourse. The most important aspect of the latest National People's Assembly election was the apparent low turnout, despite the massive campaign of electoral awareness initiated by the government and the opposition. An estimated 36.51 percent of registered voters cast their vote, in comparison with 46.17 percent in the 2002 elections. The main reason for such a low turnout is the sense of powerlessness and frustration that has swept the country since the civil war began in 1991. The National Liberation Front (FLN) dominates the National Assembly, although some opposition parties have gained a significant presence there as well. Algeria's current concerns are similar to those prevailing in the region as a whole, namely, economic development, transparency, accommodation, and national reconciliation. On 29 November 2007, Algeria rescheduled its local election, which had been scheduled for September 2007.

Mauritania continues to suffer from military coups and autocracy. The junta conducted the most recent coup in August 2005 and promised free elections in two years. In June 2006, 97 percent of the people approved a new constitution that put term limits on the president and set up a promising system of government. The country also organized its parliamentary elections on 19 November 2006, which were declared free and fair. On 25 March 2007, Mauritania conducted its second round of presidential elections in which Sidi Ould Sheikh Abdullahi, a former political prisoner, won 53 percent of the popular vote, making him Mauritania's first democratically elected president. Mauritania is recovering from decades of autocratic rule and mismanagement of its national resources; however, the country is more hopeful when it comes to institutionalizing its political structure and creating the political stability necessary for development.

Morocco has the region's best developed political party structure. "In the 1950s, Morocco was one of the rare newly independent states to embark on a path of political pluralism and market economics. The following decades saw successive governments enact reforms establishing a relatively open political and economic system. And yet, almost half a century on, the country remains authoritarian."<sup>43</sup> Its current Assembly of Representatives, elected in September 2002, is more representative than ever. Morocco conducted its second parliamentary election within the fourth wave discourse on 7 September 2007. The low turnout, 37 percent, was the election's most apparent aspect. However, thirty-three political parties contested the 325

seats under a complex election law. The Independence Party won fifty-six seats, which entitled its leader, Abbas Elfassi, to form the next cabinet, which he did on 19 September 2007. Economic and electoral reform, combating corruption, and expanding political freedom are the new government's major challenges.

The fourth wave has had a positive and noticeable impact on Libya. The government did relax tensions on local, regional, as well international levels; gave up its quest for weapons of mass destruction; and abandoned its revolutionary agenda. The government is now working for national reconciliation. Currently, Libya is focusing on its domestic issues and trying to play a major role in resolving regional conflicts, such as those in Darfur and Chad. Muammar Qaddafi is consolidating the role of his son, Sayf al-Islam, to succeed him. Sayf took several initiatives to reduce tensions with Europe and the United States. Libya has settled the Lockerbie tragedy by paying a hefty settlement in exchange for diplomatic relations with the United States and the United Kingdom. During 2007, Sayf led a domestic process of national dialogue, stating clearly that the government is open to dialogue, drafting a constitution, judicial and financial reform, combating widespread corruption among the bureaucracy, organizing the media sector, and strengthening the cabinet and its role in governance.

In October 2004, Zine El Abidine Ben Ali, who has ruled Tunisia with an iron fist since his takeover in 1987, won a fourth five-year term. Freedom is restricted, and the opposition is mainly in exile. The Islamists have suffered the most. He has repressed the region's most enlightened Islamic party, al-Nahda (Renaissance). The presidential and parliamentary elections held in October 2004 were marked with fraud and a lack of competition.

The UAE has made unprecedented levels of economic progress over the past thirty years by transforming seven extremely poor desert emirates into an extremely prosperous nation. Although the UAE seems to lack such modern political arrangements as political parties, it is well-developed economically. Economic freedom and prosperity supersedes any other reservation the public might have about the system. The UAE has become an example of a diverse economy, good management of national resources, and an attractive environment for international investment. Upon its independence in 1972, the UAE established the Federal National Council (FNC), a forty-member advisory council appointed by the governors of the seven emirates. During 16-24 December 2006, the UAE conducted its first partial election in a unique system: the governors' courts of the seven emirates picked an Electoral College of 6,688 members who then voted for twenty FNC members; the other twenty were appointed. This very modest step was well-

received by observers. However, it falls far short of the acceptable standards of political development vis-à-vis the remarkable economic developmental levels achieved.

Perhaps no country in the Gulf has such solid historical grounds of pluralism as the Sultanate of Oman. The Ibadi school of thought, which advocated and practiced political freedom as early as the ninth century onward, dominates the country. In the modern age, especially after its civil war during the 1970s, the country has embarked upon a process of national reconciliation and power consolidation. Oman has made significant progress in economic and social development, but has lagged behind in political development. Education and health care are provided on a wide range. Modern highways and infrastructure have helped to expand the state's power to remote and previously inaccessible regions.

In terms of organizing elections and expanding the basis for political participation, the government introduced the basic law (constitution) in November 1996. Accordingly, two houses of Parliament were instituted: an appointed chamber known as the Majlis al-Dawlah (State Council), and the partially (and later on) fully elected Consultative Council. Oman held its partial parliamentary elections for its Consultative Council on 4 October 2003. Two of the eighty-two elected council members were women. On 27 October 2007, the second Consultative Council election was conducted, in which 880 candidates (including 25 women) competed for 82 seats. Omanis enthusiastically participated in the elections; however, no women were elected to the Majlis. Oman's national concern is development. Politically speaking, Omanis are worrying about political succession and institutionalizing domestic politics by legalizing civil society institutions.

Qatar has emerged as a leading force in the Gulf for liberalization. Educational and political reforms, social openness, and economic development have made Qatar a destination for convening international conferences on issues of human rights, democracy, trade, globalization, and international cooperation. Al-Jazeera's success as a free satellite television station, which is unique among the world's media outlets, has placed Qatar on the world map. The aggressiveness of its leadership in the areas of leading roles in the United Nations and the Arab-Israeli conflict has also contributed to the country's status on the world scene. Currently, Qatar has a forty-five member appointed Shura Council. However, in 2003, the Qataris approved the country's first-ever draft constitution, which provides for a partially elected legislature but places the actual powers of governance in the *amir* (the head of the state). Its future Parliament would consist of 45 members, 30 of whom are elected and 15 of whom are appointed by the *amir*. When it comes

to the country's electoral base, it needs to be said that Qatari nationals are estimated to be no more than 150,000 people, which is not that substantial in nature. Qatar made some progress in organizing municipal elections, held for the first time on 11 April 2007. Observers consider this election to be a positive step toward more political openness and participation.

The American invasion of Iraq awakened long episodes of sectarian conflict. The latest Iraqi parliamentary and presidential elections, conducted in January 2005 and December 2005, were important steps in stabilizing the country and forming a functional government. However, it took the Iraqi political elite five months to agree on the government's basic structure, a situation that contributes to the ongoing lack of security and stability. Regardless of political quarrels, the heavy turnout in defiance of the insurgents shows that Iraqis are desperately seeking stability, peace, and harmony. In December 2007, the Iraqi government was hoping to organize the elections of local councils in its eighteen governorates. However, the spiralling deterioration of security renders the election uncertain. Iraq, in particular, has a critical impact on the fourth wave. This will be discussed in a separate section.

On 25 January 2006, the Palestinian National Authority organized its second parliamentary elections, which Hamas won with a sweeping 60.3 percent of the popular vote. This result sent shock waves across the globe; even Hamas was surprised. Other rival factions, such as Fatah, resented the results and refused to participate in the government; however, they entered the government of national unity in March 2007. Over the past two years, much has happened: Hamas continued to reject recognizing Israel; the Palestinians were placed under siege; and military conformation between Israel and Hamas, as well as among the Palestinians themselves, brought the region to the highest level of violence in over a decade. The military confrontation between Hamas and Fatah brought the Palestinians close to an all-out civil war. In addition, the government split in two during June 2007, when Hamas militarily took over Gaza. In response, Mahmoud Abbas dismissed the Hamas government on 14 June, which Hamas rejected as unconstitutional, and immediately appointed a new prime minister who formed a cabinet that was welcomed by Israel, the United States, the EU, and other major players in the Palestinian issue. Abbas also rejected any gestures from Hamas to talk until it hands over Gaza unconditionally.

Since announcing the new cabinet, the United States in particular has intensified its efforts to revive the peace process by holding the long awaited international peace conference in November 2007 in Annapolis, Maryland. In order to limit the future prospects of Hamas' electoral gains, Abbas issued a presidential decree in September stating that from now on, presidential and

parliamentary elections would be organized according to a nationwide party list, instead of the current dual system of nationwide and local lists, which helped Hamas in Gaza in particular. The decree also stipulates that those who participate in the elections must respect the PLO's programs and commitment toward Israel. Hamas rejected the decree, stating that only Parliament has the power to change the election law. Hamas is neither a member of the PLO nor recognizes Israel. The Palestinian political process has a particular impact on the fourth wave, which will be addressed shortly.

In the early 1990s, Yemen was one of the most promising cases for unity and pluralism. "North and South Yemen surprised the world by announcing that, along with the unification of the two countries, the new Republic of Yemen would bring democracy to the Arabian Peninsula."<sup>44</sup> However, a civil war erupted shortly after unity. Both northern and southern forces massacred people, exiled political opponents, restricted freedoms (e.g., of the press), and centralized power in the hands of Ali Abdullah Salih. In 1999 and 2006, Salih won landslide victories. The country conducted parliamentary elections in April 2003 and presidential elections in September 2006. Yemeni politics is driven primarily by tribal dominance over state affairs, while the state has little power outside the urban centers. Yemenis are well aware of the fourth wave's democratic potential; however, the corruption espoused with tribalism has been holding the country back. Its 2006 presidential elections were viewed as not free and fair, while its parliamentary election was tainted with fraud. Yemen's future within the fourth wave remains uncertain, as the state, ruling elite, and tribes hinder its democratic potential.

As seen above, democratic transition in the region remains fragile despite the conduciveness of conditions for change. There exists a democratic opportunity that must be utilized properly to bring about genuine change. However, it is legitimate to ask: What does it take to translate such opportunity into reality? What does it take to democratize the Arab world? Is the West's fear of the Islamists taking over justified? How would the Islamists behave once in office? Why does the Arab world lag behind when it comes to the values of democratization, stability, prosperity, and change? Is Arab political culture inherently autocratic? There are an endless number of questions that need to be answered in order to understand the predicament of democratization in the Arab world.

### **Contentious Aspects of the Fourth Wave**

Several aspects of the fourth wave have been deemed contentious and threaten the future of democratization in Middle East. They include, but are

not necessarily limited to, the factors discussed below. In examining the predicament of reform and democratization, the failure of socioeconomic and political development over the past half century, in particular, is clearly responsible for the region's ongoing political stagnation. Such structural failures are deemed key hurdles to the fourth wave.

On the external level, the impediments to democracy lie within the complex historical encounters between the West and the Islamic world over at least the past fourteen centuries or so. Some of these episodes produced enlightened civilizations (e.g., Andalusia), while at other times the encounters were brutal and heralded the development of western democracy or pursuant to its advent. Islam's expansion in Europe and the West, its decline, the Crusades, colonialism and post-colonialism, cold war politics, neocolonialism, globalization, Americanization, 9/11, the New Crusade, the "war on terrorism," the "long war on terrorism," and the current "long, long war on terrorism" are all significant encounters that have had conflicting impacts on the region's democratization.

At a narrower level, the current impediments have to do primarily with two factors: first, the West's fear of Islam; its failure to understand Islam, Muslims, and the Shari'ah; its fear of an Islamist takeover; and its fear of a theocratic-populist model of government resulting from popular elections; and, second, the Islamists' views of democracy, their failure to reach out to the West, explain themselves and their agendas clearly, educate the West about Islam and Muslims, and present a successful model of a modern and democratic Islamic government.

**THE GREEN THREAT AND THE FOURTH WAVE.** The West fears Islam as a religion, Muslims as a people, and Islamists as a political force. So far, this fear has provided the region's autocratic regimes with unprecedented longevity. Having created an us vs. them dichotomy, it is in the West's best interest to continue dealing with the autocratic status quo they know, instead of a dubious and "unpredictable theocracy" that they do not know. As a result, the West continues to show no serious interest in alleviating transgressions committed against Islamists or even secular-modernists.

However, the question of why such a state of affairs persists remains. The short answer is the West's lack of understanding of Islam and Islamic movements. There has been a deliberate distortion of Islam's image ever since the two civilizations' early encounters. The demonization of Islam and Muslims is embedded within western culture, thought, literature, and folklore. The "Mohammedans" envisioned by Europe during its "Dark Ages" remain intact in current western thought, policies, and relations toward Islam

and Muslims. Qutb describes this as the “‘Crusaders’ spirit’ [that] runs through Western thought.”<sup>45</sup> Western views on Islamic movements have also been distorted since the movement’s inception in 1928. Britain and France made up their minds via a one-sided declaration of animosity toward Islamists, who led the wars of independence in close cooperation with nationalist forces. The British colonial authorities in Egypt created the necessary environment to assassinate Hassan al-Banna, the founder and its first general guide of the Muslim Brotherhood. The misunderstanding of the Shari`ah has also contributed tremendously to the persistence of tyrannical regimes and the unfounded thesis of Islam’s incompatibility with democracy. The Shari`ah is stigmatized as a symbol of darkness and despotism. Such charges stem from a misunderstanding of the divine wisdom embedded within a set of laws that underline the concept of justice as a unifying core of Islam’s theory and practice of jurisprudence.

Some agenda-driven policy circles and stubborn academics in the West insist that Islam is incompatible with modernity at a time when Islamist-led democratic forces march toward democracy undeterred. Their accusation negates Islamic civilization’s enlightened heritage and contributions to world civilization. In addition, it negates the prevailing state of affairs in the region as its people long for freedom and strive to live in a free society. The exceptionalist school of thought seeks to abort any serious external support for the region’s democratic forces within the fourth wave’s framework. Additionally, advocating Islam’s incompatibility with democracy is futile, as it impedes the process of democratization and threatens regional and international stability. Even if Islam appears to some as incompatible with democracy, does this mean that Muslims are condemned and should be excluded from democratization simply because they are “Muslims”?

It is imperative to state that advancing the cause of freedom is not a matter of choice, but rather a matter of security and a necessity for world peace. The world can neither afford the persistence of the region’s status quo nor continue the pointless debate over Islam’s compatibility or incompatibility with democracy. The dangers of such debate have proven to be detrimental on the global scene, as we have seen over the past six years in particular. Viewing Islam as an enemy also impedes democracy. Alarmist groups in the West are mobilizing against the so-called “green threat,” “Islamic fascism,” the “new green expansion,” “the caliphate,” and the like. These banners are designed to instill a global fear of Islam and Muslims, create Islamophobia, and fuel a “clash of civilizations” discourse.

Another related factor is the unsubstantiated fear of the Islamists’ commitment to democracy. Islamists are pragmatic politicians, as we have seen

in Turkey and Jordan. Muslims crave freedom like any other people, and their march toward pluralism, democracy, and liberation is unstoppable. Elections, although imperfect and not an indication of “democratic maturity,” are taking place across the Arab Islamic world. Indonesia, Malaysia, Lebanon, Egypt, Kuwait, Jordan, Algeria, Bahrain, and other Muslim countries hold regular or irregular elections. Muslims and Islamists are marching toward democratization, paying no attention to the above-mentioned exclusionary thought. Their electoral successes are expressions of a realization of the democratic moment and an attempt to move the region’s democratic opportunity forward.

**ISLAMISTS AND THE FOURTH WAVE.** Promoting the cause of democracy within the fourth wave’s framework would be more productive if the West would realize that excluding the Islamists is unrealistic. However, questions remain: Which Islamist current can be dealt with? Is there a mainstream Islamist current? Can the world deal with organizations that reject pluralism, democracy, and constitutionalism? To answer these questions, one must identify the Islamic forces operating on the region’s political scene.

Three trends can be identified within the current Islamic discourses vis-à-vis democracy and political development at large. The first trend consists of such mainstream Islamist organizations as the Muslim Brotherhood and its moderate offspring: Turkey’s Justice and Development Party, Morocco’s Justice and Development Party, Jordan’s Islamic Action Front, the Islamic Constitutional Movement of Kuwait, Tunisia’s Renaissance Party, and Yemen’s Reform Party.

Members of this category accept democracy and constitutionalism as instruments of governance; advocate Islam’s compatibility with democracy; and simultaneously advocate particularism and respecting local traditions, history, and customs when conceptualizing indigenous democratic arrangements. Therefore, they participate actively and peacefully in their country’s political process and abide by the rules, such as running for office and giving up power if they lose the elections. However, Islamists within the mainstream are still misunderstood and mistrusted by the West. The Islamists need to make themselves and their agendas clear in order to calm western fears. The most successful party in this category has been Turkey’s Justice and Development Party, which followed a policy of openness with the West and thus managed to strike up a working relationship with it.

The second trend consists of radical Islamist organizations, namely, those that engage in both terrorism and politics. Hezbollah, Hamas, and the Islamic Liberation Party (Tahrir), to a lesser degree, represent this trend. While they accept democracy as an instrument to obtain political power and

access to governance, they reject giving up their arms or abandoning the military option. Hamas and Hezbollah in particular owe their source of legitimacy to their armed struggle and, therefore, believe that their existence would cease if they abandoned it. Hamas won a landslide victory in the parliamentary elections of 25 January 2006 and, until Abbas' recent decision (mentioned above), ran the Palestinian government. It still engages in military acts against Israel. Hezbollah is an active political organization in Lebanon and enjoys tremendous support across the Islamic world.<sup>46</sup> Simultaneously, it engages in constant military confrontations with Israel and maintains its unmatched military power in Lebanon.

Hamas and Hezbollah can be viewed as organizations in a transitional stage. While they are classified as terrorist organizations, especially by the United States, they are viewed as political liberation organizations by their respective constituencies. Accordingly, the line between terrorism and national liberation is blurred. Usually, national liberation organizations that have reached such a stage develop a political and a military wing. In some cases, these two wings are split on the leadership level. However, how the conflict develops also determines which wing might prevail. Sometimes, political wings prevail and absorb the military, which facilitates their transition into legitimate political entities and facilitates their involvement in politics. The Irish Republican Army (IRA) and the Euskadi Ta Askatasuna (ETA) are examples of such a transition from militancy to peaceful participation in the politics of Northern Ireland and Spain, respectively.<sup>47</sup>

Hamas and Hezbollah resemble the IRA in its transformation from a terrorist organization to a political partner in Northern Ireland. Hamas' situation, however, is complicated by the intricacy of the Arab-Israeli conflict, the Palestinian diaspora and internal leadership dilemma, its ideological rejection of Israel's existence, and regional and international environments that are inhospitable to its political participation. Hezbollah exists in a similar environment. In order for peace to prevail, both organizations need to be encouraged to moderate their stances on a cluster of issues that render them unwelcome in assuming any active political role. The PLO went through a process of transformation and is currently accepted as a mainstream organization, having renouncing violence in 1993.

The third trend consists of Islamic-inspired terrorist organizations and Islamic anti-democracy forces that base their terrorism and rejection of the status quo on religious grounds and use Islamic tenets to mobilize support. Its proponents are uncompromising, reject coexistence with their rivals, and insist on the latter's defeat and extermination. On the external level, they have conceptualized a global sense of "Islam being under attack" and there-

fore advocate continued confrontation with it. Ironically, they agree with the “clash of civilizations” thesis.

This trend rejects democracy as a “western product” and a political heresy and demands the establishment of an authoritarian-theological state. They view the state as an instrument to implement their version of “divine law,” which they misunderstand, distort, and misrepresent. Al-Qaeda, the Taliban, Al-Gamaa al-Islamiyya (the Islamic Group-Egypt), Egyptian Islamic Jihad (EIJ), Algeria’s Armed Islamic Group (GIA), and the Tawhid wa al-Jihad Society reject the idea and the institution of democracy. Al-Qaeda uses terrorism as its main tool to advance an agenda that has been rejected by the international community. The Taliban’s version of Islam is incompatible with modernity, and its rejection to pluralism and democracy is non-negotiable. No modern state can accept the existence of such organizations and regimes. They also represent a threat to Islam’s image and ability to project a multicultural society that lives, like all other societies, in the age of globalization.

Mainstream Islamists ought to be accepted, accommodated, and dealt with as full partners. They are by far the most popular, trusted, and organized political force in the region. Their marginalization from politics is unrealistic, for their landslide electoral victories testify to the popular support and trust placed in them. Therefore, mainstream Islamists should be assured of their right to participate in politics, be engaged in constructive dialogue with the West, trained in parliamentary processes, and helped to moderate their platforms – all of which serve the cause of democracy.

Overall, the burden of ensuring mutual understanding lies on the shoulders of both the Islamists and the West. The Islamists must make themselves known and fully understood by the world; initiate and accept an open dialogue with the West; and work in the open so as not to create an atmosphere of suspicion, mistrust, and antagonism. There are no divine or scriptural impediments to accepting western initiatives for such a dialogue, nor are there any religious impediments to talking to the United States on formal or informal levels. The Islamists must know that the world now operates under the rules of compromise, openness, dialogue, mutual understanding and interests, globalization, multiculturalism, and cultural, interfaith, and civilizational dialogue. There is no room for clandestine behavior, isolationism, or self-imposed confinement as long as they seek active participation in the nation’s political life. Therefore they must modify their political discourse, tactics, and strategies for dealing with local, regional, and international affairs. Should they choose to do so, they would certainly enjoy the support of their people and the world at large.

But should the Islamists choose otherwise, they must know that they are choosing their demise. And, should they act irresponsibly, they would fatally jeopardize the cause of the fourth wave of democratization. Finally, should American, European, and popular support for democratization wind down at home, then the Islamists should be held accountable for the ongoing status quo. On the western side, the West ought to accept the Islamists as part of the region's political milieu and deal with them on an equal footing as partners in the transition to democracy, rather than being enemies.

**IRAQ'S SETBACK AND THE FOURTH WAVE.** In planning for the invasion of Iraq, "American and British policymakers outlined national- and regional-level policy rationales for the removal of the authoritarian regime of Saddam Hussein and the imposition of democracy in post-war Iraq."<sup>48</sup> While, the war effort went well, the mismanaged occupation and irrecoverable blunders made Iraq "the world's most dangerous nation"<sup>49</sup> instead of an inspiring model for democracy. Furthermore, the absence of order in Iraq enhanced the sense of insecurity on both the regional and international levels.<sup>50</sup> American setbacks have also seriously jeopardized the fourth wave's democratic potential. Baghdad's apparent failure to establish security and stop sectarian violence made the so-called "democratic" Iraq an unattractive model. While the Bush administration has shown tremendous optimism in democratic theory and the inevitable triumph of democracy in Iraq, the security situation has worsened. As a result, democracy is failing drastically in the country.

Although Iraq was the least conducive country to democratic transition, as it lacks the basic requirements for such a transition, some country and area specialists, activists, and academicians were very optimistic and hopeful that the United States would overcome such impediments, build on the recent Iraqi tradition of coexistence, and succeed.<sup>51</sup> However, some countries harbored ill will toward the United States in Iraq. Had the United States succeeded, the map of the Middle East would have been different by this time. Shortly after the declaration of "mission accomplished" on 1 May 2003, talks about regime change in Syria, Iran, and to some extent in Saudi Arabia began surfacing among Washington circles. But the security situation began to deteriorate, and hopes were dashed when the liberators and the Iraqis became enemies. So far, the war has been costly by all standards and the human loss has far exceeded all expectations. The war threatens the region's security, and the potential spillover effect of civil strife in the Middle East is real. Iraq's current status quo is not an acceptable example of governance, for it threatens the country's territorial integrity. A constitutional model-design is urgently needed to ensure its territorial integrity.<sup>52</sup>

The loss of faith in the possibility of a democratic triumph in the region is the most devastating aspect of the Iraqi experience on both the American and the Middle Eastern scenes. On the American side, there is a loss of enthusiasm for the cause of democracy in the Middle East due to the tragic events in Iraq.<sup>53</sup> Supporters of democracy are losing the public debate in the United States, and public support for democratic governance in the Middle East is vanishing. Unfortunately, such a loss might lead to a total collapse of the fourth wave of democracy in the Arab world at large. It might also embolden the region's prevailing authoritarian tendencies, thereby enhancing autocratic rule in the Middle East for decades to come. In summing up the impact of the Iraqi experience on democracy, Shibley Telhami put it neatly:

In the end, most Arabs, like others, want freedom and a system in which their voices count. But even more, they want security for their families, and they reject foreign occupation and anarchy. The very American policy that was said to be aimed at spreading democracy increased the conditions that terrify the public and reduced the attraction of democracy itself. If Iraq is an example of the democratic change they can expect, who, anywhere, would want it?<sup>54</sup>

## Conclusion

The fourth wave's future seems uncertain. While there are encouraging signs of change, there is no solid commitment to the fourth wave's success due to the existing distrust among the forces engaged in the process. Confidence in democracy itself, establishing a working relationship with the Islamists, and eliminating various fears would certainly boost the chances of success. Otherwise its momentum will wear out. Unless all players show a firm resolve and commitment to its triumph, the democratic moment might be just another lost democratic opportunity.

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