US Civil-Society Assistance
to the Arab World
The Cases of Egypt and Palestine

IMCO BROUWER

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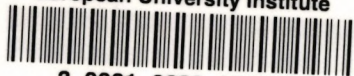
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ROBERT SCHUMAN CENTRE
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INTRODUCTION[1]

Arab Political Regimes

If there is one region in the world in which democracy is generally considered to be extremely weak or entirely absent and difficult or impossible to develop in the near future, it is the Arab world. At the end of the 20th century, none of the twenty-two members of the Arab League has a democratic regime and nor can be said to be democratizing. The majority of them did not even experience political liberalization[2] (viz. Bahrain, Comoros, Djibouti, Iraq, Libya, Mauritania, Oman, Qatar, United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, Somalia, Sudan, and Syria). However, in the 1980s and the 1990s nine Arab countries, including the most populous ones, did experience at least some, and in a few cases very significant, political liberalization (viz. Algeria, Egypt, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Morocco, Palestine, Tunisia, and Yemen).

While the reforms introduced in Kuwait and Yemen were significant for their particular contexts, the respective political regimes are still not very liberal, not to mention democratic. Palestine[3] experienced significant political liberalization since 1994, especially taking into consideration that the Palestinian Territories still have an undefined status, that the Israeli occupation and influence over the Palestinian polity continues, and that Yassir Arafat has showed an inclination to an authoritarian style of government. In Lebanon, which since the end of the 1980s has also experienced significant political liberalization, the process is jeopardized by, among other things, the continuing Syrian veto power over the Lebanese polity. Algeria demonstrated the fastest and boldest process of political liberalization of the entire Arab world. It seemed for a moment that it was on the verge of democratizing. However, the process was aborted when the incumbents faced total defeat and the Islamist party a total victory. Instead of letting the democratically elected forces take power, a new form of authoritarian regime was established. As a result, a conflict broke out which may have cost more than 75,000 lives. Between the end of the 1980s and the mid-1990s, Jordan was another Arab country that looked promising in terms of political liberalization. Many reforms were introduced, but when the King felt he was losing control over the process, he turned the clock backwards and introduced a number of restrictions on political freedoms, though maintaining a number of others. At the end of the 20th century, Morocco is acclaimed as the most promising case of political liberalization in the Arab world - notwithstanding the fact that it is an absolute monarchy. Over the past decade, Morocco changed from a major human-rights

violator to probably the Arab country that observes human rights most strictly. It is also the only Arab country where a former 'opposition' leader heads a government. With the death of Hassan II and the succession of his son Mohammed VI, the process of political liberalization seems to be continuing its course. Paradoxically, the two countries which were among the politically most liberalized Arab countries in the 1980s both, albeit to a very different extent, experienced a downward trend during the entire 1990s. Tunisia turned into one of the most restricted political regimes of the region. In Egypt too, the political regime has increasingly become more restricted since the end of the 1990s, although maintaining, unlike Tunisia, significant freedoms but falling behind Jordan, Lebanon, and Morocco.

The nine Arab countries that at least minimally politically liberalized in the 1980s and 1990s have, notwithstanding many and huge differences, at least two factors in common. First, not surprisingly, the main objective of the Arab incumbents is to stay in power - something they almost without exception succeeded in doing better than incumbents of any other region in the world. To that end, all Arab incumbents have introduced measures of political liberalization or political restriction only and exclusively either as a form of crisis management or as a form of crisis preemption (with the possible exception of Morocco). In fact, Arab incumbents have been reluctant to introduce measures of political reform and have been less reluctant to repress political freedom and competition. Cynically, but not unrealistically, the incumbents base the decision to introduce or repress political freedom and competition on a cost-benefit analysis. Sometimes the costs of regression can be extremely high (e.g. Algeria), but in most cases it is 'limited' and in any case 'manageable'. This type of 'crisis management and preemption' is facilitated by the fact that the ruling coalition in all Arab countries is small and in most cases (with the possible exception of Algeria and Lebanon) led by a strong and (relatively) uncontested leader - either monarchs or what has been labelled 'presidential monarchs', i.e. those that are nominally elected presidents but *de facto* rule their entire life (and sometimes attempt to have their sons succeed them, as in Egypt). It has been argued that one of the crucial characteristics for processes of political liberalization and democratization to start is that within the ruling coalition factions favouring political change should emerge and distinguish themselves from those in the ruling coalition that do not favour such change. For political liberalization and democratization to succeed, the reformers (or soft-liners) should be able to challenge and eventually control the latter (hard-liners). The problem in the Arab world is that the ruling coalitions are predominantly monolithic and conservative and that reformers are either absent or constitute a small part of them.

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Second, most of the nine countries where some form of political liberalization occurred, formally a number of provisions exist for political freedom and competition. Human-rights offices, departments or even ministries have been established to monitor the national human-rights situation. A large variety of civil-society organizations are allowed to function, as well as press freedom. In addition, nominally multi-party systems emerged and elections are held regularly for national and sometimes for local governments as well as for the head of State (except, of course, for Jordan, Kuwait, and Morocco). The practice, however, is rather different. Human rights are violated in virtually all these countries, civil-society organizations are extremely closely monitored by the authorities, and a plurality of parties does not imply political pluralism, not to mention real potential for alternation of power through elections. But even if some 'opposition' forces gain some seats in parliaments, these parliaments themselves have little or no power vis-à-vis the government, not to mention vis-à-vis the president or the monarch. In short, many formal provisions for political freedom and competition as well as democratic institutions exist in these nine Arab countries, but substantially they are weak and precarious.

Arab Civil Societies → excluding po. parties ?!

An image persists that civil societies are conspicuous for their absence or their weakness in the Arab world. It is presumed that the Arab/Islamic culture together with the long-standing authoritarian regimes has impeded the development of anything similar to Western civil society. Without any doubt, Arab countries have no civil societies identical to the ones in the West. However, Arab and Western countries have more than one thing in common in this realm, though there are also significant differences. As has convincingly been demonstrated by general overviews[4] and detailed studies[5], in many Arab countries civil-society organizations have existed for decades, in some cases more than a century. As in the West, many of these organizations are entirely based upon voluntary participation. As with many Western civil-society organizations, they are often inspired by religious motivations. Contrary to the West, in many cases civil-society organizations have been brought directly under government control (e.g. trade unions). In other cases, the State sets up and runs organizations which in the West would be organizations functioning independently of the State. In addition, as opposed to the West, legislation regarding civil-society organizations is extremely restricted. Not necessarily different from some Western experiences, civil-society organizations are 'politicized' in two distinct ways. First, they are divided along different ideological lines and, second, they are used (or even created) by political

parties or factions (both governmental and opposition, including Islamic) for political struggles. In addition, new forms of civil-society organizations are emerging that look identical to their counterparts in the West, i.e. professional non-governmental organizations. Finally, many of these civil-society organizations can be considered to be minimally 'civic', i.e. tolerant of diverging identities and opinions.

In sum, in all nine Arab countries that experienced political liberalization during the past two decades a wide variety of civil-society organizations exist and are active. Whether they form a civil society in the Western sense of the word depends largely on the definition of the term. If it stands for a space in which citizens organize themselves on a voluntary basis and their organizations are not government-controlled, most of the nine Arab countries have a civil society, albeit a weak one. If it stands for civil-society organizations challenging the State, most of the nine countries have a civil society too.

Democracy Assistance

Western democracy promotion & protection to non-democratic, democratizing and newly democratized countries existed even before the Second World War. However, the democratic transitions of Latin America first and of Central and Eastern European countries subsequently- the latter concomitant with the collapse of the Soviet Union and the emergence of a new international situation - have boosted Western democracy promotion & protection enormously. In addition, a shift has taken place from more traditional forms of democracy promotion & protection - such as military intervention and sanctions - to new forms (labelled democracy assistance) - such as assistance to reform constitutions, electoral laws, parliaments, judiciaries, bureaucracies (decentralization), to monitor elections, and to a large variety of civil-society organizations (including Human-rights organizations, think tanks, and organizations that provide civic education).

Another recent development is that more and more non-democratic countries are exposed to democracy promotion & protection and especially to democracy assistance. Since the mid-1990s at least ten Arab countries (Algeria, Egypt, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Morocco, Oman, Palestine, Tunisia, and Yemen) have received democracy assistance, albeit to very different extents and in different forms. The number and variety of donors involved in these activities is unwieldy. All Western governments, a number of major Inter-Governmental Organizations (e.g. UNDP, ILO, UNESCO), and a huge number of Western Non-Governmental Organizations

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have developed democracy assistance to the Arab world, investing tens of millions of USD every year since the first half of the 1990s. The forms of democracy assistance provided to the Arab world are similar to those provided to other non-democratic countries. Civil-society assistance - i.e. all forms of assistance that aims at developing civil society, especially but not exclusively civil-society organizations (including, for example, human-rights organizations) and the provision of civic education - is an important component of it.

Civil-society Assistance

In this essay I will focus on civil-society assistance. The main reason is that civil-society assistance is potentially politically and culturally more sensitive than other forms of democracy assistance (such as assistance to the legislative or judiciary). In countries with more or less authoritarian regimes, State control over civil society is crucial. External support to strengthen or even establish civil-society organizations that engage in a variety of activities, including monitoring and where possible criticizing governmental malpractice, is obviously a sensitive issue for the donors and for the target countries' governments. This picture is even further complicated by the fact that parts of (civil) society in the target countries oppose not only their governments but also foreign assistance to their societies. In addition, and more subtly, large segments of the population of most Arab countries are sensitive and suspicious about foreign actors' motives behind democracy assistance. Parts of these populations are exposed particularly to civil-society assistance. Donors need to be aware of these sensitivities and find ways to avoid open refusal. In any case, as the following examples show, this relatively difficult environment has not discouraged donors. In Egypt, for example, projects of civil-society assistance include: (1) the provision of civic education to women in poor neighborhoods of Cairo to encourage them to vote in elections; (2) the creation of a forty million USD NGO Service Centre in the same city; (3) the training of young party officials of the Egyptian ruling party; (4) support for private voluntary organizations[6] in rural Egypt to draw local government officials into more democratic forms of governance; (5) the sponsorship or establishment of think tanks to check government policies and the functioning of the legislature. In Morocco support is provided to (1) improve the rights of women in the workplace and in unions; (2) support unions themselves to strengthen the capability to communicate with their members, provide collective bargaining and leadership skills; (3) support business associations to strengthen their institutional capabilities and have voice in matters of public policies. In many Arab countries a large variety of human-rights organizations are supported to inform citizens of their rights, to

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report abuses, and to assist citizens in trials. In some cases (especially in Palestine), prison guards and police officers get trained to become more respectful of human rights.

The Cases of Egypt and Palestine

In this contribution I will focus on civil-society assistance to Egypt and Palestine. I have chosen Egypt for a variety of reasons. Civil-society assistance to Egypt is significant. In Egypt political liberalization was introduced first in the 1970s and again in the 1980s, while in the 1990s the political regime became more and more restricted. It is under these circumstances of limited and diminishing political liberalization that external donors have to operate. Moderate Islamic forces have been important social and political actors for many decades in Egypt, while radical violent Islamic forces have put the incumbents under strong pressure since the beginning of the 1990s. Foreign actors, including democracy assistance, consider Egypt's stability as crucial for maintaining and furthering peace with Israel. In fact, most donors of democracy assistance, especially governments but also inter-governmental and, to a lesser extent, non-governmental organizations, have accepted or even been sympathetic to the hard-handed policy of the Egyptian incumbents against radical and moderate Islamic actors alike. Therefore, the Egyptian case is, among other things, illustrative how the goal of democracy promotion is balanced (or outweighed) by the objective of political stability.

Palestine is in a number of ways a contrasting case to that of Egypt. It is not a State (while Egypt is one of the oldest nation States in the world); at the most it is a State in the making, and the struggle for independence (now transferred to the negotiating table) continues, negatively influencing the process of political liberalization. In Palestine, all institutions have to be built from scratch (while in Egypt they are old and considered to be almost impossible to reform). Palestine is a small society, in contrast to Egypt, the most populous Arab country. The size of democracy assistance to Palestine is very significant, in democracy assistance pro capita terms possibly among the largest in the world, while it is much more modest in Egypt. A final difference between the two cases is that the leverage of external donors over the Palestinians is significant - because of their need for international recognition and their exhausted resources (thanks to the struggle for independence and the Israeli occupation) - while Egypt has much more resources to challenge foreign actors' agendas. The cases have also a few things in common: for example, the (perceived) need of donors to balance democracy promotion with stability (which in turn would guarantee the peace process and the security of Israel). In

addition, in both cases moderate and radical Islamic forces represent the political opposition. In sum, although I do not attempt to make a systematic comparison between the two cases, the analyses of two rather different cases will help to throw some light on the dynamics of democracy assistance in general and civil-society assistance in particular in the context of the Arab world.

This essay focuses mainly on US civil-society assistance because the US is a major donor of democracy assistance in general and civil-society assistance in particular. Only in passing will some references be made to European programmes. It is even more important to stress that this essay is written from a donor perspective and pays only limited indirect attention to the perspective of the recipients. This does not imply that I consider donors more important actors than recipients, I don't. It is simply the result of the fact that this essay is a first result of an ongoing research project in which extensive attention will be paid to the perspective of recipients and the many facets of interaction between donors and recipients.

In the first section of this essay, I describe briefly the conditions of the Egyptian and Palestinian political regimes and civil societies and some factors that determine these conditions. These are the contexts in which the foreign donor intervenes. In the second section, I describe and analyse civil-society assistance, focusing especially on donors' strategies. In particular, I pay attention to the idea that civil-society assistance necessarily leads to democratization, an idea that donors explicitly or implicitly give as justification for their assistance but have neither thought through nor proven to be right. Finally, in the third section, I discuss the issue of impact of civil-society assistance and some ways to possibly improve it.

LOCAL CONDITIONS

Egypt's Political Regime

[handwritten: Formal → democracy]

Egypt has a more authoritarian regime today than it had in the mid-1980s, notwithstanding the fact that a number of institutions are in place which are generally associated with democracies. In the Egyptian case, however, they do not function along democratic lines. For example, elections are held regularly with a multiplicity of parties (officially thirteen political parties are registered, but not all of them choose to compete in elections) and a large number of candidates. However, elections are not free and not fair. The dominant National Democratic Party has so far always systematically won at least two thirds of the parliamentary seats (a crucial issue since the parliament proposes by a two-thirds majority the sole presidential candidate, who has subsequently to be confirmed by referendum). Within these clear and unchangeable limits, there is some room for opposition parties. Three of them - the liberal Wafd party, the leftist Tagammu party, and the Labour party, which has acquired an Islamic identity - have some visibility (through their newspapers) but little electoral following. Instead, the potentially most representative political force in the country, the Muslim Brotherhood, is not allowed to present itself in elections. Attempts to form an alternative party that would allow Muslim Brothers to run have been continuously blocked. On occasions, Muslim Brother members have attempted to run as independent candidates or as candidates on other parties' lists. However, they have increasingly been 'discouraged' or simply not been allowed to run.

One of the results of these neither free nor fair elections is that the Egyptian parliament, the oldest in the region, has little weight in a political system in which power is tilted to the President who, among other things, has strong legislative powers and can dissolve parliament. While national elections are at least held regularly, elections for other public positions such as mayors of towns were abolished 'to reduce conflict'. The judiciary, especially the Supreme Constitutional Court, is relatively independent and has on a number of occasions taken decisions against the executive. On two such occasions, it decided that electoral laws were unconstitutional, and as a result these laws had to be changed and new elections held. The Egyptian military does not have a direct role in political decisions on who is allowed to run for elections or not (as, for example, in Turkey). However, its role in Egyptian politics and society can hardly be overstated. The president is a former military officer, like all former presidents, ministers of defence, and many

other ministers. The military cannot be discussed by anyone and its mere size and role in the economy and society is enormous.

Since the electoral way to political change has been blocked, political and social forces have taken alternative ways to attempt to have some political influence. First, the relatively free printed press (radio and television are under strict governmental control) provides one channel for expression. Second, since the 1980s, political activity by the opposition had shifted to the professional unions - notably those of engineers, physicians, and schoolteachers – where fierce political competition has taken place and where Islamists were able to obtain majorities. Although the political power of these unions is limited – they do not serve as full alternatives for political parties - the incumbents put them under direct State control by appointing bureaucrats to their boards, closing yet another venue for expressing political views alternative to those of the ruling coalition.

A third way of expressing political opposition has been the use of violence by a number of Islamic groups. Between 1992 and 1994, these groups challenged the Egyptian State by attacking and sometimes killing major politicians and public figures and tourists, creating fear among the incumbents and causing a major drop in tourist revenues. Eventually, the battle (not necessarily the war) was won militarily by the State. One of its effects was that - although Egyptian intellectuals and a substantive amount of foreign analysts would argue that Egypt is too different from Algeria ever to become 'Another Algeria' (i.e. a situation in which democratization would lead to Islamists almost gaining power) – the polity became more restricted. Egyptian bureaucrats and politicians use the Algerian experience as an excuse for their repressive policies. The international community, including donors of civil-society assistance, have shown 'understanding' for the Egyptian incumbents' arguments and policies.

Egyptian Civil Society

Egypt has a vibrant civil society. According to official figures Egypt has about 13,000 legal civil-society organizations (i.e. those that are registered with the Ministry of Social Affairs). Virtually all of them are service-providing associations. In terms of interest representation, Egypt counts 23 official labour unions (plus a certain number of illegal unions), 26 chambers of commerce, a dozen business and bankers' associations, and 21 professional associations[7]. Furthermore, as I have noted in the previous section, there are thirteen legalized political parties. However, only a few of them have any members to speak of, with

most made up of only a few elites. In terms of major social organizations that have a large membership and a strong potential for political mobilization and representation, the Muslim Brotherhood should be mentioned. In terms of advocacy NGOs, there has been a strong increase in their numbers over the past two decades. Egypt counts more than a dozen human-rights groups, and about a dozen organizations that monitor State policies and provide civic education have been established in recent years. The printed media, as I mentioned, are still relatively free, although recently attempts have been made to curb some of their freedom. This representation of Egyptian civil society does not capture its extension or its vitality. One of its main elements is the numerous and active private voluntary associations that assist citizens that the State is unable or unwilling to reach. These associations are often related to mosques (but also, to a lesser extent, to the Coptic Church), are run by professionals who give some of their time to volunteer in such structures, and are financed by the collection of *zakat* (alms). Notwithstanding dominant and almost hegemonic interpretations in the West, the Islamic identity of many of these associations has limited implications at the political level. They seem not to be channels to recruit cadres or votes or to mobilize citizens, nor to commit radical and violent acts[8]. Nor would it be easy to rally Egyptians around the idea of establishing an Islamic State. It is true that most Egyptians have a strong Islamic identity (except for the 10 percent of Copts) and they follow Islamic traditions very faithfully - as is illustrated by the large proportion of individuals who observe Ramadan. At the same time, however, Egyptians are secular in many ways. An analogy can be drawn with those who observe Catholic holidays - often without following many of the precepts of Catholicism - without wanting to establish a Catholic State.

The Egyptian State is paranoid regarding the issue of control of civil society. A number of organizations that would have been established by citizens in other countries, such as agricultural cooperatives, have been set up and are controlled by the State. At the time of the Revolution (1952), the State took over independent organizations - such as chambers of commerce, trade unions, the federation of industries – and never gave up control over them. Professional unions, which previously enjoyed some freedom, were increasingly put under State control through a law adopted in 1993. On May 28, 1999 the Egyptian People's Assembly adopted a new law - replacing after long debates the infamous Law No. 32 of 1964 - to regulate civil-society organizations. This Law on Associations and Civil Institutions is as restrictive as its predecessor. Among other things, it allows the State to intervene in the administrative and financial affairs of the civil-society organizations. The State can dismiss board members, appoint government

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representatives, and prevent civil-society organizations receiving foreign funding. The fear of the ruling coalition has been well expressed by the Minister of Insurance and Social Affairs, who overviews civil-society organizations and especially NGOs: 'I am not allowing this [new] law for the creation of 14,000 political parties".[9] A number of, especially, members of human-rights organizations have stated that they prefer to go to prison rather than comply with the provisions of the new law, if President Mubarak ratifies it and it comes into force. Some expect Mubarak to take time, implying that the old law No. 32 remains in force.

The issue of foreign funding is very sensitive and frequently the subject of public debate and even campaigns. In the winter of 1998-99 it again came to the fore with the arrest of the general secretary of the Egyptian Organization for Human Rights because his organization had received funds from the British Parliament which had been used to write a report on human-rights abuses involving Copts and Muslims. He, his organization, and the Britons, were accused of stirring religious strife and destroying the national image abroad. A large number of articles were written in newspapers, showing that the issue is very sensitive and that recipient NGOs operate in an uncertain and vulnerable situation which, to be sure, the Egyptian government does nothing to ameliorate (while at the same time itself receiving billions of dollars in foreign aid).

In sum, Egypt has a vibrant but heavily controlled civil society in which groups with an Islamic identity play an important role. The vast majority cannot be said to pose major threats to political liberalization or democratization. On the rare occasions when they were able to participate to a limited extent in elections for Parliament (such as the 1987 elections) or to be active in civil-society organizations without (in)direct State intervention, they have shown to stick to the rules. Relatively small but relatively effective (in terms of attracting attention and causing fear), radical violent Islamic groups have chosen another path. But as has been stated on many occasions, the moderate Islamic actors should not be put in the same heap as the radical ones, something the Egyptian incumbents have done[10]. The Egyptian incumbents have not only been doing exactly that to undermine the credibility of the moderate Islamists, but also been using all possible means to cripple and control other segments of civil society, not only making the lives of many Egyptians difficult but also creating a difficult environment for foreign civil-society assistance.

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Palestine's Political Regime

After twenty-seven years of Israeli occupation, in 1994 the Palestinian Authority was established, to rule directly first over Gaza and Jericho, and subsequently over other areas of the West Bank. In the following five years the Palestinian Authority remained a somewhat ambiguous structure with a high number of personnel, a low level of efficiency, and few institutionalized mechanisms for decision-making and control. On the one hand, this ambiguity is structural because the Palestinian Authority was established without creating an independent State. The struggle against Israel for independence continues in the absence of a peace process or clear perspectives how the future arrangement will look like. Israel and a number of Western governments (especially the US) not only tolerate but even encourage Arafat to be tough with internal violent opposition to the peace process, which means tolerating major violations of human rights and undemocratic rule in Palestine. This situation is also an opportunity for Arafat to establish highly personalized rule and maintain a low level of institutionalization of power. Arafat's style of ruling is less the result of his cultural identity than of pure calculation. Having lived outside the territories for decades, Arafat felt the need to obtain control over a Palestinian polity and society by replacing and co-opting the leaders of the Intifada, and to substitute a decentralized power structure by one that centralized all power in his hands. Other goals were considered to be secondary, such as negotiating a good final agreement with Israel, or to be avoided, such as establishing a democratic and efficient government in Palestine. To achieve his main goal, Arafat uses, besides replacement and co-optation, a huge amount of security personnel distributed over nine (!) different bodies all reporting directly to him[11]. He also relies heavily on patronage, distributing government jobs and other material and non-material rewards.

In January 1996 the first elections were held both for the 'presidency' and for the Palestinian Legislative Council. Arafat won virtually unopposed with 88%. For the Council an impressive number of 676 candidates ran for 88 available seats. Voter turnout was also impressive, but the district-based winner-take-all electoral system ensured Arafat's Fatah 'party' 50 seats plus independently elected council members who later joined the winning party. Arafat thus enjoys a comfortable two-thirds-plus majority. The Palestinian Legislative Council, which according to the Oslo Agreements was designed as a central source for decision-making and checking the executive, has not yet reached that objective. Arafat has been relatively successful in preventing the Council from becoming powerful, although

on a number of occasions its members (including a number of Fatah members) have challenged Arafat's style of governing openly.

The most assertive opposition to Arafat has come from Islamic forces. Hamas, a more radical and political offshoot of the Muslim Brotherhood, is strongly opposed to the peace process and has a relatively large following, especially in Gaza. The relationship between Fatah and Hamas is complex. Neither of the two sides is able or willing to destroy the other, because both represent large parts of the population. In addition, they have the same common external enemy. Hamas (as well as Fatah) is not a monolithic organization. In its ranks one finds those that support self-rule as well as those that oppose it. Among the latter, one finds those who favour the use of violence as well as those who favour other forms of opposition[12]. Often some Solomonic solution is found. For example, Hamas boycotted the 1996 elections, but a number of its members ran as independents and eventually won four seats. That Fatah is afraid of Hamas's strength (because it is socially deeper rooted) is the reason why local elections, originally planned for late 1996, have continuously been postponed. In sum, Hamas is a very significant and legitimate component of the Palestinian polity and society and as such cannot simply be repressed. At the same time, it is hard to imagine that Hamas could outnumber the PLO at national level, which is one of the reasons it did not participate in the 1996 elections, since the majority of the Palestinians is secular and less socially conservative than Hamas[13]. The best strategy for isolating the more violent components of Hamas is allowing the organization to operate freely and engaging it as much as possible in the political process. The same strategy should be applied to the smaller and less representative nationalist and leftist groups that oppose the Oslo Agreements.

Political liberalization has occurred in Palestine which, given the difficult Palestinian circumstances, should be considered as a major achievement. But perspectives for a democratic transition do not look promising. Paradoxically, Palestine under the Palestinian Authority is in certain respects not only more authoritarian than the Palestinian society during the Intifada, but even more authoritarian than the PLO before 1994. In the absence of a State, Arafat can continue his authoritarian style of government in the name of national unity in the struggle for independence. But even if independence is eventually obtained, the prospects for democracy look slim because of the many challenges it would have to face. First, the territory of a Palestinian State will be extremely fragmented due to the continuing presence of a large number of Jewish settlements. Second, a Palestinian State will not be economically viable. Dependence on foreign aid will

continue for a long period of time, creating a rentier State structure in which significant amounts of material and non-material benefits are distributed to the population in exchange for their political quiescence. The Palestinian State will be exclusively accountable to foreign donors that most likely will continue to close an eye to undemocratic practices in order to safeguard the interests of political stability and economic reform.

Palestinian Civil Society

The Palestinian civil society is extremely vibrant, at least since the late 1970s and the early 1980s. During that period, after a phase of demobilization as a result of the Israeli occupation in 1967, Palestinians started to organize themselves to resist occupation, to secure survival of their society, and to prepare the advent of an eventual State.[14] After a long gestation period, in December 1987 the Intifada broke out. The number of organizations that combined the provision of services with grassroots political activity increased sharply. These included health and agricultural relief committees, women and workers' organizations, student organizations, human-rights organizations and trade unions that had existed previously. Charitable societies run by notables and without a political agenda continued to function. The newly established networks and organizations were highly decentralized and involved tens of thousands of Palestinians in a direct political experience that had a civic and democratic character. The Intifada was led by a new elite of professionals who were formed in Palestinian universities and Israeli jails and were radically different from the older elite of notables that had dominated Palestinian polity and society in earlier periods[15]. All newly established organizations were affiliated with (or even established by) one of the main PLO factions (*Fatah*, Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine, the Palestinian Communist Party (which joined the PLO in 1987)) or with Hamas. During the Intifada, most ideological differences were overcome in favour of the national cause. Islamic charities were financed by the *zakat* and by other Arab countries, while the secular Palestinian organizations were highly dependent on foreign funding from both Arab and Western sources.

Eventually, the Intifada was successful in making the continuation of the occupation too costly for the Israelis and in preparing the ground for the Oslo Agreements. After the establishment of the Palestinian Authority in 1994, a phase of demobilization of civil-society organizations and networks took place. In part, this should be considered as natural. Although the Palestinian Authority was not yet a State structure in the strict sense of the word, it was designed to be a structure

to perform some of the roles previously performed by civil-society organizations and networks. In addition, foreign donors were sensitive to Palestinian Authority officials' arguments that aid originally directed towards these organizations and networks should be redirected to the Palestinian Authority. Especially, they argued, it could not continue to go to organizations that opposed the Oslo Agreements. Foreign aid to Palestinian NGOs, which had already declined after 1990 (Gulf war), declined further after 1994 (Oslo Agreements) from a total of approximately 140-220 m. USD in 1990 to 60 m. USD in 1996. [16] The share of aid to service-oriented civil-society organizations collapsed even more. Human-rights organizations and advocacy groups became the primary focus of foreign donors.

One instrument to achieve Arafat's objective of curbing the power of the new elites and their organizations was designing a restrictive law on NGOs. The original plan was to adopt a law modelled on the highly restrictive Egyptian law No. 32 of 1964 to control the approximately 1,500 civil-society organizations in Palestine[17]. This met with strong protests from the NGO community, which had in the meantime established networks to coordinate the work and to safeguard the independent status of NGOs *vis-à-vis* the Palestinian Authority - of which the Palestinian Network of NGOs was the most representative and active[18]. Foreign donors put strong pressure on the Palestinian Authority not to adopt this law, which was subsequently withdrawn[19].

In sum, the demobilization of the post-autonomy period affected most grassroots organizations. Political parties, trade unions and service delivery organizations have lost much of their strength. Palestinian civil society seems to be less vibrant than five or ten years ago. The strongest organizations today are the mostly Islamic service delivery organizations and the Western-type advocacy groups, including human-rights organizations. However, they have not been able to fully resist Arafat's imposition of an authoritarian style of government.

DONOR ACTIVITIES

Strategies

In the literature on democratic transitions, four ways are distinguished in which such a transition can take place ('modes of transition'): through a pact, imposition, reform, or revolution[20]. The first two modes of transition are determined by different elites or elite factions. A *pact* is made when these elites agree upon multilateral compromise among themselves. Instead, an *imposition* occurs when elites use force unilaterally and effectively to bring about regime change against the resistance of the incumbents. The latter two modes of transition are strongly determined by the masses. *Reform* occurs when masses mobilize and impose a compromised outcome without resorting to violence. *Revolution* occurs when masses rise up in arms and defeat the authoritarian rulers militarily. The first question for external actors that want to promote democracy is which of the four modes of transition they prefer to take place in the target country. Subsequently, they have to decide who to support in order to favour that particular mode of transition. For example, if they favour a pacted transition between elites or an imposition by an alternative elite, the natural targets for their support would be these elites and the institutions they control. If they favour reform, they should mainly focus on facilitating and assisting mass mobilization and to some extent elites and State institutions that might eventually be needed to make compromises with the representatives of the masses. If they favour revolution as mode of transition, they should also support mass mobilization, but not elites or State institutions. What emerges clearly from this short description is that regime transitions are about power struggles between different actors - elites and/or masses - over alternative political programmes and world views, no matter which of the four modes of transition is followed. In short, regime transitions are inherently political processes. *Transition is a pol process*

Generally, external democracy promoters do not hold this view. They argue, often implicitly, that there is (only) a 'non-political', technical and incremental way to democracy. In their view, (western-liberal) democracy is supposedly the natural end-point of a long trajectory of social and political development. Unlike some decades ago, today there is also the conviction (and plenty of empirical examples) that it is possible to 'speed up' the pace of political development and establish democracies even if not all socio-economic 'requisites' are met. That has opened up a wide room for manoeuvre for political engineering, room in which foreign donors have stepped in massively. 'Non-political' forms of democracy

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promotion consist basically in creating new and reinforcing existing structures and practices which are considered the pillars of established democracies, e.g. institutions (parliaments, judiciary), civil-society organizations (e.g. interest groups, NGOs), and civically behaving citizens. In the framework of this essay I shall focus on assistance to civil-society organization and civic education. Instead, donors stay away from 'political' forms of democracy promotion, i.e. those that aim at assisting actors and organizations that work openly and directly for democratization of the political regime. Typically, these include political parties, social movements, interest groups that act as political movements, and informal networks (e.g. Solidarnosc in Poland, the ANC in South Africa). Donors argue that 'political' democracy promotion is interference in the political life of the target country and, in any case, too sensitive. However, it is hard to see that what has been defined as 'non-political' democracy promotion is not interference in the social, economic, and political life of the target countries. In fact, governments and/or political factions in target countries often criticize this form of democracy promotion and instrumentalize it for their political ends. The reason why donors nevertheless opt little for 'political' forms of democracy promotion has more likely to do with donors' preferences for predictable and slow processes of political transition over more unpredictable and more rapid ones. In addition, donors might perceive themselves as less equipped to employ 'political' forms of democracy promotion; however it is not clear why they can be more confident about picking the right advocacy NGO than picking the right political party as target for their assistance. Finally, donors might have other objectives than 'simply' promoting democracy, such as economic reform, social justice, and peace. Actually, as we will see in the final section of this essay, for a number of donors democracy promotion is often no more (and sometimes less) than a secondary objective, stability being the first one. It goes without saying that if this is the case, donors will be unlikely to promote radical, fast modes of transition with uncertain outcomes.

It will come as no surprise that the latter applies to most external actors that promote democracy in the Arab world, including Egypt and Palestine. Accordingly, donors predominantly practice 'non-political' democracy promotion in these countries. However, there are some minor instances of 'political' democracy promotion. In Egypt, for example, the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung trains cadres of the dominant NDP party, while in Palestine the Arab Thought Forum, sponsored by USAID, engages all political parties in a dialogue, including those that oppose not only Arafat but also the Oslo Agreements (among them also Islamists). Bu the parties that potentially could take the lead in a mobilization for

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regime change are not supported by democracy promoters. Nor do donors urge target governments to allow these parties to be established. Other political actors that could potentially become important in triggering regime change - such as student movements - are heavily repressed in most Arab countries (including Egypt) and do not receive any donor support. Trade unions in a number of Arab countries, including Egypt and Palestine, receive assistance, but only of a technical nature, not support to mobilize their members or to become broader political movements.

If strategy is supposedly a crucial element for a donor to decide its programmes and policies, it is singular to see that even the larger suppliers of democracy . promotion & protection - governments, inter-governmental organizations, and the major specialized professional democracy promoters - invest so little in strategizing. At first sight, the Democratic Institutions Support Project commissioned by USAID from major US consultant Chemonics seems to be an exception to this rule. Between October 1992 and September 1996, close to seven million US dollars[21] were spent to provide political economy reviews, institutional assessments and country strategies for democratization in six Arab countries: Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Palestine, and Yemen. Two limitations were introduced at the outset: [the objective is] ... "to determine those aspects of political liberalization that contribute most to *removing obstacles to economic reform* ... "[22] and how to promote the "creation of political and legal *institutional* environments that will foster more rapid long-term *progress on economic reform* in countries of the Near East."[23] In other words, the study focused on democratization only as a means for supporting economic reform. In addition, it very much took an institutional approach. Civil-society organizations were discussed in the more than thirty reports of the project, but exclusively from the perspective of whether they would win or lose from economic reform and what their reactions would be[24]. Moreover, there is no indication that these reports were used by the personnel that eventually decides on programmes and projects. Perhaps this is the reason why USAID decided not to use its option for an additional, fifth year of the DIS project.

In conclusion, donors do invest little in strategies and if they do they do not use the results. In addition, donors prefer to draw an artificial distinction between 'political' and 'non-political' forms of democracy promotion, not so much because of the sensitivity of the target country or the perceived difficulty of intervening with 'political' programmes. Instead, on the one hand it seems more to do with their conviction of the existence of a non-political way to democracy, and on the

other with the fact that donors have a more complex agenda than 'just' to assist rapid democratization of target countries.

Democracy Assistance: Some Quantification

Describing programmes and projects of democracy assistance in terms of the money spent is not very precise. First of all, this does not take into account how much of the money is spent in the recipient country (especially when, as is the case of US aid, much of the money is paid to US consultants and US NGOs). Second, potential multiplier effects are ignored. Some small projects could achieve a lot with minor funding. while others with a lot more funding might achieve much less. Third, in some cases a large portion of the money spent goes to administrative and personnel expenses, while in other cases these are reduced to the minimum. In addition, it is almost impossible to give complete figures when there is a large number of donors and when not all donors provide data (in this respect European donors generally do much worse than US donors). Also, accounting measures can differ and double accounting can occur due to long chains from original donors to final recipients. With all these caveats in mind, let us look at some quantitative financial information. I limit my analyses to two major donors, USAID and the European Union.

US AiD

USAID Egypt's Civil-society Assistance is one of three components of its effort to promote democracy in Egypt, the other two being assistance to the legislature and judiciary. For the Fiscal Years of 1997 - 1999 the total budget for democracy assistance was respectively 28.3 m. USD, 24.0, and 30.8 m. USD. In the latter year, 25 m. USD or 81% was spent on civil-society assistance alone. The total cumulative budget for projects active in January 1998 (of which some started as early as 1993 and one was planned to end in September 2004) was 137.4 m. USD. Of this total 104.4 m. USD or 76% went to only six civil-society projects. Twenty-one m. USD or 15% went to three judiciary projects, and twelve m. USD or 9% to legislative assistance. Since the total US economic support to Egypt is 815 m. USD per year, democracy assistance represents less than 4% of it. Total US support for Egypt, including military aid, was 2.3 b. USD in FY 1998, of which democracy assistance represented only 1%. In sum, in absolute terms US democracy assistance to Egypt is of some significance and most of the funds take the form of civil-society assistance. In relative terms, however, US democracy assistance as a proportion of total US assistance to Egypt is minimal. [25] In the period 1996 - 1998, USAID democracy assistance to Palestine[26] totalled approximately 16 m. USD: 6,5 m. USD for assistance to the legislature; 3.5 m.

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USD for electoral assistance; 1.0 m. USD to the executive; and 5.0 m. USD for civil-society assistance, 2.2 m USD alone for a single civic education programme. US overall assistance to the Palestinians since 1993 has been approx. 100 m. USD a year.

MEDA [handwritten]

For the sake of comparison, the European Union civil-society assistance to the Arab world consists, since 1996, of the MEDA Democracy programme, with an annual budget of 9 m. euros, of which a substantial part goes to Palestine. In addition, a number of decentralized cooperation programmes existed between 1992 and 1996, such as Med Media, Med Campus, and Med Urbs, which made reference to democracy promotion although this was not the main objective. The EU also supports the Euro-Mediterranean Civil Forum, which yearly brings together civil-society organizations from both sides of the Mediterranean in order to strengthen a trans-mediterranean civil society. In addition, through its general human-rights programs and through its so-called micro actions, other funds are made available for civil-society and democracy assistance. Finally, ad hoc democracy assistance to Palestine has been significant, approx. 29 m. USD (about 20 m. USD for elections; 5 m. USD for assistance to the legislature; and 2 m. USD for a media programme). EU civil-society assistance to Palestine and Egypt together is estimated at approx. 3 m. USD per year since 1996. Total EU assistance to Palestinians between 1993 and 1997 totaled 700 m. Euro.[27] Thus the EU spends less on civil-society assistance than USAID. It should be noted, however, that single European countries add a substantial amount of money to what is spent by the EU. In the realm of civil-society assistance, the EU has funded only smaller projects (for example in 1996 it financed 62 projects, half of them for less than 100,000 euros each) through its MEDA democracy programme. Another distinguishing feature of EU civil-society assistance is that it is demand driven, i.e. potential recipients present their projects which are then pre-selected locally, while the final selection takes place in Brussels.

'Non-Political' Programmes and Projects

Civic Education   ⟹ *imposer des valeurs occid* [handwritten]

Civic education programmes aim at one or more of the following things: (1) increasing individuals' knowledge of Western liberal democratic principles and institutions; (2) socializing them to Western civic values; and (3) stimulate them to become politically active citizens who vote in elections, write petitions to their representatives, and eventually become members or founders of civil-society organizations. These programmes assume that the target group lacks knowledge, is

not sufficiently civic, and/or is politically passive often ignoring the fact that target groups have their own specific political values and behaviour to which these programmes are usually not adapted. They are at the most adapted to the participants' level of instruction and to some specific political issues. While civic education possibly has a strong and positive impact on individuals' formal knowledge of democratic institutions, its impact on values and behaviour is much less certain and diminishes rapidly after the programme is over. It is therefore hard to see how civic education alone could have a major impact on political liberalization or democratization.

Nevertheless, large-scale civic education programmes have been financed and implemented in Egypt and Palestine. They have, however, taken different forms. First, civic education was used in order to transmit information and provide incentives to participate in a specific election. This was done for the Palestinian 1996 elections, as well as for the Egyptian 1997 local elections. In the case of the former, these were the first elections to be held after the territories had become autonomous and were expected to be relatively free and fair. Under these circumstances, they seem to have had a positive effect on the number of participants and the proportion of valid votes cast. [28] But in the case of the Egyptian elections, not expected to be either free or fair, civic education programmes - implemented by the newly established Group for Democratic Development and Hoda, the Association of Egyptian Women Voters - were not only useless, but could even have backfired. Citizens' expectations regarding the impact of their participation were frustrated and possibly contributed to producing more pessimism and passivity than might have been the case had they not received civic education. In such conditions, it might be more productive to help citizens mobilize against the regime, instead of educating them how to vote - but that would mean shifting to an overtly political strategy.

A second form of civic education is not related to electoral or other specific events. It was provided by the National Democratic Institute for International Affairs (NDI) in Palestine. In 1995, after a period of experimenting with various forms of civic education, the NDI set up the Civic Forum with the intent of increasing citizen awareness of democratic concepts, developing community leaders, and encouraging local organizations to play a role in the decision-making process. The NDI trained some twenty Palestinians to become moderators in this programme and held some 300 educational sessions every six weeks on a different topic. These sessions were hosted by civil-society organizations that encouraged their members to participate. The Civic Forum claimed to reach some 6,000

Palestinians every six weeks. Since 1995 approximately 25,000 persons have participated in at least one session. The topics included, among other things, the role of NGOs, elections, the judiciary, general budgetary practices, political parties, local governments, and the media in democratic regimes. The Civic Forum itself became a Palestinian NGO in June 1998. The NDI continued to guarantee its support with funds provided by USAID[29]. An independent assessment by a Canadian consultant[30] found that participants were extremely satisfied with the programme. Only three examples were given in which participants were able to resolve a political problem by engaging a local government (regarding a kindergarten, water supply, trash collection). Moreover, the participants stressed that Civic Forum sessions were useful in and by themselves. Those who did not participate were found "to be still very much in the traditional mind-set. This entailed a heavy reliance on political and religious dogma and a tendency to fall back on the Koran or Islamic political philosophy when confronted with problems in their community or society".[31]

Despite this favorable assessment, the Civic Forum does have some problems. First, it reaches only those citizens who are already members of civil society organizations and who could be expected to be already better informed and more active than individuals who are not members of any organization. Second, the programme seems to ignore the fact that Palestinians have had direct experience with democratic forms of decision-making, especially during the Intifada. They might not need additional 'technical' knowledge about democracy or advice about how to change their values. What they might want to learn is how to mobilize, not under a foreign occupier, but under a Palestinian authoritarian regime. But they might especially want support for doing so. Third, the programme is rather theoretical in content and has apparently had little impact on the capacity of participants to obtain concrete results by compelling local authorities to be more transparent and accountable. Only three examples of problem-solving were found in the experience of several thousand participants. Fourth, the programme seems to be culturally biased in implying that one cannot be politically aware and active if one has a 'traditional' world outlook, based upon Islamic political philosophy.

In sum, civic education programmes such as the Civic Forum are generally perceived as useful by their participants. However, to be useful in helping them to forge more accountable and transparent local governments or to liberalize their regimes politically, they should be designed in a more overtly political way.

Private Voluntary Organizations[32]   advocacy.

Over the past decades, development assistance has changed from simply providing assistance to stimulating active participation of the population in development projects, often through the intervention of community-based organizations, cooperatives, and other private voluntary associations. The rationale behind this change was that in order to enhance success and sustainability, recipients should perceive the project as theirs. Since the early 1990s, large development aid providers began also to provide democracy assistance. At first, this was focused on elections and State institutions such as legislatures and judiciaries. Subsequently, they 'discovered' the participatory potential in their own development projects and thought it to be useful and efficient to add an advocacy element to them. USAID's long-standing private voluntary organization project in rural Egypt, which had focused on participatory development to increase living standards, was supplemented by the training of individuals on how to get services delivered by local authorities and how to make them more accountable and transparent. Since the introduction of this advocacy component, the project is listed under democracy promotion activities of USAID in Egypt. Within the framework of this project, USAID works with a large number of private voluntary organizations, including Islamic ones. This type of 'advocacy development project' is seen, first of all, as a contribution to democratization at local level (which has been defined as democracy or democratization with a small d). But this is not necessarily the case. Local authorities might become somewhat more efficient, but not necessarily more democratic. As at national level, at local level too it could be argued that more overtly political forms of organization (e.g. mass mobilization) could have a greater impact than advocacy by small groups. These projects linking advocacy to concrete problems of the community will most likely have a positive effect on living standards and on group empowerment. Some have argued that 'advocacy development projects' also contribute to democratization at national level (which has been defined as democracy or democratization with a capital D), but this is wishful thinking or instrumental manipulation in order to obtain funding. At most the impact of these projects on democratization at national level seems to be weak, and in any case hard to prove.

The World Bank has developed an innovative project to transform Palestinian private voluntary organizations into more 'efficient' service providers. It set up a 'Trust Fund Grant for a Palestinian NGO Project' of 20 m. USD, of which it contributed one half. Attempts to involve NGOs in the planning and execution of the project were abandoned. In the beginning, the Palestinian NGO

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network and the General Union of Charitable Societies were consulted. The Palestinian Authority, anxious to control both NGOs and foreign funds, promoted the establishment of three NGO networks of its own during the first six months of 1997. [33] The World Bank, faced with this situation, decided to abandon consultation altogether. The project is managed by the largest Palestinian charity (the Welfare Association, based in Jordan & UK), the British Council, and the Charities Aid Foundation (UK). It aims at the reinvigoration of 'Palestinian 'not-for-profit' public service organizations of a charitable or developmental nature'[34] in their capacity to deliver economic and social services to needy Palestinians - for example to the handicapped, for low-cost housing, to women's health and development, and for pre-school education programmes. In order to do so these organizations should, according to the World Bank, be de-politicized and re-dedicate themselves to the immediate and concrete needs of their constituents. In addition, skills and capabilities of the organizations should be upgraded and cooperative relations between these organizations and the Palestinian Authority should be strengthened. No mention is made of advocacy. Eligible organizations should pursue non-political humanitarian and developmental objectives and develop projects that do not "have as principal objective the promotion of any particular political or religious viewpoint."[35].

Both the USAID project in Egypt and the World Bank project in Palestine, notwithstanding their differences, have in common the view that private voluntary organizations should deliver services that the States are not delivering, or not delivering well enough. They are also convinced that such activities should stay away from politics and try to achieve their objectives through advocacy (USAID) or cooperation with the authorities (World Bank).

Non-Governmental Organizations[36]

NGOs that monitor, document, and investigate the impact of government policies on their societies, polities, and economies, and that denounce public inefficiency and violations of human rights, have become the major focus of foreign donors in both Palestine and Egypt, as well as in the other Arab countries. These organizations generally were established with the help of foreign donors, some a few years ago, others over a decade ago. Their structures look very similar. Their staff is well-educated and professional. They have small or no membership. Their financial resources are mainly or exclusively provided by a set of foreign donors (the majority of these organizations are financed by more than one foreign donor at a time). They are not formally related to any political party, although their board

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members often have past political experience. In sum, these organizations look very much like organizations that operate in established Western democracies. There is, however, one major difference, namely that the context in which they operate is authoritarian.

Why do Western donors support these NGOs? First, for them this would seem to be a technical, non-political way to democratization - even if such organizations have not been exclusively responsible for regime change anywhere. More realistically, it could be justified as preparing the ground for an eventual infrastructure of personnel and organizations once democratization has been initiated by more overtly political mobilized groups. Second, the donors may not be aiming at democratization, but simply at making the existing regimes less authoritarian and, especially, more efficient. Third, the donors may simply find such NGOs to be the easiest targets for aid: they not only speak the language (English) but also understand what donors want.

Private and public research institutions and think tanks receive significant (and some rely exclusively on) foreign funding, to prepare documentation, do research, publish reports, and organize conferences on topics of political and economic actuality. Among the main donors are the Ford Foundation, the German political foundations (especially the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung and the Konrad Adenauer Stiftung), as well as USAID, the US democracy promotion organizations (e.g. NDI, IRI, NED) and such inter-governmental organizations as UNDP and UNESCO. In Egypt, the Ibn Khaldun Center for Development Studies, which has for a number of years been publishing the periodical *Civil Society* (both in English and Arabic) and an annual report on *Civil Society and Democratic Change in the Arab World* (in Arabic), is probably the largest recipient of such money. Recipients in Egypt also include the New Civic Forum, established with UNDP funds with the goal of promoting political and economic reform, and the prestigious semi-governmental al-Ahram Center for Political and Strategic Studies. Egyptian university institutes are also recipients of foreign aid, among them the Centre for Political Research and Studies and the Centre for the Study of Developing Countries, both at Cairo University. In Palestine, the Centre for Palestinian Research and Studies, the Jerusalem Media and Communication Centre, Palestinian Academic Society for the Study of International Affairs, al-Muwatin, Arab Thought Forum, and the universities of Birzeit and al-Quds are a few important recipients of foreign aid.

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The largest intervention in the NGO sector is USAID Egypt's NGO Service Centre: around 40 m. USD. This Centre aims at improving the capacity of civil-society organizations to represent and articulate their needs. It provides business-centre facilities and staff support; it will be a place for networking and information exchange, and will give grants. Representatives of USAID and the Egyptian NGO community, as well as the Egyptian government (!) are on the Centre's board. Potential users of the NGO Centre should be officially recognized NGOs, according to the rules laid down in the NGO law. Also what I defined as PVOs and discussed in the previous section could theoretically apply for funds (in practice, however, there will be only one branch of the NGO Centre, in Cairo, making it hard for PVOs to use it effectively). The usefulness of yet another incentive for creating Western-type NGOs can be questioned. The fact that the Egyptian government has such an important role in controlling the Centre's activities makes it even less useful. This NGO Centre shows the limits of USAID intervention in the realm of civil-society assistance in Egypt. First, USAID's room of manoeuvre is limited by the provisions of the Camp David agreements which demand Egyptian government approval for all USAID projects implemented in Egypt (the question then is why the US does not challenge this provision). Second, being a huge bureaucratic institution, USAID has, as I described before, a tendency to finance large projects.

Human-rights groups have been the focus of foreign funding longer. In Palestine in the late 1970s and during the 1980s they were supported because they documented and denounced Israeli human-rights violations and assisted victims. Since the late 1980s human-rights organizations in other Arab countries have also become the focus of foreign aid. Since the beginning of the 1990s there has been a boom in the number of human-rights organizations. In Palestine human-rights organizations partially changed their focus from abuses by the Israeli occupier to human-rights violations by the Palestinian Authority. At the moment, Egypt and Palestine have at least a dozen human-rights groups each. There are a number of reasons for this proliferation of groups. First, the need to intervene on a large variety of specific issues - ranging from torture to women's rights, from labour rights to freedom of expression - has led organizations to specialize in specific sets of rights. Second, the different tasks human-rights organizations have to perform - from reporting to campaigning, from assisting victims to human-rights education - was also an incentive to the multiplication of human-rights associations. Third, diverging political views have been at the bases of splits in human-rights movements. Fourth, and last but not least, the availability of a large donor community has also had a positive effect on the multiplication of groups.

There is no expectation that human-rights promotion in and by itself will bring about regime change in either Egypt or Palestine. However, given the authoritarian nature of the Egyptian and Palestinian regimes, focusing foreign aid on human-rights organizations in Egypt and Palestine could be a good strategy for donors who not only want to promote human rights but also political liberalization and eventually democratization. Human-rights organizations are able to put their respective authoritarian regimes in difficulty, not least because of the fact that they are part of international networks of solidarity. However, governmental and inter-governmental donors, instead of limiting themselves to providing financial and technical means to human-rights groups, should more consistently use sanctions and rewards to force Egypt and Palestine to observe human rights.

An issue that is particularly difficult for outside donors to resolve is bridging the gap that exists between human-rights groups and the society at large. Their agendas, even if they are aimed at improving the human rights of all citizens, are nevertheless perceived as being foreign. Their organizations have almost no members other than a few elite individuals. Their practices in directly assisting citizens (often those belonging to specific groups, such as women, workers, ethnic minorities) are too limited.

A final and most important issue is that in Egypt and Palestine foreign donors are actively trying to avoid the introduction of restrictive laws that aim at regulating the NGOs. In Palestine donors seem to have been successful, while in Egypt they were not. Notwithstanding the fact that foreign donors put major effort into persuading the Egyptian government not to introduce a restrictive NGO act - for example USAID invested substantial funds in studies on possible alternatives for at least five years - the law was nevertheless introduced and approved by the Parliament. The US State Department spokesman responded the very same day by saying that the law was "the wrong direction to go if Egypt wants to energize civil society and promote development".[37] Basically, he admitted the failure of the US policy and confirmed US unwillingness to push Egypt harder towards political reform.

Interest Groups[38]

Interest groups can become important forces for political liberalization and eventual democratization - especially those representing labour. This can happen when an interest group insists that certain government policies be implemented or withdrawn, resists a repressive response and is capable of creating a crisis

situation, does not bend to repression and therefore creates a situation of crisis. In this scenario, political liberalization and democratization become the byproduct of collective efforts to obtain other goals. By mobilizing in defence of its own interests with regard to specific government policies, an organization can split the ruling coalition and become the spearhead of societal mobilization against the political regime itself. Solidarnosc in Poland was the archetype of such a situation. Striking is allowed in only a few Arab countries and where it is allowed it is little practised. However, strikes in Morocco led the regime to make concessions to workers in July 1997. Subsequently, student protest broke out. And in February 1998 the regime introduced significant measures of political liberalization.

In Egypt trade unions are all strictly State controlled and striking is forbidden. Wildcat strikes occur frequently and are systematically repressed violently. In Palestine the labour movement had been a major force in the Intifada[39] but followed the general demobilization trend after the Palestinian Authority was established. Both the Palestinian and Egyptian trade unions are subject to minimal donor support. More significantly, the ILO has been assisting and advising the State, trade unions, and business associations to write a new labour law, which should for the first time allow workers formally the right to strike in 'exchange' for employers' right to hire and especially fire without limitations.

Business associations have, directly or through their members, received substantial technical assistance in order to make their organizations more efficient and get them incorporated into networks of international business. In a number of Arab countries these activities are financed by the Centre for International Private Enterprise (CIPE), one of the four core recipients of the NED (e.g. in Morocco). The EU, within the framework of the MEDA partnership between the EU and twelve Mediterranean countries, provides programmes and funds. As opposed to the projects financed by CIPE, the EU does not define business promotion as democracy promotion. Professional associations in Egypt are not supported by external donors. The Egyptian government would probably not let them, their members would not like to be supported by Western donors, and the donors would not like to support organizations with an Islamic majority. The Palestinian Bar Association, instead, has been trained by AMIDEAST (an US educational organization) and financed by the US Information Service.

None of the civil-society organizations I have discussed so far was able to mobilize regime change. Human-rights organizations can put the ruling class under pressure but lack links to grassroots. Interest groups can turn into political

movements but none in Palestine or Egypt seem to be strong or representative enough. Labour, the most indicated interest group for taking the lead in the struggle for regime transition, is too controlled in Egypt and too weak in Palestine.

IMPACT AND CONCLUDING REMARKS

Objectives

For donors to assess the impact of their and others' civil-society assistance to the Arab world (Egypt and Palestine), and to conclude whether they have been successful or not, depends to a significant extent what the objectives of the donors are. The declared objective for all civil-society assistance donors is to develop civil society, and thereby contribute to the political liberalization and democratization of authoritarian rule. For most donors, the promotion of civil-society development also (and for a number of them, above all) contributes to a number of other social, economic, or political objectives, such as economic liberalization, economic development, social justice, and emancipation of women. In the case of Egypt and Palestine, some donors - notably national governments and inter-governmental organizations - have more far-reaching objectives than simply promoting civil society and democracy. For example, for the US, EU, and most West European governments the highest priorities are: the security of Israel; ensuring Palestinian support for the peace process and Egypt's support for the peace agreement with Israel; providing a solution that is acceptable for the majority of Palestinians; and economic liberalization of both Egypt and Palestine. To achieve these objectives the promotion of civil society and democracy could be perceived as (and could very well be) counter-productive. Conversely, their policies of support for authoritarian incumbents by, among other things, military assistance to Egypt and secret service training to Palestine, often run counter to the declared objectives of promoting civil society and democracy.

The result is that contradictory messages are sent to authoritarian incumbents, and even more so to Palestinians and Egyptians. For example, USAID's declared main goal in Palestine is to strengthen the commitment of the Palestinians to the peace process by showing tangible benefits which, among other things, should be enhanced by more responsible and accountable government, which in turn should be achieved by increasing citizen participation, expanding institutions of civil society, and increasing the flow and diversity of information to citizens[40]. At the same time, however, the US (as well as Israel and to a lesser

extent the EU) encourage the Palestinian leadership to control internal opposition that disagrees with the Oslo Agreements and attacks Israeli objectives. The fact that, in so doing, the Palestinian leadership has engaged in human-rights violations- especially by security forces that are trained by the CIA - has not triggered a major reaction from the US or the EU.[41]

Not only national governments have problems with making different goals compatible. Virtually all inter-governmental organizations as well as Western NGOs have to comply with the policies of national governments, since they depend almost exclusively on governmental or other public monies for their civil-society and democracy assistance. This is especially the case for the 'professional democracy promoters'; i.e. those organizations and private consultant companies that mainly or exclusively focus on the promotion of democracy. Both find significant examples in the US. To the first belong such organizations as the NED, NDI, IRI, and IFES, and to the second consultants like Chemonics, Associates for Rural Development, and Management Systems International.

In most areas of the world where democracy is being promoted, the opposition is pro-Western, pro-liberal democracy, and pro-economic liberalization along the lines of the Washington Consensus. In the Arab world, however, the opposition to existing authoritarian regimes is composed of Islamists, nationalists and leftists who - for different reasons and in different forms - have a political agenda that contrasts with that of the donors, and are sometimes simply anti-Western and anti-liberal democracy. For donors, turning away from these forces means turning away from the most effective opponents of the existing authoritarian regimes that represent significant parts of the population, and running the risk of supporting little significant actors that will have only minor impact on the political situation in the target country.

Impact of civil-st Assistance !

Showing whether a few hundred projects - of a few tens of millions of dollars in which at the most a few thousand nationals were directly involved - had an impact on the Palestinian or Egyptian political regime is an arduous task. The question should therefore be reformulated: what impact did civil-society assistance have on the micro level (i.e. on individuals or organizations)? what impact did it most likely have on the meso level (e.g. civil society)?, and what impact could it have possibly had on the macro level (i.e. political regime)?[42]

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The question of the democratic impact of civil-society assistance depends, among other things, on the goals that have been set by foreign donors. The higher the goals, the less likely they are to be achieved. Interestingly enough, donors continue to announce public high (and manifestly unrealistic) goals because this seems to be the best way to obtain funding – very much a US phenomenon. It seems doubtful that they really believe that they can have a major impact at macro level with just a few civil-society assistance projects. Donors of civil-society assistance, however, (and, especially governments) do not only seek to promote democracy. More often than not, they support such programmes in order to maintain stability, or to save the peace process, or to keep labour under control during privatization, or to obtain high quality socio-economic and political data on a previously inaccessible society. If one or more of these goals are achieved – even if democratization did not occur – donors might consider civil-society assistance a success even if they might not admit it publicly.

When assessing impact, donors prefer to monitor and display output rather than outcome. They may even consider the two as synonyms. The difference, however, is fundamental. For example, an output of a civic education project might be the training of 200 individuals for 10 hours. An outcome of the same project could be an increase in knowledge, a change in values, and a change in behaviour of the participants. Of course, while the former is easy to assess, the latter is much harder to. But it is more significant.

Micro Level Impact   (individuals)
or.

Of the three levels of impact, the impact on single organizations and individuals has been the strongest. There can be no doubt that external support for Egyptian and Palestinian civil-society organizations has had at least one effect. Weak (and often ailing) organizations managed to survive; others expanded; and new ones were created thanks to civil-society assistance. Most of these organizations, including advocacy NGOs as well as service-delivery private voluntary organizations (especially in Palestine), rely almost exclusively on foreign aid. Advocacy NGOs receive support only from Western countries, whereas service-delivery private voluntary organizations receive assistance from Western and Arab countries. The advocacy NGOs (including human-rights associations) turned into relatively efficient, transparent, and accountable organizations and generally did what they were supposed to do: publishing reports, providing legal assistance, conducting public opinion polls, etc. The service-delivery private voluntary organizations too seem generally to have satisfied donors' expectations. On the

individual level, those who participated in civic education projects increased their knowledge and possibly changed their values - even if only a few seemed to have changed their behaviour. At least, that is what the limited evaluation of one major civic education project has concluded. A more profound longer-term effect on the individual level is that staff of civil-society organizations in general, and of NGOs in particular, have become more skilled thanks to donor-supported training. In some future context of democratization, they would be much more capable of playing a constructive role. But was this relatively positive impact on the micro level paralleled by a similar impact on the meso level, for example by strengthening civil society or promoting a better form of governance at local or regional level?

Meso Level Impact $(Civil - st)$

Indicators of civil-society development depend on the definition of civil society and on the availability of monitoring instruments. If, for example, civil society is equated with the presence of organizations, the total number of associations and movements, and possibly also the total number of individuals actively involved in or reached by the activities of these organizations, might be satisfactory indicators. If civil society is defined as the level of civicness of its citizens, probably opinion polls and discourse analyses would be more suitable means for assessing development. Although no definitive data are available, it seems that the total number of civil-society organizations has increased both in Palestine and Egypt since external support has been provided by donors, starting in the 1970s and 1980s. This increase has not been dramatic or monotonic. In the case of Palestine, this is partially because a certain number of civil-society organizations disappeared after the Intifada ended and the Palestinian Authority was established. It can be assumed that external donor support was important in the increase of new civil-society organizations. However, multiplication of organizations does not necessarily imply increase in political pluralism. In Palestine it could be argued that there has been a decline in political pluralism, since a number of civil-society organizations disappeared or were weakened because of the fact that they opposed the peace process and the donors stopped funding them. The median number of active persons per civil-society organization is decreasing because the number of professional organizations is increasing. In other words the increase in the number of organizations has not been followed by an analogous increase in the number of persons involved in these organizations. Another indicator of limited pluralism is that especially in the case of advocacy NGOs, board membership tends to be overlapping. Professional advocacy NGOs have also become the main employer

for individuals who formerly were active in leftist social movements and political parties. It has been argued that such NGOs, which among other things pay relatively high salaries, have depleted the leadership of the political opposition, a form of de-politicization of the polity, thus contributing to making political liberalization and democratization less likely to occur[43]. One could also argue that leftist movements and parties declined independently of the advocacy NGO boom and, in any case, they also provide a valid alternative for well-educated middle-class persons to getting co-opted by the State or employed in private business. It has created an opportunity for Palestinians that were politically active during the Intifada and those that returned from abroad to stay out of the proto-State bureaucracy. It seems that there has been an increase in the number of persons reached by civil-society organizations, both in Palestine and Egypt, although most of the increase comes from the Islamic service providers and less from Western-funded organizations. The limited amount of persons reached by civic education programmes and civil-society organizations in relation to the total population (especially in Egypt), and the limited effect of civic education itself, leads me to assume that the level of 'civicness' - whether in value or behaviour - has not changed significantly in either country.

Macro Level Impact (po- Rufunies)

The causality behind political liberalization and democratization is not easy to assess. Without going into detail, the Palestinian and Egyptian developments at the regime level provide a mixed picture. On some accounts, they have become less restrictive, and on others more. The balance for Egypt seems to be negative: today's regime is more restricted than the one of fifteen years ago. The balance for Palestine seems to be more positive: the regime is less restricted than some years ago. How and to what extent has civil-society assistance contributed to these situations?

In Palestine and Egypt, human-rights organizations have been successful in advancing some specific human rights. At the same time, however, they were not able to stop continued or increasing violation of others. In Palestine, advocacy NGOs have been successful on a limited scale in making the Palestinian Authority and the Palestinian Legislative Council more accountable and transparent. In Egypt, this has not happened. Civil-society assistance (and other forms of democracy promotion) have not been able to bring about political liberalization and democratization in either Egypt or Palestine (or in any other Arab country). At the most, it has been instrumental in limiting the authoritarian character of both

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regimes, but it has not been instrumental in helping to mobilize a strong opposition, which could have been more effective in politically liberalizing and democratizing these countries. It should be noted, however, that such an effort was never intended by the donors or attempted by many organizations they sponsored.

Concluding Remarks

In terms of objectives donors, especially governmental and inter-governmental ones, should be more honest about their objectives in Palestine and Egypt. Their priorities, as I mentioned above are, in the following order: safeguarding Israel; providing a solution that most Palestinians would consider acceptable; and promoting economic reform. Democratization is not among their highest priorities. Donors would do well to be more transparent about their objectives, not least in order to be consistent with their declared objective of promoting democracy, i.e. accountable and transparent forms of government. For foreign NGOs providing civil-society assistance, democratization is generally higher on their list of priorities, although they are constrained by the fact that they rely almost exclusively on governments and inter-governmental organizations for funding. They should more actively resist the narrow interpretations that their funders have of democracy promotion in Palestine and Egypt.

Donors should invest more time and effort in strategizing. They should be more explicit not only about their objectives but about how they might contradict each other. They should also acquire more 'technical' knowledge regarding processes of political liberalization and democratization. For example, they should become aware that setting up and sponsoring NGOs does not necessarily help to democratize a country, and might even have a negative effect on democratization, especially if it takes leadership away from political organizations that challenge the regime. In addition, donors should not think in terms of programmes or single projects when they develop a strategy. They should aim at achieving an intermediate (meso) objective, and use all means at their disposal concertedly. For example, they could aim at creating a better environment for NGOs. In order to do this, forms of civil-society assistance (e.g. support for human-rights organizations that address this specific issue) should be combined with other forms of democracy promotion, such as the threat of sanctions if the target country does not comply and the promise of rewards (e.g. in the form of development aid) if it does. In addition, coordination should take place within large donors (e.g. the various parts of the US administration) but also among various donors. Formally, coordination does exist in Palestine and Egypt, but that rarely goes beyond exchange of information. If

they really want to promote political liberalization and ultimately democratization in Egypt or Palestine, donors should focus on and assist actors that have the capacity to mobilize large numbers of persons across a large gamut of affiliations. One should invest in coalition-building even if not all partners in such coalitions are in conformity with the donors' values. These might include organizations with a moderate Islamic outlook (and which represent a large section of the population, such as the Muslim Brothers in Egypt) or with nationalist or leftist ideologies and opposed to the Oslo Agreements (like in Palestine).

Besides being more informed about strategy and synergy, the specific programmes and projects should pay attention to a number of additional issues. Donors should be flexible when it comes to translating their strategies into specific programmes and projects. They should not come with blueprints of how a partner organization should look like, but be guided by local individuals and organizations. To be able to match donor strategy and preferences of domestic actors in the target country, its personnel should be knowledgeable about the target society and should be able to reach partners that do not necessarily search for external support. Too often, donors restrict the choice of their partners to those that have received previous grants from foreign donors and not only speak English well but are also socialized to Western forms of management. This implies that there is a small group of dominant organizations that is financed over and over again because they provide products in the format that donors want to see. Instead, donors should give preference to existing organizations that are effectively representative of their society and if possible have grassroots membership.

In many cases, the management of civil-society assistance project can be improved. The issue of control - over who is eventually chosen as recipient and how organizations spend the funds provided by donors - plays too much of a role in most projects. In addition, often large parts of the project funds returns to the donor country - it sends field officers to the target country, equipment is bought in the donor country, national consultants are flown in. The latter is especially true for governmental (especially US) and inter-governmental organizations (especially EU and UNDP). An example of more modest spending on overhead and relying on local expertise is the way the Dutch Foreign Ministry makes funds available to support a wide range of Egyptian human-rights organizations. The funds are administered by the major development aid organization NOVIB, which has no field office in Cairo and allocates the funds to the recipient organizations with the help of a local expert. Although the responsible person in The Hague regularly visits Egypt, the role of the local expert is more important. A solution that might be

even better is to establish endowments in recipient countries, mainly or exclusively run by local citizens, reducing the role of foreigners to the lowest level possible.

In sum, civil-society assistance has not been and will not be a decisive factor for strong civil societies or democratic regimes to emerge in Palestine or Egypt. To increase its positive and to reduce its negative impact, such assistance should be combined with other forms of democracy promotion and should be coordinated between donors. Donor personnel's technical knowledge of political liberalization and democratization processes and their understanding of the local political and social context should be enhanced. However, a revision of the overall foreign-policy objectives would have the most significant impact on democratization of both countries.

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NOTES

[1] To be published by the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace (Washington, DC) in a volume on Civil Society Assistance edited by Thomas Carothers and Marina Ottaway (Autumn 2000). Imco Brouwer is Research Associate at the European University Institute (EUI) (Florence, Italy) and Coordinator of the Mediterranean Programme of the Robert Schuman Centre at the EUI. Together with Philippe C. Schmitter, he was recipient of a generous USIP grant (October 1997 - May 1999) to study "Western Democracies and the Promotion of Democracy in the Arab World" (The opinions, findings, and conclusions expressed in this publication are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of the United States Institute for Peace). As of March 1999 he is one of the researchers in a project directed by Claus Offe and Philippe C. Schmitter on "Western Democracy Promotion and Protection in Central and Eastern Europe and the Middle East and North Africa", generously financed by the Volkswagen Foundation (until February 2002). Christine Abele, Bernard Gbikpi, Brad Glasser, Nicolas Guilhot, and especially Philippe C. Schmitter, provided very useful feedback. Last but not least, the comments and suggestions of Marina Ottaway and Tom Carothers were fundamental in improving this contribution. Of course, the responsibility for the result is exclusively of the author. E-mail: *brouwer@iue.it*

[2] We define *democratization* as: a process whereby, in a significant and substantial way, rules and procedures of citizenship are either applied to institutions previously governed by other principles or expanded to include persons not previously enjoying such rights and obligations or extended to cover issues and institutions not previously subject to citizen participation. *Political liberalization* is defined as a process whereby (political) freedom is increased and whereby, in a minimal and more formal than substantial way, rules and procedures of citizenship are applied and expanded. For the definition of democratization we heavily rely on Guillermo O'Donnell, Philippe C. Schmitter, *Transitions from Authoritarian Rule: Tentative Conclusions about Uncertain Democracies*, Baltimore, Johns Hopkins, 1986, pp. 7 – 8.

[3] In this essay I use the term Palestine to indicate the Palestinian Territories that were occupied by Israel in 1967. Since 1994, Israel has withdrawn from parts of these Territories, over which the Palestinians have achieved self-rule. In the near future, additional parts of these Territories will be transferred to the Palestinians, although it seems highly unlikely that this will be the case for all the Territories (e.g. the settlements and East Jerusalem). The Territories under Palestinian self-rule do not constitute an independent State, although internationally (even in Israel) there is the conviction that the Palestinians will eventually obtain independence. In order to avoid the use of more precise but more complicated terms to define the Palestinian Territories in such a way as to include all Palestinians that presently participate in the Palestinian polity in the territories occupied in 1967 - including those that live under continuing Israeli occupation - and to exclude the large number of Israeli citizens living in settlements in the territories that were occupied in 1967, I prefer the term Palestine. It goes without saying that I do not want to simplify an intricate reality. It might be useful to stress that, although I consider Palestinian independence a question of time (as well as a matter of right), this does not make the use of the term less valid, or more confusing.

[4] See Augustus Richard Norton (ed.), *Civil Society in the Middle East*, Leiden, E.J. Brill, two volumes (1995, 1996).

[5] See Diane Singerman, *Avenues of Participation: Family, Politics, and Networks in Urban Quarters of Cairo*, Cairo, AUC Press, 1997.

[6] In this essay I distinguish the following types of organizations: *Private voluntary organizations*: a subset of civil-society organizations that focuses on service delivery and community development; *Civil-society organizations*: all organizations in civil society; *Non-governmental organizations*: a subset of civil-society organizations that focuses predominantly on advocacy and issues of public interest; *Interest groups*: organizations that pursue specific interests of their members.

[7] See Mustapha Kamil al-Sayyid, "A Civil Society in Egypt", in Norton, op. cit. (1995).

[8] See Vickie Langohr, "Do Clients of Clinics Become Cadres?: Critiquing Some Assumptions About Islamist Social Welfare", paper presented at the Middle East Studies Association Annual Conference, San Francisco, November 22 -24, 1997.

[9] *Financial Times*, 10 June 1999 p. 6.

[10] See one of the many that have made this point: Fawaz A. Gerges, *America and Political Islam, Clash of Cultures or Clash of Interests?*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1999. See especially the Chapter on Egypt, pp. 171 - 191.

[11] Glenn Robinson, "Authoritarianism with a Palestinian Face", *Current History*, January 1998, p. 15.

[12] See for example Jean-François Legrain, "HAMAS: Legitimate Heir of Palestinian Nationalism", in John L. Esposito (ed.), *Revolution, Radicalism, or Reform?*, Cairo, The American University in Cairo Press, 1997, pp. 159 – 178.

[13] See Ziad Abu Amr, *Islamic Fundamentalism in the West Bank and Gaza: Muslim Brotherhood and Islamic Jihad*, Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 1994.

[14] See Joost R. Hiltermann, *Behind the Intifada: Labor and Women's Movements in the Occupied Territories*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1991, who shows that Palestinians started to organize intensively before the Intifada started.

[15] See Glenn Robinson, *Building a Palestinian State: The Incomplete Revolution*, Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 1997.

[16] See Robinson:1997, op. cit., p. 45 and especially Denis Sullivan, "NGOs in Palestine: Agents of Development and Foundation of Civil Society", *Journal of Palestine Studies*, Spring 1996, Vol. 25, No. 3, p. 96.

[17] Denis Sullivan, "NGOs in Palestine...", p. 94.

[18] See Feras Milhem, "Le mouvement associatif en Palestine: Les ONG face à l'Autorité palestinienne", *Monde arabe Maghreb Machrek*, July - September 1998, No. 161, pp. 91 – 101.

[19] Denis Sullivan, op. cit., pp. 98 – 99.

[20] Terry L. Karl, Philippe C. Schmitter, "Modes of Transition in Latin America, Southern and Eastern Europe", *International Social Science Journal*, Vol. 128, pp. 269 – 284.

[21] The contract was for four years with an option for an additional fifth year that USAID decided not to use. Total budget for four years was 6,636,224 USD and for the optional fifth year 1,337,292 USD. Chemonics International, a major US consulting company, obtained the contract.

[22] USAID, Governance and Democracy Program, Near East Bureau, "DIS Project", White Copy p. 38, italics ours.

[23] Ibid, p. 3. Italics ours.

[24] Alan Richards and Raymond Baker, *Political Economy Review of Egypt*, June 1992 for Management Systems International; Raymond Baker, *'Civil Society' in Egypt: Concept and*

Social Realities, August 1992; Robert Springborg, *Participatory Organizations and Political Institutions in Egypt*, January 1993 for DIS / Chemonics; and Susan S. Davis, *Advocacy-Oriented Non-Governmental Organizations in Egypt: Structure, Activities, Constraints, and Needs*, May 1995 for DIS / Chemonics.

[25] Besides USAID Egypt's projects there are other US projects that are funded from Washington, for example by the NED, and implemented by organizations such as NDI. Thus US democracy assistance to Egypt (and Palestine) is slightly higher.

[26] Besides the official publications of USAID and the EU, the following sources for democracy assistance to the Palestinians are important: UN Special Coordinator in the Occupied Territories (UNSCO), "Rule of Law Development in the West Bank and Gaza: Survey and Status of Development Effort", July 1997; Palestinian National Authority Core Group on Rule of Law and Legal Institution Building, "Human Rights, Democracy & Rule of Law: Submission to the Palestinian development Plan for the Years 1998 - 2000; Jerusalem Media & Communication Centre (JMCC), *Foreign Aid and Development of Palestine*, June 1997 and JMCC, *Mortgaging Self-Reliance: Foreign Aid and Development in Palestine*, November 1997.

[27] See the European Commission note, "The Role of the European Union in the Peace Process and Its Future Assistance to the Middle East", n. d.

[28] For example Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, 'Civic Education Measures in Preparation for the Palestinian Elections', 1995-1996, funded by the EU MEDA Democracy programme.

[29] The participants stressed that the Civic Forum should be managed by Palestinians but paid for by outside donors (especially the US and Great Britain), since they are to be blamed for the Palestinian situation.

[30] Viewpoints Research Ltd., "Independent Evaluation of Civic Education and Civic Forum in the West Bank, Gaza Strip and East Jerusalem', Report on Qualitative Research, February 9, 1998. A total of 18 focus groups in 11 communities, 162 respondents. Eight groups had been exposed to Civic Forum sessions, ten had not.

[31] Viewpoints Research Ltd., "Independent Evaluation…, p. 7.

[32] I define private voluntary organizations as a subset of civil-society organizations that focuses on service delivery and community development; see footnote 6.

[33] They are: the Board Union of Palestinian NGOs (BUPNGO), the General Palestinian Union of NGOs (GUNGO), and the Palestinian National Institute for NGOs (PNIN).

[34] This is the official definition of the target groups used in The World Bank, "The Palestinian NGO Project: Public Discussion Paper ", al-Ram, West Bank, July 15, 1997, p. 2. It explicitly excludes such organizations as trade unions, professional membership associations or commercial cooperatives.

[35] Ibid., p. 10.

[36] I define Non-Governmental Organizations as a subset of civil-society organizations that focuses pre-dominantly on advocacy and issues of public interest (see footnote 6).

[37] Quoted in *Middle East International*, June 4, 1999, p.18.

[38] I defined *Interest groups* as organizations that pursue specific interests of their members (see footnote 6).

[39] See Joost Hiltermann, op. cit.

[40] USAID, "USAID / West Bank and Gaza Strategy 1996-2000", March 1996, Abbreviated Version.

[41] It is true that especially the EU and some European countries (e.g. Denmark, Great Britain, Sweden, and the Netherlands) have developed programmes to train police and prison guards to gain respect for human rights of suspects and prisoners. At the same time, the same EU (and even more so, the US and Israel) is not taking as strong a stand against the Palestinian Authority as could be expected. See Human Rights Watch / Middle East, "Palestinian Self-Rule Areas: Human Rights Under the Palestinian Authority", September 1997, Vol. 9, No. 10 (E), pp. 39-44.

[42] For a more in-depth discussion of this issue, see Schmitter, Brouwer, "Conceptualizing, Researching & Evaluating Democracy Promotion & Protection", European University Institute. To be published in the working paper series of the Department of Political and Social Sciences, European University Institute.

[43] Azmi Bishara: "The Civil Society Debate", paper to the Van Leer Jerusalem Institute, 1997(?).

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