Chapter-II

DEMOCRACY PROMOTION IN THE MUSLIM WORLD

“We support the advance of freedom in the Middle East, because it is our founding principle, and because it is in our national interest. The hateful ideology of terrorism is shaped and nurtured and protected by oppressive regimes. Free nations, in contrast, encourage creativity and tolerance and enterprise. And in those free nations, the appeal of extremism withers away. Free governments do not build weapons of mass destruction for the purpose of mass terror. Over time, the expansion of liberty throughout the world is the best guarantee of security throughout the world. Freedom is the way to peace.”

--President George W. Bush

As a response to the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, and a justification for the US invasion of Iraq, the Bush Administration made the promotion of democracy in the Middle East a national security priority. It articulated its priority by stating that greater political freedom could undermine Islamic radicalism and indoctrination. Former US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice argued that “Elections are the beginning of every democracy, but of course they are not the end. Effective institutions are essential to the success of all liberal democracies. And by institutions I mean pluralistic parties, transparent and accountable legislatures, independent judiciaries, free press, active civil society, market economies and, of course, a monopoly for the state on the means of violence” (Rice 2003). It was a tall order and achieving such “democracy” was not to be an easy effort. As the democracy promotion policy moved forward, US policy makers confronted a significant dilemma over the means to respond to challenges posed by political
Islamist movements. They are the parties and political organizations that advocated social and political reforms in accordance with Islamic religious principles. If elected, such forces would certainly oppose US policies. Many scholars have questioned the practicality of this approach and the US ability to unleash the forces of modernization and social change in the Islamic World. Yet, despite continuing reservations over US sincerity, depth of commitment, and consistency on the democratization issue, the US policy reverberated across the Arab world. The US policy is responsible for the changing dynamics of the region for better or for worse.

Democracy promotion policy generated a long and vexing dilemma for the Bush Administration. Should the United States exert pressure on Arab governments to open their political systems? Islamists, the most popular opposition force in Arab politics, were likely to benefit from it. If elected, Islamist political parties and organizations would challenge the key aspects of US foreign policy in the Middle East, such as support for Israel, the occupation of Iraq, and the large US military presence in the Persian Gulf. Some analysts argued that with the ascent of Shiite Muslim, the United States, by encouraging free and fair elections across the region, may have inadvertently strengthened Islamist opposition movements, particularly militant ones.

This dilemma became even more problematic with the possibility of participation of non-violent Islamist groups in politics. Many of these groups existed in what some experts call, a “gray zone,” in which their participation in politics was permitted but limited. Since the “moderate” Islamist groups had renounced violence and terrorism, US efforts to promote democracy would considerably benefit these Islamists. However, circumstances differ across the Arab world, and democracy promotion in the Middle East became a complex issue with
many outstanding questions, particularly when examining Islamism.

**Islamism and Identity Politics:**

At the heart of the democratization issue in the Middle East, there is an inherent question of national identity. In many countries, questions about the role of Islam in political life, rights for ethnic and religious minorities, and the role of women remained unresolved. When Arab nationalism appeared discredited in the wake of successive defeats in the Arab-Israel wars in 1967 and 1973, Islamism and ethnic politics stepped in to fill an identity vacuum in the Arab world. A number of competing and overlapping identities contested for primacy in the Middle East. “Moderate Islamists” pursued to balance the need for political and social reform with the desire to create a society governed by the general principles of Islamic law i.e. Sharia. Other, more radical Islamists used elections as a tool to come to power in order to create more rigid Islamic rule. Non-Islamist reformers drew support from both secular intellectuals and minority religious/ethnic communities, who were traditionally relegated to second-class status. Secular intellectuals, members of some minority groups, and women’s rights advocates were frequently accused of collaborating with foreigners. It is because their vision of democracy might have been closely resembled the liberal democracies of Western Europe and the United States. Ruling elites in the military and private sector, who often manipulated the state system to obtain a minimum of popular support, had created their own “national identities” to reinforce their rule. Some regimes had created secular republics dominated by one ruling party with the help of the military. Other ruling families had based their legitimacy on their common ancestry from the prophet Muhammad.

Many analysts consider Islamism to be the most popular of the identification models in the Arab world. According to Quintan Wiktorowicz, “Islamic activism
is rooted in the symbolism, language, and cultural history of Muslim society and as a result has successfully resonated with increasingly disillusioned populations suffering from political exclusion, economic deprivation, and a sense of growing impotence at the expense of outside powers and a faceless process of globalization” (Wicktowicz 2004: 25). “Islam is the solution” is a common Islamist slogan to the socio-economic problems posed by modernity and Western consumer culture. Islamists, both radical and non-violent groups, sought to construct their own institutions in society, were ranging from political organizations to health clinics and schools. Through their extensive social welfare networks, Islamists have created alternative organizational structures that serve to reinforce their appeal among the lower and middle classes. There are many examples across the Middle East of legal or semi-legal Islamist organizations that have been granted either full or limited participation in the political system. Some of these groups have renounced violence and peacefully oppose their respective governments. Some regimes have allowed their participation, because Islamist parties may act to reinforce the strength of the one-party state or royal family. For example, when facing economic recession and large-scale public unrest, Arab governments sometimes granted more scope to Islamist organizations for conducting opposition activities in order to relieve the political system of public pressure. Thus, non-violent Islamist groups have existed in an ambiguous position. On the one hand, regimes may exaggerate the threat Islamists pose to state stability and therefore maintain that these groups are illegal. On the other hand, they may permit Islamists to conduct limited opposition activity if such activity ultimately benefits the regime. Arab dissidents had long maintained that some secular authoritarian regimes offer Islamists’ limited participation in politics to prevent secular opposition groups or leaders from challenging the ruling party.
Concern Over Islamist Groups:

In previous Administrations, democracy promotion was not seen as a US national security priority and Islamist extremism was not seen as a significant threat. The Islamist dilemma was largely an academic question rather than an immediate policy concern. Since the 1979 Iranian revolution, the US government increasingly believed that, if Islamist groups come to power, they would pursue a more confrontational approach in their foreign policy toward the United States. Thus, the key US strategic interests would suffer, including access to oil reserves, military cooperation, and the security of Israel etc. To the extent that the United States pushed for regional reform, the focus was largely on economic reform and trade liberalization. Actual concern over the lack of democratization and human rights was secondary. Arab regimes largely focused on the symbolic rather than the substantive elements of democratic change in order to diffuse occasional international attention to their lack of political freedom. Many governments continued to employ this strategy by manipulating elections, keeping parliamentary systems weak, and allowing only a token opposition to operate openly and legally.

The entry of the Palestinian Hamas and the Lebanese Hezbollah movements into the formal political process also fueled US suspicions of Islamist movements. US-designated terrorist organizations and combatants in the Arab-Israeli conflict, Hamas and Hezbollah have maintained armed militias and refused to renounce violence as means of achieving their political goals. Though both groups participate in their respective political systems, they are infamous for maintaining armed/terrorist wings that threaten Israel (Department of State 2005). Many security experts argue that Islamist groups that renounce violence as a tactic in their own countries but support its use in the Palestinian-Israeli context should not be considered non-violent.
In addition, American policy makers have long been observed that how some Arab regimes have played on Western fears of political Islamism. They have been doing so by attempting to paint all Islamist organizations as radical, thereby positioning themselves as the only moderate alternative likely to support US objectives. Some Arab governments, such as Egypt, Syria, and Algeria, have a history of violent confrontation with Islamic extremists who have assassinated government officials and launched costly insurgencies against security forces. In some ways, Arab governments have been engaged in their own “war on terror” for many years. The experience has made them reluctant to recognize non-revolutionary Islamist groups. Many Arab human rights advocates have asserted that regimes have harnessed the fear of fundamentalist-inspired terrorism and instability in order to justify continued one-party rule and relieve external pressure for political reform.

Promoting Liberal Alternatives:

Some believe that all Islamists, whether they espouse peaceful or violent means to achieve power, are suspect. Dr. Martin Kramer, a Middle East expert at the Washington Institute for Near East Policy, argues that all Islamists are fundamentalists who are inherently anti-democratic and anti-Western. In his essay, “Islam vs. Democracy,” Kramer writes that, “Democracy, diversity, accommodation-- the fundamentalists have repudiated them all. In appealing to the masses that fill their mosques, they promise, instead, to institute a regime of Islamic law, make common cause with like-minded “brethren” everywhere, and struggle against the hegemony of the West and the existence of Israel. Fundamentalists have held to these principles through long periods of oppression, and will not abandon them now, at the moment of their greatest popular resonance” (Kramer 1993).

Other experts have echoed such beliefs, asserting that the idea of non-
violent Islamism is a myth. Because it is observed that non-violent Islamists routinely fail to condemn terrorist acts committed by their more radical counterparts. According to Daniel Pipes, director of the Philadelphia-based think tank, the Middle East Forum, facilitating the immediate political participation of Islamists is tantamount to “helping the enemy” (Nixon Center 2004). Others believe that Islamists would set back democratization by restricting the rights of women and religious minorities, and that their ascension to power would be detrimental to US policy in the region. The best way to counter the Islamist influence is obviously the promotion of democracy in this region. Some analysts suggested that that the United States should aggressively work to strengthen the rule of law, separation of powers, civil society, and alternative, preferably secular, movements. There also continues to be strong sentiment among some foreign policy experts and Arab government officials that the United States should refrain from pushing for political liberalization. It should allow market forces and globalization to gradually build educated middle classes who can push for change indigenously.

A Pragmatic Approach:

The Bush Administration’s policy of democracy promotion toward Muslim world became somewhat unclear. It was because many foreign policy practitioners in the US State Department believed that, the United States was taking a pragmatic approach toward Middle East democratization. Some officials asserted that US policy is flexible and applied to specific circumstances on a country-by-country and case-by-case basis. The political conditions and the orientation and legal status of Islamist movements in one country may be markedly different from another. According to one scholar, moderate Islamist parties are mistakenly treated as monolithic entities, when instead, groups differ among themselves on the question of how much of the historical Sharia (Islamic law) that is, the corpus of traditional Islamic legal
rulings inherited from the past can and should be revised (Barsalou 2005). Because it was constrained by its strategic relationships with authoritarian regimes, The US government might have been capable of selective engagement with some non-violent Islamist groups. In this viewpoint, such an approach could serve US interests by promoting reform where it is possible without disrupting relations with other key Arab partners. Although it would be far less ambitious than the grand rhetoric outlined by the Bush Administration and would have been left the US government open to accusations of promoting reform inconsistently.

Implementation of Democracy Promotion Policy:

There have been widespread criticisms of US democracy promotion efforts both inside and outside the Arab world. But even then, the critics have given a collective recognition that President Bush and his Administration made the pursuit of democratic reforms a high-profile issue. Not only that Bush Administration had provided supplementary resources for its effective implementation. The United States employed a variety of diplomatic tools and policy instruments to promote democracy in the Middle East. Behind the scenes bilateral diplomacy, in which US officials engage Arab governments on the reform issue, is considered by many experts to be one of the most effective ways of promoting democracy (Albright 2005). Public statements by Bush Administration officials visiting the region is another way for US policy makers to keep reform a visible issue in US dealings with Arab regimes. One of such prominent examples was Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice’s July 2005 policy speech on democracy at the American University of Cairo in Egypt. However, visiting US officials who raise the democratization issue are often accused of unfairly meddling in Arab affairs or as patronizing the Arab people. Islamist groups frequently reiterate such attacks, seizing on opportunities presented by visiting US delegations speaking on reform to criticize US policies in the Middle
US Democracy Programs:

Since the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks; the United States has significantly increased funding for democracy promotion in the Arab world. Measuring the effectiveness of democracy promotion is a difficult task. Democracy cannot be quantified or measured like traditional US foreign assistance for tangible projects, such as road construction, water resource development, and school improvement. Further, proponents of current policy said that the United States continued to spend far more resources on military assistance to the region than on reform. While this statement is factually correct, it focuses too narrowly on levels of spending rather than on the substance of US programming. Support for indigenous reformers do not necessarily require large amounts of financial assistance.

Congressional Action:

Congress also specified how the US democracy funds are spent on the ground. Traditionally, USAID’s Democracy and Governance grants have been awarded to international subcontractors to carry out specific programs. It is mainly due to certain Arab governments’ reluctance to allow US support for domestic groups. However, the Consolidated Appropriations Act specified that US funds for democracy and governance activities in Egypt are no longer subject to the prior approval of the Egyptian government (Congress 2004). USAID could channel funds toward non-governmental organizations in Egypt in coordination with an independent board of Egyptian political activists and experts. Funds for NGOs are awarded competitively by using an Annual Program Statement (APS) method that describes and publicly advertises the types of activities. USAID is interested in funding and then invites interested NGOs to submit proposals. There are quarterly meetings to review new proposals received as a result of the advertisement, and
awards are made throughout the year following those reviews.

**Supporting Organizations:**

**NED:** The National Endowment for Democracy (NED) is a semi-private, nonprofit organization created in 1983 to strengthen democratic institutions around the world through non-governmental efforts. [http://www.ned.org]

**NDI:** The National Democratic Institute for International Affairs (NDI) is a nonprofit organization funded by NED that works to strengthen and expand democracy worldwide. [http://www.ndi.org]

**IRI:** The International Republican Institute (IRI) is a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization funded by NED dedicated to advancing democracy, freedom, self-government, and the rule of law worldwide. [http://www.iri.org]

**MEPI:** The Middle East Partnership Initiative (MEPI) is a U.S. State Department program designed to promote political, economic, and educational development in the Middle East. [http://www.mepi.state.gov]

**USAID:** The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) is an independent federal government agency that supports economic and political development around the globe. [http://www.usaid.gov]

**The Middle East Partnership Initiative (MEPI):**

In December 2002 the Middle East Partnership Initiative (MEPI) was created to supplement the US democratization agenda. In unveiling the program, Powell explained, “Any approach to the Middle East that ignores its political, economic, and educational underdevelopment will be built upon sand” (Powell 2002). MEPI sought to influence the change by funding pilot projects, such as an election assistance program in Jordan and a program to monitor Yemeni parliamentary elections. The willingness of governments to allow such funding in their countries
signaled a tangible willingness to permit the advance of democratic governance. This shifted focus from traditional government-to-government aid programs and, instead, emphasized smaller grants to smaller NGOs. Despite claims by some commentators that the US government is obsessed with electoral as opposed to liberal democracy, MEPI’s list of grantees reflects an emphasis on civil society, judicial and media reform, and enfranchising women.

The largest portion of the MEPI budget supported political programs to strengthen democratic processes, create or expand public space for critical democratic debates, strengthen the role of free media, and promote the rule of law to ensure government accountability. The State Department tailored these programs to account for both local needs and the art of the possible. For example, it brought student leaders from countries such as Bahrain, Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Oman, and Saudi Arabia to Purdue, Notre Dame, George Washington University, and the University of Delaware (Purdue News 2004) and supported parliamentary training in Morocco for recently-elected politicians as that country’s political system began to open to a region-wide effort for judicial and legal reform (Department of State 2003). Because, “countries cannot succeed as democracies if more than half of their population is denied basic democratic rights” (Haass 2000). MEPI also seeks to improve women’s rights in order to increase women’s economic independence and participation in governance.

After initial start-up programs developed largely by MEPI staff, the office faced little problems because of an increasing reliance on US embassy staff and host governments for program recommendations. Many grants awarded during this period were benign. They brought little or no risk to the host government and did not do enough to advance democratization. There was a selection bias toward programs benefiting Arab governments, as opposed to those focusing on the civic
sector. This suggested the conventional dilemmas of many diplomats who, on one hand, might agree with the necessity of reform, but on the other, are reluctant to do anything to disrupt their relationships with senior government officials. Since then MEPI checked this tendency by deploying its own staff including many Foreign Service officers on long-term assignments to the region in which they can seek out local partners and NGOs independent of the US embassy.

Detractors of this program say that MEPI programs are too small and scattered to fulfill US policy goals for the region. But MEPI alone was not meant to be the entirety of policy. Diplomatic follow-up can magnify MEPI’s effectiveness. Some elements of the bureaucracy within the Department of State and US Agency for International Development (USAID) had been too slow to reflect the new emphasis on human rights and democracy promotion. Even though, a consistent message across the US foreign policy apparatus and its embassies overseas had been ensuring a smoother transition toward democracy.

Any question that a US commitment to democratize the Middle East had put to rest with second inaugural address of President Bush in January 2005 (Bush 2005). His subsequent speeches provided more definition to his approach. Noting problems faced by countries from Slovakia and Georgia to Iraq and Afghanistan, the president stated, “No nation in history has made the transition from tyranny to a free society without setbacks and false starts. What separates those nations that succeed from those that falter is their progress in establishing free institutions. So to help young democracies succeed, we must help them build free institutions to fill the vacuum created by change” (Bush 2005).

It is believed that MEPI can have a positive impact on the region by promoting democracy and economic development. MEPI began issuing small grants directly to NGOs in the Middle East in order to support political activists and
human rights organizations. MEPI grants were awarded to some NGOs to help train election monitors for the 2005 presidential and parliamentary elections in Egypt (Wall Street Journal 2005). Critics of this policy charge that MEPI, as a State Department-run program, has little credibility in the Arab world, as it awards grants to mostly American-run organizations to implement programs with little long-term impact (Hawthorne 2005). Some experts have recommended that MEPI be transformed into a private foundation in order to partly disassociate it from direct US government control (Sharp 2005: 6). US Officials have rejected this idea, asserting that the United States needs such policy tools to effect change in the region.

In countries such as Libya, Syria, and Tunisia that were lagging behind in democratization, US policymakers emphasized outreach and empowerment of civil society. Democratization policy continues to evolve. In response to criticism from some Middle Eastern leaders that democratization imposed from the outside could not work (USA Today 2005), the Bush Administration launched the “Fund for the Future.” The fund is a joint venture between Western and regional governments on one hand and the private sector on the other. Its goal is to support indigenous reformers to draw upon their ideas and their ideals to nurture grassroots organizations that support the development of democracy. Its objective also to build civil society, strengthening the rule of law, and ensure greater opportunity for health and education. However, the fund’s planned 2005 launch at the “Forum for the Future” summit in Bahrain failed to produce a formal agreement due to Egyptian demands that only government sanctioned NGOs be eligible. Such a condition, reflective of the strategy of many regional governments to create a class of government operated NGOs, would derail promotion of democracy and independent civil society.

*The Broader Middle East and North Africa Initiative (BMENA):*
BMENA is a multilateral initiative among G-8 countries and regional partners to promote democracy and reform in the “Broader Middle East.” The main component of BMENA is the convening of an annual conference designed to promote dialogue between the political activists, who support reforms and Arab and Western governments. The inaugural “Forum for the Future” was held in Rabat, Morocco in December 2004. The following year, the forum was held in Manama, Bahrain. A third meeting took place in Jordan in 2006. At this time, it was unclear what additional resources the international community would devote to BMENA or how the initiative will be institutionalized beyond its annual convention. By helping to create BMENA, the Bush Administration had been credited with raising awareness within the international community for the need for political and economic reform in Arab countries. However, BMENA was too broad to promote democratic reform effectively, and it was doubtful that BMENA could evolve into something more than a forum for inter-governmental dialogue.

Generally, BMENA countries support two funds. One is the “Foundation for the Future,” which is designed to channel financial grants toward non-governmental organizations in the region. This is to help civil society, strengthen the rule of law, to protect basic civil liberties, and ensure greater opportunity for health and education. Another is the “Fund for the Future,” which is designed to help businesses in the region, especially small and medium-sized enterprises, gain access to the capital they need to create jobs and economic growth. US contributions to both funds come from MEPI-controlled accounts and appropriations (Sharp 2006: 10).

**US Policy towards Morocco:**

Morocco has long been considered a key US partner in North Africa and the Arab world. There are multiple dimensions to the US-Moroccan relationship. Democracy
promotion and upholding human rights are one of the several pressing priorities for US policy makers. Morocco has a good record of assisting US efforts to promote Middle East peace and counter terrorism in the Sahara. Since the September 11th terrorist attacks, the United States had taken a number of concrete steps to further its relationship with Morocco. The steps were, increasing military and economic aid, concluding a free trade agreement, and sponsoring an international conference in Rabat on reform as part of the Administration’s “Broader Middle East and North Africa Initiative” (Sharp 2005). Morocco was eligible for funding under the Bush Administration’s new foreign aid initiative, “the Millennium Challenge Account.” In addition, Morocco had been used as a test case for the Administration’s other reform program, i.e. the State Department’s Middle East Partnership Initiative (MEPI). It was expected that deteriorating socio-economic conditions in Morocco could have lead to increased radicalism. This fear led to a number of new activities and increased US funding for education, healthcare, women’s right, job creation, and structural readjustment programs etc. The Moroccan government has welcomed all these activities in its own soil.

To a certain extent, US democracy promotion efforts in Morocco were largely regime friendly, as policy makers may be reluctant to disrupt strong US - Moroccan relations. Nevertheless, the United States involved more in Moroccan domestic politics and has sponsored several programs in which the Justice and Development Party i.e. PJD was an active participant. In fact, US diplomats and PJD party leaders openly acknowledged such participation. But the US officials expressed that there were no special outreach efforts to work with the PJD or any other Islamist group in Morocco. The PJD was simply treated as one of the several organizations, whose members attend National Democratic Institute (NDI) and International Republican Institute (IRI)-sponsored seminars on strengthening political parties and enhancing
campaign skills. Public opinion polls in 2006 conducted by IRI in Morocco have indicated that up to 47% of the Moroccan electorate were leaning toward supporting the PJD (Khalaf 2006).

Perhaps as a sign of the PJD’s growing activism and grasp of democratic politics, several policy analysts in Morocco noted that PJD members had seized the opportunities for additional training and technical support. They got this support from a variety of international non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to a far greater extent than older, more established Moroccan parties. It is also noteworthy that the PJD initially rejected participating in US government-sponsored training programs; however, over the time, its opposition subsided. According to Thomas Carothers, a democracy specialist at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, “I believe that any political party that accepts the political rules of the game and follows the law should be allowed to participate in the political process. Morocco’s PJD clearly has a legitimate role to play in Morocco’s electoral politics. I also think it is normal for the US government to develop and maintain contacts with a wide variety of legitimate political actors in a country, including those that may not like some elements of US foreign policy” (Rachidi 2005). US policy makers were mindful that the United States should pursue a policy of engagement with the PJD rather than ignore it. In May 2006, the US State Department’s International Visitor’s Program sponsored a visit of a senior PJD leader, Saad Eddine Othmani to the United States. Earlier to this the PJD had sponsored a March 2006 conference in Morocco entitled, “American Decision Making and its Impact on the Moroccan-American Relations.” It was a sign that the PJD itself might be eager to expand dialogue with the United States. When asked about US democracy promotion policy in the Middle East Othmani remarked that “We cannot deny the role of external factors, but the reforms have not been simply
imposed from outside. The US administration cannot achieve its goals at our expense, and should seek to build trust and identify common interests through a cooperative dialogue” (CEIP 2005).

US Engagement became complicated by internal divisions within Islamist organizations such as the PJD, in which liberal and conservative factions compete for influence. The PJD, while outwardly more moderate in its political discourse, has its hardliners, many of whom were opposed to better relations with the West and may be more emboldened following the Hamas victory in the January 2006 Palestinian legislative elections (OSC 2006). The PJD’s leadership was trying to balance its more progressive approach to politics with the needs of conservative Islamist party members. When asked about its relations with the United States and US policy in Iraq, one hardline PJD leader remarked that, “I’m not in favor of meeting Americans who are on official missions. They are killing Muslim people. I am against any relation with them. If they say they are going to leave Iraq, I don’t have any problem with meeting them. Our position is very clear. We don’t approve their policy” (Rachidi 2005).

Thus, the party had occasionally boycotted some US embassy-sponsored events, particularly during the times of regional tension. The PJD has demonstrated against the US presence in Iraq. The party also had criticized the United States and European Union for ending all direct support for the Palestinian Authority following the 2006 Hamas victory. Nevertheless, PJD leader Saad Eddine Othmani had been cautious in his remarks on Hamas, stating in a recent interview that the Hamas victory “was a major event that marked both the victory of democracy and of the strategy of resistance to the occupation. Hamas in government will be different from the Hamas in the opposition, and I do not rule out the possibility of its moving towards a search for a peaceful solution” (OSC 2005).
Overall, US policy makers had been careful not to overemphasize US contacts with the PJD. It is because there was a widespread public skepticism of all political parties, including the PJD for the United States in Morocco. Political observers focused intently on the 2007 parliamentary elections, and they were speculating that the PJD would have run the maximum number of candidates. In past elections, the PJD succumbed to government pressure and fielded candidates in just 20%-30% of electoral contests. The PJD, like the United States, takes a gradualist approach to political reform in Morocco. Also, it did not want to relinquish its position in the opposition. By staying in the opposition it could comfortably criticize government corruption and inefficiency without having the responsibility of running the country. It is also suggested that the PJD could have participated in the coalition government to develop experience in governance and improve its electoral chances in the future elections.

The ultimate goal of all Islamist groups is the establishment of a non-democratic state based on Islamic law (Sharia). That is the reason why the US government had been cautiously dealing with the Moroccan Islamist. It can be argued that the PJD’s non-violent approach to politics, disguises its eventual non-democratic agenda. Pursuing non-violence was merely a political tactic to get the power rather than abandonment of violence for greater cause. According to Robert Satloff, Executive Director of the Washington Institute for Near East Policy, the spread of radical Islamism, and not US unpopularity, is the most serious challenge to US interests in many Arab and Muslim societies. The solution as frequently expressed by liberal Moroccans cannot be found in reaching an accommodation with Islamists. Anti-Islamist Moroccans complain that Washington sends the wrong message when it provides parliamentary training funds that are used by Islamist legislators to become more effective critics of the
government (Satloff 2004).

The US policy would have been exclusively focused on promoting democratic alternatives to Islamists politics. US Government have always clarified that it was not favoring any particular group like the PJD, but treat all Moroccan parties equally. Some Moroccan media had echoed demands that the United States cease all contacts with Islamists. They feared that US policy might involuntarily empower organizations like the PJD and possibly lead to a Hamas-like outcome. The Moroccan government frequently warned US observers that non-violent Islamists in Morocco view electoral politics as a means to come to power and establish a theocracy in the kingdom.

Congress had been supportive of the Administration’s efforts to strengthen ties to Morocco. Congress approved a free trade agreement (FTA) with Morocco (P.L. 108-302) on August 17, 2004, and it came into effect on January 1, 2006. Congress had appropriated increasing amounts of foreign aid to Morocco to assist with countering terrorism, democratization, and the FTA. In FY2006, Morocco had received $10.890 million in Economic Support Funds (ESF), $12.375 million in Foreign Military Financing (FMF), $8.217 million in Development Assistance (DA), and $1.856 million for International Military Education and Training (IMET). For FY2007, the Administration had requested $18 million in ESF, $12.5 million in FMF, $5.4 million for DA, and $1.975 million for IMET (Migdalovitz 2006: 6).

**US Policy towards Egypt:**

The United States had long been advocated the promotion of democracy, human rights and political freedom in Egypt. Prior to the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001; economic reform superseded political reform in the US’ relations with Egypt. However, the recent push for democracy in the Middle East seen as a counterweight to Islamic militancy. The US policy towards Egypt had been revived by balancing
security and economic interests with democracy promotion policies. The Bush Administration employed a variety of diplomatic tools to encourage reform in Egypt. US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice made visits to Egypt and had spoken about the need for reform at the American University in Cairo and held meetings with political activists. The United States also had expanded its foreign aid and democracy programming activities in Egypt. The State Department’s Middle East Partnership Initiative (MEPI) began distributing small grants directly to NGOs in Egypt to support secular political activists and human rights groups, particularly during the presidential and parliamentary election seasons. Though the United States had been less willing to overtly pressure Egypt for its political reforms, but it was forthright for pushing the reform in many ways. When Egyptian authorities arrested, tried, and imprisoned Ayman Nour, the United States protested and reportedly withheld announcing its intention to negotiate a long sought after US-Egyptian free trade agreement. Although Nour had been labeled as an opportunist and minor political figure, but he was an opposition leader and runner-up in the 2005 presidential election. He represented a secular alternative to the ruling National Democratic Party (NDP), which practice Arab nationalism and Arab socialism.

Nevertheless, the depth of the US commitment to democratization in Egypt can never be beyond question. The doubt was raised particularly after the Hamas victory in Palestinian parliamentary elections. With the Hamas takeover of most of the Palestinian Authority, Egypt, the United States, and Israel have a shared purpose in containing Hamas and the spread of its violent Islamist influence into neighboring states. In this changed atmosphere, it was speculated that US policy makers might tone down their rhetoric on reform in Egypt. For example, when the Egyptian parliament voted to approve the two-year extension the nation’s 25-year old Emergency laws in April 2006, a move long opposed by the United States, the
Administration was careful not to overly condemn the maneuver, particularly as it came only days after several deadly terrorist attacks in the Sinai Peninsula (McCormack 2006).

At present, the Islamist dilemma in Egypt appears to perplex US policy makers and outside observers alike. The United States respects the Egyptian government’s wishes not to allow illegal Islamist organizations, such as the Muslim Brotherhood, to officially participate in US sponsored reform activities in Egypt. Reportedly, US non-governmental democracy organizations would have ensured that no Brotherhood participants attend US funded seminars or training programs. Moreover, Egyptian law prohibits even legal organizations or parties from accepting financial support from foreign entities. Nevertheless, the United States has not completely rejected having any contact with Brotherhood members. The US State Department had clarified that the United States would not deal directly with the Brotherhood since it was banned under Egyptian law, but Brotherhood members would not be barred from meetings between US officials and parliament members. According to J. Scott Carpenter, Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Near East Affairs at the US State Department, “There is recognition that there are a number of folks who have been elected to Parliament, and they are there. This is an issue for Egyptian society to deal with, it’s not something for us necessarily to involve ourselves with” (Daily Star Egypt 2006).

Given these barriers, the Bush Administration became cautious in mentioning the Islamist issue in Egypt. But still the possibility for informal dialogue between the US officials and some Egyptian Islamists do exist. The Al Wasat organization was an aspirant political party, unsuccessful in its registration attempts, whose legal status was precarious. This party could have been more responsive to any participation in US government sponsored democracy training programs rather than
an illegal organization like the Muslim Brotherhood. However, the US policy makers needed to be careful about appearing to favor any one group in Egyptian politics. In June 2006, the Egyptian government accused the local head of the International Republican Institute’s (IRI) Egypt program of meddling in Egypt’s internal affairs and demanded that the organization temporarily halt its activities there. US Officials were continually pressing Islamists on their views on issues of importance to US policy in the region. According to J. Scott Carpenter, Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Near East Affairs at the US State Department, “On specific things like protection of minorities and protection of women’s rights, that is something that in our discussions with Islamists parties we have to continue asking them: What is your position? Do you protect women’s rights? What about the Coptic Christian community in Egypt? It is important that we retain our clarity even as these groups struggle to come to a conclusion within the gray zones” (Carpenter 2006).

Islamists in Egypt would hardly welcome US dialogue in the first place due to their deep suspicion of Western intentions and overseas interference. It is noted that many Muslim Brotherhood members were opposed to US policy in the Middle East, and might want to clarify any appearance of cooperation in politics. There were always individual members who might not be as resistant as most party members to participating in US programs. For the most part, only a few Brotherhood members interacted with their American counterpart. Overall, the US policy reinforce, rather than initiate, local demands for accelerated political liberalization in Egypt. There was lack of consensus over which party the United States should strengthen. By limiting the realm of political space to either the ruling National Democratic Party or the Muslim Brotherhood, Egyptian authorities had forced the West to support the regime. Otherwise, Muslim Brotherhood will take the power
and it would be difficult for the US government to deal with them. Though many US programs are designed to foster what some call a “Third Way,” i.e. non-Islamist or secular liberal movements, regime action succeeded in preventing such attempts.

The US support for reform in Egypt did not necessarily have to resemble a zero-sum game. The United States was trying to refrain from openly supporting any opposition movement. Instead, it had promoted openess and provided resources that would enable Egyptians to address these problems themselves. According to Michele Dunn of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, “The principal role of foreign governments is not to negotiate with oppositionists but to deal with the Egyptian government. Thus, what the United States and Europe can and should do is press the Egyptian government to keep open the political space needed for productive dialogue between Islamists and secularists. Such a dialogue among Egyptians themselves is where solutions to the problem of Islamist inclusion in the political sphere can emerge” (Dunn 2006). It is also noteworthy that the Egyptian government, by limiting political space, had strengthened the West’s impatience with the pace of change in Egypt.

Through annual foreign operations and State Department appropriations legislation, Congress provided funding for reform in Egypt through the following programs: the United States Agency for International Development’s (USAID) Egypt Office; the Middle East Partnership Initiative (MEPI), a State Department program designed to encourage reform in Arab countries by strengthening Arab civil society, encouraging micro-enterprise, expanding political participation, and promoting women’s rights; the State Department’s Human Rights and Democracy Fund (HRDF), an account that funds human rights promotion in Muslim-majority countries; and the National Endowment for Democracy’s (NED) Muslim Democracy Program. Congress also required ensuring that US foreign
assistance for Egypt was being appropriately used to promote reform. In conference report language accompanying P.L.108-447, the FY2005 Consolidated Appropriations Act, and conferees specified “democracy and governance activities shall not be subject to the prior approval of the Government of Egypt (GoE). The managers intended this language to include NGOs and other segments of civil society that might not have been registered with, or officially recognized by, the GoE. However, the managers understood that the GoE should be kept informed of funding provided pursuant to these activities” (Conference Report 2004). P.L.109-102 (H.R.3057), the FY2006 Foreign Operations Appropriations Act, designates $100 million in economic aid (out of a total $495 million) for USAID education and democracy and governance programming. In addition, report language accompanying the bill stipulated that “not less than 50 percent of the funds for democracy, governance and human rights be provided through non-governmental organizations for the purpose of strengthening Egyptian civil society organizations, enhancing their participation in the political process and their ability to promote and monitor human rights” (Conference Report 2005). In June 2006, the House narrowly defeated an amendment (198-225) to H.R.5522, the FY2007 Foreign Operations Appropriations Bill, which would have reallocated $100 million in economic aid to Egypt and used it instead to fight AIDS worldwide and to assist the Darfur region of Sudan (Sharp 2008: 23). Many supporters of the amendment were dismayed by the Egyptian government’s spring 2006 crackdown on pro-democracy activists in Cairo.

**US Policy towards Jordan:**

Given Jordan’s dependence on foreign assistance from the United States and Europe, its government continually advertises its reform credentials. The Jordanian government sought to position itself as the regional model of a modernizing Arab state, particularly in the economic sphere. The pursuit of reform-minded programs
allowed Jordan to conform to the policy priorities of the United States. The US government provides large amounts of economic and military aid to Jordan. Jordanian leaders also were anxious to develop opportunities for the country’s largely young population, which faces unemployment. US Policymakers welcomed Jordan’s initiative, highlighting that positive development in the region was part of a US national security strategy, especially after the September 11, 2001, attacks. On October 24, 2000, the United States and Jordan signed a free trade agreement, leading to a dramatic increase in Jordanian exports to US markets.

One sector, which had already been targeted for reform, was Jordan’s educational system. In July 2003, the Education Ministry, in conjunction with USAID, the World Bank, and other international lenders, developed a program called the Educational Reform for a Knowledge-based Economy. Under this plan, Jordan, with help from Microsoft and Cisco Systems, had built computer labs in several public schools and developed a modern curriculum, which incorporates information technology. However, this initiative had drawn much criticism from Islamist deputies in Jordan’s lower house of parliament. Many Jordanian lawmakers were upset that 10th grade teachers were teaching a curriculum that drew distinctions between terrorism specifically suicide bombing and “legitimate resistance.” According to Islamic Action Front (IAF) deputy Moussa Wahsh, “the United States has pressured several Arab and Muslim countries to change their school curriculum under the slogan of modernization” (Daily Star, 2004). In early 2004, the Jordanian parliament held a special session in which several deputies expressed similar sentiments. The government had tried to balance the need to improve institutions; while avoiding Islamist charges that the government was beholden to outside or secular interests.

US democracy assistance to Jordan has focused on female participation in
politics. In 2003, King Abdullah established a six-seat quota for women parliamentarians in Jordan’s National Assembly, the 110-seat lower house of Parliament. In 2003, the National Democratic Institute (NDI) launched a women candidates’ training program for women wanting to run in local and parliamentary elections. NDI had trained four of the current six women in parliament. The International Republican Institute also runs programs in Jordan focused on overcoming political apathy and increasing citizen participation in politics.

Jordan has become a major target of Jihadi terrorist groups, particularly organizations operating from Iraq led by the terrorist mastermind Abu Mus‘ab al-Zarqawi himself a Jordanian citizen in exile. On November 9, 2005, nearly simultaneous explosions took place at three western-owned hotels in Amman i.e. the Radisson, Grand Hyatt, and Days Inn. In this heinous act, 58 persons were killed and approximately 100 others were seriously injured. The terrorist organization Al-Qaeda in Iraq headed by Zarqawi claimed responsibility for the act. Consequently, US officials became hesitant to push the monarchy too hard on the issue of political reform. While some IAF members, particularly women, participated in US-sponsored workshops, there was no concerted effort among US diplomats in Amman to engage the IAF. King Abdullah and other senior Jordanian officials have repeatedly emphasized that change is necessary for Jordan’s survival but that a reform process should be internally driven. On March 11, 2004, then Foreign Minister Marwan Muasher told the American audience at the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars that “We do not differ over the content of this reform,” but he went on to say that such a program should not be “imposed, or perceived to be imposed, in any way, from the outside” (Mausher 2004). With Jordan facing a terrorist threat emanating from Iraq in the east, and with Hamas in control of parts of the bordering West Bank, the United States appeared willing to accept
whatever pace the government sets for the political reform process.

Congress had supported Administration efforts to strengthen Jordan’s economy and military in recent years. Jordan had seen a steady increase in its aid since the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks. The war in Iraq also had led Congress to provide Jordan with additional assistance in appreciation of its efforts to train Iraqi police and army units. Between FY2002 and FY2005, Jordan received an annual average of $780 million in economic and military aid (including supplemental funding), up from an average of $246 million per year between FY1996 and FY2001 (Sharp 2006: 14). The Senate version of H.R.4939, the FY2006 Emergency Supplemental Bill, contains $100 million in economic aid for Jordan to continue and accelerate economic reforms.

**Explanation on Iraq:**

The initial justification the Bush Administration gave for the intervention in Iraq was the threat posed by Saddam Hussein’s WMD. It was of course discredited when no such weapons could be found in Iraq till the end of the Bush tenure. The second justification was the alleged connection between Saddam Hussein’s regime and Al Qaeda. This claim also had been discredited by most American experts on terrorism even before the war began, and indeed no evidence of any such connection had ever emerged. By summer 2003, only one justification for the war remained to the administration, and that was its claim that the United States could bring democracy to Iraq and that Iraq would then become a model, and perhaps even a base, for the spread of democracy to other countries in the Middle East, particularly Syria, Iran, and Saudi Arabia (Boyer 2004). Now, several years after the beginning of the Iraq War, the promise of democratization remained the only justification for the war. It was not surprising that the Bush administration kept telling the American people about the value and the necessity
of the US democratization project for Iraq and for other Muslim lands as well. The administration was always pointing to some impending political event to demonstrate that democracy in Iraq was just around the corner. Of course, whenever US military forces turned a corner in Iraq, they keep getting hit by the improvised explosive devices planted by the Iraqi insurgents.

The US democratization project in Iraq and in the Muslim world fits into a long chain of US democratization efforts that reach back to the beginning of the twentieth century. Some of these efforts were successful, and some were not. Together they form a pattern that can tell us something about the prospects for the democratization efforts now underway in Iraq (Snyder, 2003).

**The American Way:**

The twentieth century witnessed numerous attempts to bring democracy to countries that hitherto had been ruled by authoritarian regimes. The great majority of these efforts were promoted by the United States, and many of them were backed by US military intervention and occupation. The twentieth century was the American century; and it was also the century of democratization. Indeed, the century began with the United States’ engagement in three separate military occupations to bring democracy to former colonies of the Spanish empire: the Philippines, Cuba, and Puerto Rico. The occupation of Philippines to install democracy and the successful suppression of the insurgents were especially bloody and costly. Four thousand US soldiers lost their lives in the Philippine Insurrection (1899–1902), along with 16,000 Filipino guerrillas and as many as 200,000 civilians (Kurth 2004). A decade later, President Woodrow Wilson defined the essence of the new century, which might be seen also as the Wilsonian century. He first sent the US Marines into several Latin American countries, declaring that he was going to teach the South Americans to elect good men. Then he sent the entire US military
into Europe, declaring that the United States was going to make the world safe for democracy. The United States at the beginning of the twenty-first century attempted to use military conquest and occupation to bring democracy in the Middle East. It vaguely defined the process, and justified it to its allies. This is simply the latest chapter added in a grand American narrative that has been under way for more than a hundred years. By now, many countries know what it means to be, in the words of Jean- Jacques Rousseau, “forced to be free” (Montgomery 1957).

Conducting the Iraq War and supplementing regime change was the first phase of the grand project that would bring democracy to Iraq and its neighbors, the Muslim world. The Bush Administration and neoconservative writers pointed to the US successes in West Germany and Japan as historical precedents. They were notably silent, however, about the large numbers of US failures or disappointments elsewhere, particularly in the Caribbean Basin and Central America, to say nothing of Vietnam (Boot 2003: 125). Nor did they mention the most recent, wide-ranging, and numerous democratization efforts, in the former Soviet bloc. If there were any honest discussion about the prospects for democratization in the Middle East, then the discussion would have concluded that the prospects were bleak. But for whatever reason the Bush Administration and the neoconservative promoters of the war chose not to consider the cases of failure in their discourse.

**Obstacles to Democracy Promotion:**

The challenges of democracy promotion, and the specific features of the United States’ role in the Middle East complicated the formulation of more dynamic yet realistic approach.

First, America’s ability to influence internal political developments in Arab countries is marginal. Democratic transitions mainly are driven by complex
internal factors, with outside forces having a secondary impact at best. In most Arab countries democracy is not an impossible long-term goal, but current political, economic, and regional conditions are not favorable for the growth of democracy. It would have been much easier for the United States to intervene in support of popular democratic forces that already mobilized for the change in their own countries, but these forces do not exist.

By perceiving toward the West, domestic group with a political reform agenda were unlikely to soon become American allies in democracy promotion. Across the Middle East, Islamists remained the main opposition group. But Islamists were not seeking United States support; instead a major part of their platform was rejection of the United States Middle East Policies. The few existing liberal groups were deeply suspicious of the United States for its past support of autocratic regime. They were also skeptical about its policy of overthrowing Saddam Hussein, and its perceived disregard of Palestinian right. In addition, many Arab countries had pressing economic needs, with a considerable number of Middle Eastern states had been suffering from recessions and rising unemployment. In this situation, it was rhetorical for the United States to focus so much on “democracy promotion,” when many Arab people would have interested to find a job or wanted to feed their families.

Finally, US policymakers remained deeply ambivalent about whether calling for democratic change was truly in America’s interest. The main concerns of the United States in the Middle East were an uninterrupted, cheap supply of oil; political challenge in Iraq, Israel-Palestine peace settlement; and moreover seeking support in the war on terrorism. These all still seem best fulfilled by the cooperation of friendly stable regime rather than the countries experiencing the turmoil and uncertainties of democratic transformation.
Democracy Promotion and its Criticism:

After 9-11, the Bush administration concluded that, decades of US support for non-democratic leaders in the Middle East led not to stability but rather contributed to terrorism (Haass 2003). While US government support for democracy promotion is not new, such sustained attention and allocation of resources marks a new emphasis on democratization. Because of the conflicts in Afghanistan and Iraq, too often critics misconstrued US democratization policy as military in focus. During the past quarter century, over eighty countries have become democracies, yet only in five of them- Grenada, Panama, Serbia, Afghanistan, and Iraq did US military intervention play a role (Freedom House 2005). These examples and the post-World War II experiences of Germany and Japan demonstrated that democratization can occur through use of force, but it is not the preferred or prevalent method. Washington’s primary commitment to Middle East democratization support remained in the realm of coordinated diplomacy and international programs.

Supporting democracy is a long-term investment, but when coupled with diplomatic commitment, it works. Chile, El Salvador, South Korea, Taiwan, Georgia, and Ukraine, where US administrations patiently employed democracy policies for seven to ten years. It was much before the “overnight” victories of citizens against entrenched regimes. In all of these countries, regional experts advocated that democracy could not take root for various cultural reasons; and realists advocated that democracy should not take root (Muravchik 1992).

With the exception of Israel, Middle Eastern states had experienced decades of undemocratic practices with deeply entrenched personalities whose interests were inimical to reform. The Bush administration committed Washington to be as supportive of accountable and representative governance in the Middle East. Building on the experiences of Middle Eastern countries that had already begun to
open their systems, the Bush administration sought to work at the grassroots level by encouraging US nongovernmental organization’s partnerships with local reformers. Diplomats intensified these efforts by emphasizing the importance of democratic change. The strategy had already borne fruit. Regional reformers, such as Saad Eddin Ibrahim of Egypt, who was hopeless in the past decade, recently believed that meaningful political reforms could be possible. Important steps toward expanded democratic participation had occurred in countries such as Kuwait, Bahrain, and even Saudi Arabia. In reaction, longtime US allies with less than democratic systems such as Egypt and Tunisia sought to counter the shift in Washington’s priorities on democracy and human rights.

**Washington’s Explanation:**

In the months after 9/11, there was a debate within the administration over democracy and human rights policy. Some senior and mid-level officials saw the attacks as the end of a decade-long period of American supremacy. America was not threatened ever, and therefore could afford the luxury of not being concerned with the internal practices of other nations. The shock of 9/11 had diminished the diplomatically inconvenient issues of human rights and democracy. Many people, who had served in the Reagan administration, drew parallels between the 1980s and a post-9/11 world. In the 1980s, they believed, the US success was in part due not only to stating what America stood against communism, but also in enunciating a counter vision of democracy and freedom. Some in the Reagan administration also had viewed democratization as a weapon with which to roll back the Soviet Union (Kaufman 2000). In Philippines in 1986, and in Chile two years later, democratization also became a tool to ensure that even non-democratic allies did not fall prey to Soviet-backed revolutionaries. Democratization was not
the only method of ensuring a US Cold War victory, but it was a significant part of a broader strategy.

National Security Advisor Condoleezza Rice signaled the beginning of a resolution to the debate just a week after the attacks. She said, “Our values matter to us abroad. We are not going to stop talking about the things that matter to us—human rights, religious freedom and so forth and so on. We’re going to continue to press those things” (Rice 2001). Secretary of State Colin Powell later added, “We have a vision of a region where respect for the sanctity of the individual, the rule of law, and the politics of participation grow stronger day by day” (Powell 2001). Other administration officials also restated the importance of human rights and democracy in US diplomacy in general and to the Middle East in particular. President Bush ended the debate when he placed democracy and human rights in the context of the war on terror in his January 2002 State of the Union Address. While media attention focused upon his formulation of an “Axis of Evil,” more consequential was his statement of the importance of democratization for the region. He said, “America will always stand firm for the non-negotiable demands of human dignity: the rule of law; limits on the power of the state; respect for women; private property; free speech; equal justice; and religious tolerance. America will take the side of brave men and women who advocate these values around the world, including the Islamic world” (Bush 2002). Such a statement marked the first time a US president talked so prominently about human rights in the Muslim world.

Within the State Department, a group of officials in the Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs and the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor was already working to implement the President’s words more concretely. During 2002,
the two bureaus combined resources to spend or commit US$29 million for programs to advance democracy in the Middle East (Department of State 2002).

When President Bush spoke at West Point in June 2002, he drew clear parallels between the Cold War and the post-9-11 world: “The war on terror will require resolve and patience; it will also require firm moral purpose. In this way our struggle is similar to the Cold War. Now, as then, our enemies are totalitarians, holding a creed of power with no place for human dignity. Now, as then, they seek to impose a joyless conformity, to control every life and all of life. America confronted imperial communism in many different ways—diplomatic, economic, and military. Yet moral clarity was essential to our victory in the Cold War. When leaders like John F. Kennedy and Ronald Reagan refused to gloss over the brutality of tyrants, they gave hope to prisoners and dissidents and exiles, and rallied free nations to a great cause” (Bush 2002).