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Democratization in the Arab World

Prospects and Lessons from
Around the Globe

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Summary

The successful revolts in early 2011 against long-entrenched autocrats in Egypt and Tunisia were a remarkable human achievement. By the end of 2011, Tunisia had crossed the threshold to becoming an electoral democracy. Over the course of the year, ragtag groups of rebels steadily gained ground in their ultimately successful quest to push Libya's dictator from power. And by early 2012, a handover of power was under way in Yemen after a yearlong uprising; Syrian authorities were brutally suppressing an active opposition; and the Sunni minority's hold on power in Bahrain remained contested by the Shia majority. The utterly unexpected Arab Spring had catalyzed a political sea change.

But daunting challenges clearly lay ahead for the countries where revolutions had succeeded. Prognosticators could not be certain: Would the Arab Spring lead to a flowering of democracy? Would loosening of the political systems in these countries unleash dangerous forces of extremism or ethno-sectarian conflict? Would new autocrats replace the old ones? Would surviving autocrats harden their positions or see the need for at least gradual change? The soundest forecast may be that the future course of these unpredicted changes will be unpredictable.

Nevertheless, it is possible to identify conditions and decisions that are likely to influence whether the region's regime changes will lead to democratization. Foreign policies and aid programs intended to encourage and assist democratization processes will require an understanding of those conditions and decisions. To offer a basis for such an understanding, this study addresses three questions:

1. What are the main challenges to democratization that Egypt, Tunisia, and other Arab countries experiencing political change are likely to face in the coming years?
2. How have other countries around the world that emerged from authoritarianism overcome or failed to overcome similar challenges?
3. What can the United States and the broader international community do to help transitioning countries overcome these challenges and strengthen their fledgling democracies?

Answers to these questions do not provide a road map for democratization; the processes under way are too complex and the circumstances in the countries too diverse for one-size-fits-all guidelines. But, unquestionably, there are lessons to be learned from the many and varied political transitions that have occurred throughout the world in recent decades.

Thus, we approached the study's questions principally through comparative analysis. We analyzed transition experiences in all the world regions where relevant political changes have occurred since the mid-1970s in what Samuel Huntington famously termed the "third wave" of democratization, and drew lessons that could be applied to the Arab world. We focused on the challenges in Tunisia and Egypt because these were the only countries where revolutions had been completed when we embarked on the study. We supplemented this work with an exploration of scholarly literature on democratization, including studies examining the effectiveness of foreign aid in support of democratization. Our overall aim was to bridge the academic world's extensive investigation of democratization processes and the policy world's interest in determining how to respond to the events of the Arab Spring and to produce pragmatic, policy-relevant conclusions.

Theories of Democratization and Study Structure

Although not a rarity, full-fledged democracy was not the world's predominant form of government before the third wave. In 1973, Freedom

House rated just 29 percent of 151 countries as “free,” 28 percent as “partly free,” and 43 percent as “not free.” By the end of 2011, the percentages of free and not free countries had roughly reversed: 45 percent of 195 countries were free, 31 percent were partly free, and 24 percent were not free.

Spurred by democracy’s dramatic advances over the past 40 years, scholarly interest in democratization mushroomed. Scholars have generated a vast literature that explores the many dimensions of democracy and of democratization as a process of political system change. They have revealed the tremendous diversity of democratization experiences, but because of that diversity, have struggled to produce generalizations on which policies could be based. Even for countries within a single region sharing similar background conditions, the variation in transition experiences has been emphasized.

The notion of a “transition paradigm,” in which countries move from authoritarian rule toward democracy through a sequence of stages, has been largely rejected. Many countries have been seen to settle into a “gray zone” of diverse forms of government where autocratic and democratic features are combined. Such countries are no longer seen as simply stalled on the road to democracy. In this volume, we use the term *transition* not to imply that countries undergoing political change tend to follow a set, linear pattern but, rather, to indicate our concern for the *process* of democratization, in particular, the ways it can be influenced and the possibilities for how it can unfold. The strand of the democratization literature concerned with the gray zone suggests that the changes under way in the Arab world may lead to various possible destinations that differ *both* from their points of departure and from liberal democracy.

An important preoccupation of democratization scholars, and one with particular relevance to this study, is the question, what *causes* polities to become and remain democracies? Despite a huge volume of research in this area, there are few uncontested findings and no overall consensus on causative factors. We did not try to reproduce others’ efforts to isolate systematically such factors. Rather, our purpose was to examine how factors regarded as important in the democratization literature influenced the outcomes of particular transition processes. We

did this so that we could consider how past experience speaks to the processes now unfolding in the Arab world. We did not look at every possible factor, but instead selected ones that were likely to be pertinent in the context of the Arab world. And we selected for close inspection examples of transitions in which these factors were at play, so that we could explore their effects on democratization and ways that challenges might be managed.

The influences we considered include both structural conditions and policy choices. They are: (1) the *mode of regime change*, with attention given to how the way in which power changed hands affected the democratization process; (2) the country's *past experience with political pluralism*; (3) *critical policy choices* made by the domestic actors during the transition process, including decisions made regarding subordination of militaries to civilian control, elections, constitution making, and transitional justice (holding former regime members to account for abuses); (4) *state and social cohesion*, including social cleavages, insurgencies, and unsettled borders; (5) *economic characteristics*; (6) the *external environment*; and (7) *external policy choices and assistance*, including efforts by foreign actors to foster democratization. These factors and choices form the structure for our exploration of past transitions and analysis of the implications for events in the Arab world.

The Arab World on the Eve of Change

On the eve of the Arab Spring, the Arab world remained the sole zone untouched by global democratization trends. There were a variety of regime types, including hybrid regimes (in Lebanon, Kuwait, and Iraq), monarchies, and authoritarian republics, but no consolidated democracies. Scholars and policy practitioners have advanced a variety of theories as well as statistical and comparative analyses to explain this lack of democracy, but no consensus has emerged on which explanations are most persuasive.

One category of theories holds that the Arab world lacks the cultural prerequisites for democracy, such as affinity for participatory government and individual rights. Some argue that either Islam or the

tribal origins of Arab society has fostered a culture of submission to authority. Another group of theories looks at what is unique about the location of the Arab world. The presence of oil in the region is one of the most prevalent explanations: Oil revenues accrue to the state, enabling it to reinforce authoritarianism by distributing patronage, buying off potential opponents, and building a coercive apparatus. A third set of theories focuses on the efforts of foreign powers, particularly the United States, to maintain regional stability and protect Israel. Finally, Arab regimes have become adept at staving off pressure for change, for example, by stoking secularist and Islamist fears of each other coming to power.

Regardless of the best explanation or combination of explanations, it is clear that authoritarianism has proven resilient in the Arab world. The Arab Spring broke down the illusion of regime invulnerability. But the confluence of conditions and authoritarian strategies that blocked political change in the past can be expected to pose challenges for democratization going forward.

From the Arab Winter to the Arab Spring

The self-immolation of street vendor Mohammed al-Bou‘azizi in Tunisia set off the wave of protests that led to the fall of President Zine El Abidine Ben ‘Ali and catalyzed the Arab Spring. Although some analysts had long questioned the stability of Arab regimes given their reliance on repression, the January 14th Revolution was surprising both in the speed with which it unfolded and in that Tunisia was the first domino to fall. The patronage networks, internal security forces, and democratic façade Ben ‘Ali spent 23 years constructing took just 29 days to collapse. Given Tunisia’s positive economic performance, large middle class, and secular values, it appeared to be one of the more unlikely candidates in the region for a mass protest movement.

The Tunisian transition had a rocky start but began to find its footing after free and fair elections in October 2011 and the seating of a Constituent Assembly in January 2012. Although very real political, practical, and economic challenges lay ahead, a remarkable shift has

occurred in Tunisia: It crossed the threshold to becoming an electoral democracy. Tunisia bears the important distinction of being the first Arab democracy since Lebanon's collapse in the mid-1970s, with the complicated exception of Iraq. This is a historically important development not only for Tunisians but also for the Arab world as a whole. If democracy deepens in Tunisia, others in the Arab world will have the opportunity to learn from Tunisia's example, including from its approach to incorporating Islamic-oriented political parties into public life.

Less than a month after Tunisia's Ben 'Ali fled into exile, Egypt's President Hosni Mubarak was compelled to step down after 30 years in power. The Egyptian revolution was a whirlwind—just 18 days of massive protests. It quickly became clear that the revolution was the relatively easy part and that a transition to a new political system would be a much longer and more uncertain process.

Egypt's new leaders will need to untangle a complex political system that mixed a veneer of democratic practices, repressive strategies, and a welfare state. The transition process will be strained by poor economic conditions; underdeveloped political and civic organizations, with the exception of Islamic groups; and the revolution's legacy of opportunistic and superficial cohesion. A crucial struggle lies ahead over the reshaping of civil–military relations. This struggle will pit the military for the first time against political forces that have democratic and social legitimacy. It is not clear whether the results of this struggle as well as the transition process more broadly will satisfy the political aspirations of the Egyptian protestors. A disconnect could lead to a return of street politics.

Despite their challenges, Tunisia and Egypt are better placed to democratize than countries such as Libya, Yemen, and (if a regime change occurs) Syria, which have severe internal divisions and have experienced or are continuing to experience serious violence associated with movements for political change. Democratization in Tunisia and especially in Egypt, the most populous and potentially the most influential Arab country, could provide pivotal examples for the rest of the region, even if it proceeds slowly.

Past Experiences Throughout the World

The third wave commenced with democratic transitions in Southern Europe in the mid-1970s. Regime changes in Latin America were set in motion in the 1980s and continued into the 1990s. Next came the stunning transformation of Central and Eastern Europe and dissolution of the Soviet Union beginning in 1989. Democratic transitions swept through sub-Saharan Africa in the early to mid-1990s (though many were not sustained), and occurred more sporadically in various parts of Asia in the 1980s through 2000s. We examined the democratization trends in each of these regions and focused in-depth on particular examples of transitions in each region.

In *Southern Europe*, the nearly contemporaneous regime changes in Portugal, Greece, and Spain produced consolidated democracies relatively quickly, while in Turkey progress was more halting. In the Portuguese, Greek, and Spanish cases and, to a lesser extent, later in Turkey, the pull of European integration was an especially important factor propelling democratization.

The courses of these transitions were diverse. Spain experienced a regime-initiated transition that relied on maintaining a high degree of consent and consensus. Portugal had a chaotic transition, in large part due to political and ideological divisions within the military. In Greece, a weakened military junta disintegrated after only seven years in power, enabling a speedy return to civilian rule.

In Turkey after the 1980 coup, the military supervised a transition from authoritarian rule and then, after ensuring that its own status and influence were strengthened in the constitution, returned to the barracks. A form of guided democracy was established in which the military acted as an unelected arbiter, determining the political rules of the game behind the scenes. That role diminished very gradually, while at the same time Islamist-oriented political parties rose to power. The Turkish model could, in its broad outlines, be replicated in some Arab countries, particularly Egypt.

Latin America saw cyclical patterns of authoritarianism and democratization in the postindependence period. The democratization cycle that unfolded in the 1980s and 1990s reflected strong continent-

wide trends toward democratic governance, the free market, and trade liberalization. These trends reinforced each other, strengthened the role of civil society and elected officials, and, in some countries, particularly in the Southern Cone, transformed the political role of the military. In Central America, the change in the global and regional balances of power that accompanied the collapse of the Soviet Union created the conditions for peaceful resolution of conflicts through the disarming of insurgent groups and their incorporation into democratic processes. Together with these changes, democracy became normative in the inter-American system.

These developments were evident in Argentina, for example, where an institutional military government fell after defeat in the Falklands War discredited it. They were evident as well in Chile's evolutionary transition to a more democratic system, which was carried out within the constitutional framework set up by the authoritarian regime. The transition in Peru, however, was an unusual case of regime collapse, primarily due to its own internal contradictions. Because Alberto Fujimori's regime had not set down deep authoritarian roots, the democratic consolidation process after his ouster proceeded quickly and faced few hurdles. In each of these cases, the transitions took their respective courses largely because of domestic political dynamics. External assistance contributed to the conduct of free and fair elections and other aspects of democratic development but did not appear to significantly affect democratization.

The transitions in *Eastern Europe and the Post-Soviet Space* resulted in disparate outcomes. For much of the Post-Soviet Space, especially the Central Asian states, the problems associated with the legacy of Soviet rule weighed heavily against democratization. For the countries of Eastern Europe, the prospect of membership in the European Union (EU) and North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) was crucial to the speed, comprehensiveness, and success of the transition processes.

The sharp economic decline experienced by the communist states in Eastern Europe in the late 1970s and early 1980s helped set the stage for regime changes by increasing public discontent and undermining the fragile legitimacy of the regimes. In the postcommunist period, the countries of both Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union were

faced with the challenge of creating market economies concurrently with changing their political orders. The dual nature of these transitions is distinct from those that occurred elsewhere or are under way in the Arab world.

One important explanation for differences among the Eastern European transitions is the degree of the former regimes' penetration of society. The regimes that maintained the tightest control and used the harshest methods to repress dissent, such as Romania and Bulgaria, had the most difficult transitions. Few, if any, autonomous groups had been allowed to emerge that could help to broker the transitions. Thus, the transitions in Romania and Bulgaria were chaotic and slower than those in countries such as Hungary and Poland, where civil society had begun to emerge prior to the transition.

Weak civil society has also been an important factor limiting democratization in Central Asia and parts of the European Post-Soviet Space. Lack of strong national identities and the emergence of violent ethnic conflicts and separatist pressures were key factors as well. In Russia, President Boris Yeltsin's decision to give priority to economic restructuring over democratic state restructuring weakened the state, weakened democracy, and ultimately weakened the economy. These failings paved the way for Yeltsin's successor, Vladimir Putin, to restore the power of the central state over society and forge a faux democracy.

In *Asia*, many countries, including North Korea, Laos, Vietnam, and China, have never embarked on a democratic course and remain under varying degrees of authoritarian rule. Many others have hybrid regimes. In recent years, though, Freedom House has recorded impressive gains in adoption of institutions of electoral democracy in the region. Among the countries that have experienced democratic transitions, the history, patterns, and durability of the transitions are especially diverse.

The limited consolidation of first-generation postcolonial democratic transitions in the region has often been explained by low levels of economic development, low levels of mass education, inexperience with democratic institutions, and historically hierarchical and authoritarian political cultures. Nevertheless, India's experience shows that democratic consolidation can happen even in the context of widespread pov-

erty and illiteracy and tremendous ethnic diversity. Second-generation democratic transitions in the 1980s and 1990s were more widespread. Although the fall of the Soviet Union and globalization were key common factors influencing change in many of the transitions during this period, the impetus for and modes of change varied widely.

For South Korea and Taiwan, for example, democratic transitions occurred in the context of modernization and economic transformation. By the 1980s each had a growing, educated middle class that increasingly regarded authoritarian, heavy-handed governance as illegitimate. In Mongolia, the only former Soviet Asian country to have undergone successful transition, the main driver of change was the fall of the Soviet Union, which prompted the ruling party to introduce a multiparty democratic system and a new constitution in 1990.

Some second-generation transitions—notably, in South Asia, Bangladesh, and Pakistan—clearly failed to produce democratic governance. In Southeast Asia, too, the record has been mixed. For example, the Philippine transition after the ouster of President Marcos in 1986 resulted in institutional changes, but did not fundamentally change the Philippine power structure. This case illustrates the potential shallowness of democratization. Meanwhile, democracy in Indonesia has strengthened over time after the fall of the 32-year rule of President Suharto in 1998. Indonesia exemplifies evolutionary transition in which changes were effected within the existing constitutional framework. In both the Philippines and Indonesia, the decisions of the senior military leaderships to support changes of government were critical factors favoring democratization. The similarities between the power structures in Indonesia and some Arab countries now in the process of transition, particularly the political role of the military and the importance of religion in public life, render Indonesia a plausible model.

Sub-Saharan Africa experienced an unprecedented and fast-moving series of democratic transitions in 1990–1994. These events have been referred to as the “second independence,” acknowledging that the democratic record of most postindependence regimes left much to be desired. Although a few transitions happened earlier, some durable and some short-lived, they represented little more than exceptions on a continent where the typical regime was authoritarian, relied on single-party rule, and kept civil liberties under tight control.

The changes of the 1990s have been attributed in part to the fall of the Soviet Union, which helped discredit one-party systems and, more importantly, removed Cold War politics from Africa. Another factor was the continent's debt crisis, which, along with a worldwide decline in commodity prices, eroded already limited revenues. A third factor was the emergence of private actors who pressed for multiparty systems, civil liberties, and democracy and were able to seize opportunities when external circumstances turned in their favor. Public opinion in the region created new pressures as well, as expectations of government performance rose and the public's readiness to challenge abuses of power grew.

Democratization in sub-Saharan Africa has, however, been fragile. Only a few countries experienced significant progress toward democratic consolidation. In many places democratic transitions were short-lived or delivered less change than promised. Some incumbents quickly learned how to manipulate the political process to ensure they would be elected, as in Kenya and Cote d'Ivoire. Others were replaced by members of the opposition who proved no less prone to authoritarian tendencies than their predecessors, as in Zambia. Unlike some of the more successful cases, in these countries there was no fundamental restructuring of political processes and institutions. Mali provides an especially unfortunate example of fragility. After two decades of democratic development, despite being one of the world's poorest countries, a coup toppled the government in early 2012.

Experience in sub-Saharan Africa demonstrates that poverty, other unfavorable structural conditions, and histories of conflict can be surmounted in the effort to build democracies. Sub-Saharan African states have more political contestation after the third wave than at any time in their postindependence histories, even if democracy in the region continues to be weakened by corruption and illiberalism. Importantly for transitional states in the Arab world, however, sub-Saharan Africa's experience also shows that democratic consolidation can be elusive. Democratization in unfavorable circumstances is a slow process, with many ongoing challenges.

Globally, the democratic momentum slowed in the first decade of the 2000s, with a variety of hybrid regime types emerging, that is, regimes that combined autocratic practices and democratic forms.

Some observers of democratization wondered whether the trend toward more and more democracy around the world was stalled or even reversing. As of the end of 2011, Freedom House observed six straight years of more countries with declining democracy scores than improving ones. Although there were no longer any widely recognized alternatives to democracy in terms of expressed ideologies, there was, in reality, a large number of illiberal democracies, or hybrid regimes. That said, regression to authoritarianism has generally *not* occurred among states that truly transitioned to democracy during the third wave.

It is too soon to tell whether the developments of the present century to date represent a turn in the trend-line away from ever greater democratic advances or an historical blip. It is also too early to tell where the political changes that began in 2011 in the Arab world will lead. But unquestionably, democracy has advanced far both normatively and practically since the mid-1970s on a global basis as well as within most regions.

Lessons and Policy Implications

Our conclusions begin with a broad comparison of the Arab Spring to key features of third wave transitions. We then identify lessons from past experience that speak to the critical challenges ahead for Egypt and Tunisia, as well as lessons for the broader Arab world. Finally, we highlight implications for policymaking in the United States and the broader international community. Overall, these conclusions will help policymakers assess the challenges ahead, form well-founded expectations, shape diplomatic approaches, and take practical steps to encourage positive change.

The Arab Spring Compared to Third Wave Transitions

A fundamental historical shift in recent decades is that democracy no longer has any serious competitors as a legitimate system of governance. Particularly after the dissolution of the Soviet Union and the rejection of communism as a form of government across Europe, governments in all countries transitioning from authoritarianism espouse democracy,

even though many fall short in practice. No governments, even those that purposefully bolster autocrats beyond their borders, now openly propose any transplantable alternative to democracy. Institutions in the international system promote democracy as a universal norm.

An important question about the consequences of the Arab Spring is whether the Arab world will adapt to this reality or change it. A distinct feature of Arab political culture is that some propose an alternative to democracy: Islamism. Uncertain as yet is what difference this distinction will make to the outcomes of transitions in the region. Developments in Egypt, Tunisia, Libya, and potentially elsewhere will test the ability of parties that champion an Islamist agenda to pursue political and social aims within a democratic system alongside parties with a secular orientation. They will also test the ability of transitional leaders to manage the cleavage between Islamist and secular conceptions of the state.

Arab countries may follow paths similar to those taken by Turkey and Indonesia, where socially conservative Muslim parties play active roles in electoral politics within democratic systems. They could experience something like Iraq's fractious identity-based politics, where sectarian affiliation plays a strong role but where the prospect of an Islamist *system* is dim. The turn away from authoritarianism could, however, open up space for groups to promote Islamist forms of government. The parameters of political Islam in Arab countries undergoing political change have yet to be defined.

Popular expectations and continued pressure will be more important to the outcomes of the Arab Spring than in some previous transitions. Already in Egypt, for example, protesters have seen a need to continue pressing the military to maintain momentum toward democracy. Transitions in Southern Europe, Latin America, and Eastern Europe were generally sustained by elite consensus, developed before the transition's opening or in its early stages, with less need for populations to hold their leaders' feet to the fire. As a result of the important role of mass protest in initiating the Arab Spring transitions and, in all likelihood, pushing the processes forward, some of these transitions, especially in Tunisia, might move more quickly than those that were initiated from above, as in Latin America. But, in the absence of

elite and intergroup consensus, the transitions in Egypt, Libya, and, if a transition opens there, Syria could remain contested for protracted periods of time.

To date, the Arab Spring has spawned more protest movements than completed regime changes. The examples of contemporaneous region-wide transitions during the third wave, especially in Eastern Europe, beg comparison with events in the Arab world. Is democracy contagious in ways that suggest more Arab regime changes are to come? Protests in Tunisia inspired protests in Egypt, and inspiration then snowballed through the region. But experience elsewhere suggests that these so-called demonstration effects, that is, events in one country showing people in other countries the possibility of change, are more powerful in sparking transformational dynamics than in sustaining them through to completed transition.

The wave of change that swept through Eastern Europe after 1989 occurred under much more favorable internal and external conditions than the changes occurring in the Arab Spring. The removal of Soviet support uniformly undermined the survival of authoritarian regimes in Eastern Europe, and European integration bolstered the democratization dynamics (transitions in the former Soviet Union, where European integration is not a factor, have been much more troubled). Arab regimes are more diverse than regimes in Eastern Europe were, including with respect to their internal and external support structures. Regimes in Syria and Yemen, for example, have mixed personalist and single-party rule and have been supported, especially in Syria's case, by a strong internal security architecture. In Bahrain, Saudi Arabia (the Gulf area's main power) supports the monarchy out of shared interest in preventing democratic reform. In other words, the Arab Spring has generated pressure for political change, but counterpressures in the region remain strong.

That said, diffusion effects do not have to be manifested in spectacular and speedy political change. In Latin America, the entrenchment of democratic norms and practices took place over a longer period of time than in Eastern or Southern Europe. Moreover, studies have shown that having democratic neighbors on average increases the likelihood of a country becoming a democracy. So, if Egypt and Tuni-

sia develop consolidated democracies, and if Libya also democratizes (though probably more slowly), and if even Iraq gradually democratizes, all of which are possible, changes such as those could affect the democratization prospects for the rest of the region over the longer term. Unlike the more uniform process in Eastern Europe, diffusion effects in the Arab world, barring any major reversals, are likely to play out progressively over time and in different ways in different countries.

A cautionary lesson can be drawn from the wave of political transitions that in the early to mid-1990s swept through sub-Saharan Africa, a region with nearly as little prior democratic experience as the Arab world. Though overall less tumultuous than the revolutions of the Arab Spring, these transitions occurred relatively quickly and many involved public protests. After the initial swell of change, many of these transitions failed to deliver enduring democratization. Fundamental restructuring of political processes and institutions, including through constitutional reform, was crucial in the more successful cases. Where such restructuring did not occur, newly elected regimes often practiced old forms of repression or manipulated democratic formalities to their benefit.

Lessons for Egypt and Tunisia

Based on our analysis of past regime transitions throughout the world and considering the particular challenges ahead for Egypt and Tunisia, we describe below lessons that speak to those challenges.

Managing Effects of the Mode of Regime Change. A fundamental challenge facing Egypt is the need to reconcile the wave of optimism the revolution unleashed with the political realities of a transition controlled by the main pillar of the former regime, the military. In addition, the revolution brought new political actors onto the scene, and their ability to solidify a continuing role will be a signal of the revolution's enduring impact. Another challenge will be managing the integration into formal politics of formerly banned organizations, including the popular and well-organized Muslim Brotherhood. An even greater wild card may be the conservative Islamist an-Nour party, which led a list of Salafists that captured a surprisingly large share of the vote in Egypt's first elections. In Tunisia, a similarly speedy revolution left little

time for oppositional groups to organize. The early transition period thus was haphazard, with no coherent central authority directing state affairs. As in Egypt, managing potential friction between groups with Islamist and secularist orientations will pose challenges during the transition process.

In past transitions, modes of regime change—including revolutionary, coup-initiated, negotiated, and gradual reform—and their effects were extremely varied. Few cases of successful democratization escaped turbulence of differing dimensions, indicating that *turbulence alone does not derail democratization*. The *difficulty of managing high popular expectations after regime change was not a prominent factor* in the reversals or especially slow transitions; failure to reform institutions, leaders' insufficient commitment to democratization, and other internal political dynamics were the more powerful explanations.

The Southern European cases show that *outcomes can hinge on whether the regime change involved rejection of the former political system*, and not just rejection of the former regime. In Spain and Portugal particularly, the dismantling of discredited institutions was essential to democratization. This is likely to be so for Tunisia as well, where the ruling party had spread its tentacles throughout the state.

In Turkey, the authoritarian Kemalist system, with its strong military influence, was eased toward full democracy only gradually. As the preferences of the majority of Turks increasingly were able to hold sway, the Islamist-oriented Justice and Development Party rose to power. In Chile, too, democracy developed gradually; authoritarian “enclaves” in the constitution (including protections for the military) were not fully removed until 25 years after the transition was launched. As in Turkey, the transition process was regime-led. This type of *gradualism will be difficult for Egypt's military to emulate*, however, because of the bottom-up, revolutionary initiation of Egypt's transition and high expectations of rapid change. A reservoir of popular respect for the Egyptian military may give it some leeway for exercising continuing political influence, but only so long as it does not blatantly thwart democratic aspirations.

The same set of triggers set off the political changes that occurred after 1989 throughout Eastern Europe and the Post-Soviet Space, that is, the withdrawal of Soviet support for satellite regimes and ultimately

the demise of the Soviet Union. But outcomes were distinctly different between the two parts of the former communist bloc, with far greater democratic gains in Eastern Europe. A key distinction is that in all the Eastern European cases, the former system, together with its supporting institutions, was thoroughly rejected. Instead of systemic change, the Post-Soviet Space saw so-called imitation democracies take hold, as well as some instances of continuing authoritarianism. *Real democracy will not take hold in the Arab world without systemic change*, whether rapid, as in Eastern Europe, or gradual, as in Turkey and Chile.

Romania's regime change shares some features with Tunisia's and to a lesser extent Libya's. Nicolae Ceausescu's especially repressive rule permitted no development of political institutions or civil society groups that could broker a transition. With an inchoate opposition in Romania, the transition process was prolonged and disorderly. Nevertheless, Romania successfully democratized, showing that *tumult early in a transition does not doom democratic progress, where there are sufficient countervailing forces to keep it on track*. Tunisia has some advantages in this regard: trade and tourism ties to Western Europe, a considerable middle class that could benefit from reforms, and a relatively high level of socioeconomic development.

Mongolia's experience should persuade policymakers to *remain open-minded about the prospects for democratization in the Arab world*. Mongolia experienced one of the most surprising, though still potentially vulnerable, democratic transitions of the third wave. The country is poor, has no previous democratic experience, has no genuinely democratic neighbors, is geographically isolated from the West, and suffered painful economic hardships during the transition process. Sound leadership and broad-based commitment to embracing democratic processes were crucial. In short order, Mongolia had several free and fair elections with alternations in power.

Similarly, Mali illustrates the possibility of planting democracy in poor soil, showing that *difficult conditions are not deterministic*. Despite being extremely poor, having no previous democratic experience, and dealing with a separatist movement, in 2011 Mali was one of only nine sub-Saharan African countries that Freedom House rated "free." Two factors crucial to Mali's success were the lack of an incumbent and the

leadership exercised by the military officer who led a coup and then promptly transferred power to a civilian–military transitional government. But Mali also illustrates that democracy planted in poor soil can be uprooted. After a 20-year process of consolidation of democracy, Mali experience a military coup in March 2012, the final outcome of which remained uncertain at the time of publication of this study. A key factor provoking the coup was insecurity exacerbated by an influx of armed insurgents who left Libya as the Qadhafi regime crumbled.

Open-mindedness as to outcomes should be tempered with a realistic appreciation of the challenges ahead: *revolutionary regime changes do not necessarily lead to transformational changes*. In the Philippines, the transition restored democratic institutions and processes, but politics then defaulted to the pre-martial law pattern of chronic instability. Patterns of political behavior were well entrenched. Countries entering new political territory, such as Mongolia and Mali, may in this sense have an advantage, as, likewise, may Arab countries that are establishing new democratic processes.

Conversely, a *transition process that emphasizes continuity can still produce deep political change* where continuity has sufficiently broad support. In Indonesia, the transition process maintained continuity of government, but institutional reforms nonetheless were set in motion and a high level of democracy was rapidly achieved. Religiously oriented parties entered politics, but militant Islamists have regularly received only small percentages of the vote. The broad similarities between the power structures (especially the political role of the military) and some social conditions in Indonesia and some Arab countries suggest the *potential for stable evolution of Arab democracies where new political groups are broadly included in the democratic process* and powerful institutions maintain consistent support for democratization.

Overcoming Lack of Democratic Experience. Egypt would seem to have had the advantage of having experienced a hybrid, rather than thoroughly autocratic, regime type. Egyptians have some limited acquaintance with democratic processes and civil society organization on which to build. Tunisia, on the other hand, is transitioning from a strongly authoritarian regime, even by regional standards. Tunisian society was effectively depoliticized by a half century of tight political

control and a system that relied on economic performance to legitimate its rule. Tunisia would seem to face a considerable uphill climb in building the institutional foundations for democracy. Nevertheless, as of early 2012, Tunisia's relative disadvantages have not prevented it from achieving more democratic progress and a smoother transition than Egypt. Perhaps the greatest risk to democratization in Tunisia is the possibility that ineffective democratic governance will cause disenchanted Tunisians, who are accustomed to relative material comfort, to be amenable to a return of so-called legitimacy by results.

Though building democratic structures and processes where few or none have existed is difficult, *past experience with political pluralism was of no particular benefit* to transition outcomes in the third wave cases we explored. In some cases, the presence of a foundation for civil society to be able to play a role in the transition was important, however. Among the countries we focused on that successfully democratized, some had prior experience with political pluralism, some had limited experience, and some had none at all.

In countries such as Hungary and Poland civil society and independent groups had begun to develop well before the transitions commenced and were able to play important roles in negotiating the transitions. Similarly, strong civil society institutions that operated within limits under authoritarian rule in Indonesia and the Philippines were critical to the regime changes and to the persistence of broad support for democratization. Egypt, which shares this advantage, may thus be better positioned for democratization than Arab countries such as Libya, where space for civil society was entirely closed, so long as power institutions such as the military continue to support democratization, as militaries ultimately did in both Indonesia and the Philippines.

Establishing Democratic Control of Security Institutions. Among the critical policy choices that will determine the extent of democratization in Egypt will be whether to reverse the long-standing subordination of civilian leadership to the influence of the military. Ensuring the military's support for democratization, despite its strong institutional interests in maintaining its political influence and lucrative business enterprises, is likely to be a vexing challenge. In Tunisia, the Ben 'Ali regime used a sprawling internal security apparatus, embedded at all

levels of society, to maintain control of politics and society. Dismantling this apparatus and subordinating legitimate internal security institutions to democratic control will be a critical element of democratization there.

Militaries in many countries played crucial roles in facilitating or directly carrying out regime changes. But in some countries, even where militaries enabled civilian oppositionists to come to power rather than taking control themselves, a difficult struggle to subordinate the military to democratic civilian control ensued. *Militaries have sometimes been effective stewards of democratization, but eventually need to be brought under civilian control* for democracy to be consolidated.

Some militaries returned to barracks on their own initiative after participating in regime change. In other cases, civilian leaders had to engage in negotiation or conciliation and offer to the military special privileges and protections to win their acquiescence to a new democratic order. Some civilian leaders had to purge the officer corps of former regime loyalists to ensure such acquiescence. *Where militaries have been discredited due to their conduct during the former regime or where they are riven by internal conflicts, civilian leaders generally found it easier to push them out of politics.* Some countries, such as Chile and Turkey, pursued a gradual approach to shifting the balance of power from military to civilian authorities, while others changed the balance more rapidly.

Subordinating the military to civilian control has been a challenge both in cases in which the military was and was not a significant player in the transition process, as indicated by coup attempts and other attempted subversions of civilian authority during transitions in Argentina, Greece, the Philippines, and elsewhere. Spain faced a military coup attempt and Peru's government faced down a mutiny a few years after the transitions in each country, even though their militaries were not key actors in the regime change. This suggests that *establishing civilian control should be a policy priority for governments in transition countries even where the military has not played an important political role* in the transition.

Where the risk of backlash is high, *conciliatory measures can be used to mitigate the risk of coups and, more generally, to socialize the military to a democratic order.* In Argentina, the new civilian government felt

compelled to move carefully in pursuing accountability for “dirty war” crimes; it responded to military revolts by negotiating with rebel officers and compromising on questions of prosecutions and salary increases. In the Philippines, the military’s support for the opposition in the political crisis that led to Ferdinand Marcos’s ouster did not translate automatically into support for the civilian government that followed. The military was not fully socialized to democracy until years after the “people power” revolution.

In Greece, however, a foiled coup attempt handed the government an opportunity to move decisively against former junta sympathizers by forcibly retiring 200 officers. The calculation of when to rebalance civil–military power relationships is difficult and must respect the particular dynamics in each case. External pressure for such rebalancing should be sensitive to these dynamics.

Bringing internal security services under democratic control poses a different type of challenge. *New leaders must dismantle internal security organs if they were pillars of support for the former regime.* Such efforts are complicated by the considerable extent to which such organs, unlike militaries, may have spread their structures and influence throughout society. Ensuring that internal security organs provide legitimate public protection services rather than operate as tools of regime control is part of the broader set of institutional reform imperatives essential to democratizing governance.

In Tunisia, the interim authorities disbanded the so-called political police, and in Egypt the State Security Directorate was dissolved. Although these bodies may have been the most egregious in their abuse of authority, the broader police forces also were implicated and will require significant reform.

Conducting Initial Democratic Elections. Decisions on the timing and openness of initial elections are often among the most contentious in the early part of a transition. Early criticisms that the Egyptian military was moving so quickly toward elections that new political forces would not have time to organize were soon replaced by criticisms that the military was moving too slowly. Tunisia moved rapidly to elect (in October 2011) a Constituent Assembly charged with drafting a new constitution. Preparations for the election were contentious, but, in the event, the elections proceeded smoothly.

Inclusive approaches to elections after regime change helped to ensure smooth transitions, even where decisions to open the political playing field seemed risky at the time. In none of our examples did inclusion of formerly banned parties (as in Greece and Spain) or of Islamist parties (as in Indonesia) set back democratization or otherwise destabilize the transition process.

Our cases showed *no correlation between the timing of first elections and the success of democratic transitions.* The underlying political dynamics and the commitment of transition leaders to a fair process are more important in shaping the course of the transition. That said, in some circumstances, adequate technical preparation for elections can be time-consuming where a pre-existing basis is lacking for establishing districts or determining who is entitled to vote. Nevertheless, as important as initial elections may be in signaling and effectuating real change, *flawed elections do not necessarily doom a democratization process.* In Ghana, for instance, elections that were *not* free and fair in 1992 (after the 1991 transition opening) did not preclude subsequent, gradual democratization and later free and fair elections.

Making a New Constitution. Another critical policy choice is whether and how to create and adopt a new constitution. A year after the Egyptian revolution, a struggle continued over how a new constitution would be written and especially over what the military's role would be in the process. Generally in Arab countries that have experienced regime change, constitution making provides an unparalleled early opportunity for developing broad consensus on a vision of the nature of the state and its relationship to the people.

Past experiences illustrate that putting in place a new constitution, or amending an existing one, is important to laying a foundation for democratic governance and enshrining protection of civil liberties, human rights, and other valued norms. But also, for immediate practical purposes, *constitution making can be used to foster successful democratization by consolidating consensus and keeping potential spoilers on board.* In Spain, for instance, the constitution-making process was used as a tool to reinforce the consensual approach to the transition. In Argentina, constitutional changes were agreed to ensure the commitment of potential political spoilers to the transition.

Accounting for Past Injustices. The controversies that have swirled around early postrevolution trials of Mubarak, his sons, and senior former regime officials indicate the potential that policy decisions regarding accountability for past injustices have for creating friction in the transition process. Decisions regarding how to continue handling questions of accountability will pose important political tests for the Egyptian leadership and important institutional tests for the Egyptian judiciary.

Like Egypt, Tunisia moved very quickly to put its former leader, his family members, and some other officials on trial. The prosecutions, at least in their early stages, were emblematic of the broader lack of order and coherence in the early period of the transition, and their shortcomings exacerbated the poor regard Tunisians have for their judiciary. Tunisia also faces the challenge of fully uprooting the former ruling party from what was essentially a single-party state. Fully purging the party rank and file would leave Tunisia bereft of experienced public administrators and would exclude a large swath of the population from public life.

During past transitions where public demands for accountability were high and the political costs perceived to be low or there was potential political gain, governments often took measures to hold prior regime officials to account for abuses. These measures, often referred to as transitional justice, have included prosecutions, purges, reparations, and truth-telling or historical recording processes. They are often characterized as contributing to reconciliation, though that concept is ill-defined and there is little evidence that such measures have reconciliatory effects. In some circumstances, countries may be exposed to foreign pressure to pursue accountability.

The way in which a postauthoritarian government handles accountability issues tends to reflect the character of a transition. The negotiated nature of the Spanish transition, for example, produced a consensual decision to abstain from opening up the past. The strong break with the past and the initial chaos that characterized the Portuguese transition was reflected in the ambitious and sometimes arbitrary accountability process, which involved expulsions from the country, prosecutions, and massive purges. When the Portuguese transition settled into a more

stable phase, reconciliation became the dominant official approach. In the Philippines, the lack of effort to pursue accountability for abuses that took place during the Marcos era is emblematic of the shallowness of change in political life. Former Marcos loyalists remained in politics, including in high-level positions, and his wife and son eventually won elected office.

In some Latin American countries, accountability was initially denied due to concerns that efforts to expose crimes committed under military regimes would destabilize and potentially subvert transitions to democracy. In most Central and Eastern European countries there has been little effort to hold former communist officials accountable for abuses during their time in power. *The risk that accountability poses for stability is rarely tested* because, where this risk is a concern, caution is usually exercised or political unwillingness prevails. But transitional justice delayed or forgone has not undermined democratic transitions; indeed, many of the most successful transitions were among the most restrained in this regard.

The lack of cases in which risks were taken and proved unwise makes it difficult to assess the genuineness of the risk. In cases such as Argentina and Chile, however, the concern seems justified: military governments were responsible for the abuses, the military's commitment to democratization was crucial in these top-down transition processes, and groups within the militaries had the capability to derail the processes. Thus, *delaying accountability is warranted when the targets and their sympathizers would have an interest in and the capability to subvert the transition*. Accountability remained an issue of intense public interest in Argentina and Chile, and, ultimately, decades later, as democracy was consolidated, prosecutions and other measures were pursued.

In Egypt, the military was the key pillar of the regime, but the regime on its face was civilianized, and the abuses of greatest public concern were not associated directly with military actions. Thus, although the military's commitment to democratic transition is crucial in Egypt, efforts to hold Mubarak and others accountable may not pose important risks as long as the net is not cast too widely; the merits of delay are less compelling than in Argentina and Chile. Moreover, *given the revolutionary nature of the regime changes in both Egypt and Tunisia,*

the new political forces can gain by seeming to meet public demands for accountability.

Managing State and Social Cohesion Problems. Sectarian strife between Egypt's Muslims and Coptic Christians emerged as an important threat to stability in the early period after the revolution. Numerous clashes broke out that led to the destruction of churches, loss of life, and increasing polarization between the two communities. In Tunisia, cohesion problems relate principally to the political sphere, in which moderate Islamist and secularist visions of governance are competing in the more open postrevolution environment. Another problem will be addressing perceived inequities between the interior of the country and the more well-to-do and politically influential coastal areas. Addressing regional inequities would go a long way toward stabilizing the transition process and delivering on the promise of the revolution.

Experiences elsewhere in the world suggest that *the threat to democratization that state and social cohesion problems pose comes less from the problems themselves than from how governments respond to them.* Sectarian and ethnic divisions, irredentism and other threats to territorial integrity, and insurgencies test a government's capacity and commitment to respond in ways that are consistent with democratic decision-making, civilian control over security institutions, and human rights and other norms associated with democracy. Instead of aligning with democratic practices, responses to cohesion problems could manifest or reinforce weaknesses in democracy.

Indonesia provides a positive example of how to manage these problems. The government faced separatist insurgencies; violence against the relatively prosperous ethnic Chinese; and large-scale violence between Muslim and Christian communities, which radical Islamist organizations then used to mobilize supporters. The government responded with a combination of negotiation and deployment of military and police forces to the conflict areas. It brokered agreements between Muslim and Christian communities, and (after the 2004 tsunami) reached an agreement with the separatist movement in Aceh that gave the province substantial autonomy.

The Turkish example, on the other hand, shows how a government's responses to cohesion problems can weaken, or reflect weak-

nesses in, democracy. The Turkish government has responded to Kurdish nationalism, expressed both through violence and political struggle, with repressive measures directed at a segment of its own population and with resistance to cultural and political autonomy for the Kurdish areas.

Turkey, like Tunisia and in some respects Egypt, also lacks a widely shared vision of the state and deep-seated social polarization. The country remains divided between Western coastal and urban middle class citizens, who support a secularist vision of the state, and large majorities in the Central and Eastern provinces and the urban lower middle-class, who support the ascendant socially conservative policies favored by the Justice and Development Party. Democratization brought this polarization to the surface of politics by enabling parties that reflect majority views to wield new influence. The problem in Turkey requires continuing efforts to find ways to accommodate divergent interests and suggests that the difficulty Arab countries may have in resolving similar problems could slow the transition processes. *Lack of consensus on the nature of the state can pose an obstacle in constitutional negotiations, law reform, establishment of new governance structures, and setting of policy priorities.*

Confronting Economic Problems. Economic grievances, especially widespread perceptions of inequalities, were one driver of the revolution in Egypt. The regime's legitimacy had been based on a social contract that included extensive state employment, food subsidies, and considerable social welfare spending. In the short term, the revolution only exacerbated Egypt's economic challenges, thus making the need to manage the public's expectations of economic improvement more compelling. Tunisia, on the other hand, was considered a model of economic reform in the region under the former regime and experienced impressive economic growth. But its performance masked serious problems, including high unemployment among university-educated youth, wide regional disparities in living standards, and growing personal indebtedness among the middle class. Tunisians will expect new leaders to address these difficult issues.

In many countries that experienced political transitions, deterioration of economic conditions and consequent public discontent played

a role in precipitating the transition. These include Eastern European countries, in which poor economic performance undermined the fragile legitimacy of authoritarian regimes. In Indonesia, severe economic hardship that resulted from the 1997 Asian financial crisis triggered popular unrest, contributing to Suharto's fall. Many countries in sub-Saharan Africa suffered economic stress in the early 1990s, leading to public protests and some regime changes.

In the aftermath of regime changes, however, *failure to improve living standards did not cause democratization to fail*. Recessionary crises have been shown to trigger democratic reversals in poorer countries, but avoiding crisis and failing to meet popular expectations are not the same. Mongolia experienced painful economic hardships during what was nonetheless a successful transition. Spain suffered sharp economic deterioration after regime change, but democratization proceeded with strong public support. In Argentina, a dire economic situation at the time of regime change required the new civilian government to adopt an austerity program; strong public backlash led to the president's early resignation but did not derail the transition. Elsewhere in Latin America, however, discontent over persistent economic inequality helped bring semi-authoritarian populist movements to power (in Venezuela, Bolivia, and Ecuador). On the whole, though, these experiences suggest that economic problems, however vexing for government leaders, are not determinative of the course of democratization.

That said, *economic improvements can help consolidate democracy*. Multiple studies show that democracy can be introduced at any level of economic development, but that higher levels of development ensure that democracy will endure. The reasons *why* that is so are disputed. Even so, it is apparent that economic improvement and democratization sometimes go hand-in-hand. The Indonesian economy, for instance, steadily strengthened after Suharto's ouster, thus bolstering the democratic transition.

Transitions in the Arab world could be especially fragile and could be more vulnerable to economic strains than many past cases. The potential impact of economic factors must be considered in conjunction with other dynamics. Given the regional environment, including strong resistance to democratization among many Arab leaders and

lack of an attractive pole such as the EU, the circumstances seem less favorable for successful transition than in the European cases or the top-down Latin American ones. Moreover, because Islamism is seen by some in the Arab world as an ideological rival to liberal democracy, a crucial question will be whether economic frustrations or other disappointments with the fruits of revolution will enhance the attractiveness of the Islamist alternative. Much is likely to depend on the examples to be set in Egypt and Tunisia, where Islamist parties have already succeeded electorally, but with most leaders so far promising a moderate course.

Responding to the External Environment. For both Egypt and Tunisia, internal social and political dynamics drove the revolutions, with Tunisia's revolution providing a spark for Egypt's by demonstrating that an apparently strong and entrenched regime actually was fragile. Going forward, strong international, particularly U.S., interest in Egypt's stability due to the country's strategic location, in its foreign policy toward Israel, and in how it exercises its influence throughout the Arab world could be at odds with full democratization and the populist pressures that could be ushered in. But the degree of leverage the United States especially will have to influence decisions and events in Egypt is an open question. Tunisia, as a small and geopolitically less significant country, will probably escape intense external scrutiny and pressures.

As in Egypt and Tunisia, *internal dynamics were the principal drivers of regime changes in most countries that underwent political transitions, even where external events provided the trigger.* The countries of Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union are the major exceptions; once the possibility of change became manifest (when Gorbachev showed his willingness to tolerate a noncommunist government in Poland), all of the regimes became vulnerable.

Being one among neighbors undergoing political changes simultaneously helps to launch transitions, but not necessarily to consolidate democracy. Other external factors were consequential in some cases, however. Once transitions were initiated in Southern and Eastern Europe, the prospect of integration into European institutions was a powerful force that helped the changes stick. The integration processes provided both incentives for painful political and economic reforms and channels

for practical assistance, as well as yardsticks for measuring progress toward democracy. Even in Turkey, which has not yet acceded to the EU, the desire to qualify for membership has contributed significantly to democratization.

In sub-Saharan Africa, the wave of transitions to multiparty elections in the early 1990s did not lead to consolidated democracies in most of the countries affected. After the Cold War, Western donors felt freer to apply pressure for democratization in the region, but this was not enough to overcome countervailing internal political factors. In Latin America, democracy became normative in the region during the 1980s and 1990s, in part through mechanisms of the Organization of American States (OAS). But the OAS lacks the ability either to enforce such norms or provide tangible incentives to adhere to them. Peer pressures from neighboring states rapidly deflated a coup attempt in Paraguay in 1996, but more recent democratic erosion in Venezuela, Bolivia, and Ecuador illustrates that norms do not have the same power to lock in democratic patterns as political and economic integration has been shown to have in Europe.

Although being in a democratic neighborhood may help countries move toward democracy, being in a nondemocratic neighborhood does not necessarily imperil political change. In Asia, the nature of regimes is diverse, and some countries have remained democratic over long periods of time even without regional democratic norms or integrative structures. The Philippines, for example, has experienced long periods of democracy, and South Korea has been a democracy since 1987. Mongolia democratized in a distinctly undemocratic neighborhood. Thus, *the success of democratization in any single Arab state does not depend on the success of the Arab Spring more broadly.*

Broader Lessons for Democratization in the Arab World

Widening the lens beyond Egypt and Tunisia, we offer several broad lessons from past transition experiences. We also briefly assess the implications of our conclusions for transitions newly under way or on the horizon by early 2012.

Broad Lessons from Past Experiences. Past transition experiences exhibit significant variation along multiple dimensions. Thus, it is

important to bear in mind that *particular factors that tend to contribute to or to undermine democratization rarely if ever determine outcomes.*

Leadership and, more broadly, *elite commitment to change* emerged as a crucial factor in democratization. Decisions that people in power make can be determinative of democratization; internal circumstances and external pressure or assistance, by affecting incentives or the range of options available, can make those decisions easier or harder.

European integration offered unmatched incentives and support for successful democratization in Southern and Eastern Europe. The NATO accession process was useful in this regard as well. No other region in the foreseeable future is likely to have such advantages in consolidating democracy. Assistance and pressure of a realistic scale for countries of the Arab world are likely to be easily outweighed by internal considerations.

Decisions regarding *whether to balance change with elements of continuity* and, if so, how much continuity to incorporate were critical in shaping the course of transitions. In Chile, opposition leaders decided to accept a significant degree of continuity throughout a long, gradual transition to democracy. This ensured a slow pace, but a peaceful and successful process. In Spain, reformers in the regime chose to use existing legal and constitutional structures to change the nature of the political system in order to defuse opposition from supporters of the old regime and avoid a legal and political vacuum. In other cases, notably in Eastern Europe, the prior system was so discredited that incorporating elements of political continuity was out of the question, though institutions of the old regime were used to formalize early steps toward democracy in some cases.

Our case studies bear out scholars' findings that no threshold of economic development is required for democratization. Because a country's policy implementation capabilities and the resilience of its state institutions are generally related to its level of economic development (i.e., poorer countries on the whole tend to have weaker institutions), it is apparent that *democratization can occur even with low levels of institutional development.* Arab countries transitioning from highly personalistic regimes will have considerable state-building challenges, and those transitioning from strong institutionalized authoritarian

systems will require the type of thorough institutional reform that was needed in Eastern Europe, but democracy need not founder on these challenges.

Implications for Libya, Yemen, and Syria. The regimes in Tunisia and Egypt were the first to topple in the Arab Spring in the early months of 2011, but others followed or continue to be under pressure for change. The uncertainty in the region, and a new recognition of the fragility of its regimes, raises the question of whether lessons drawn from previous democratic transitions and applied to Egypt and Tunisia are also relevant to these other cases.

Unlike Egypt and Tunisia, Libya, Yemen, and, if the Assad regime ultimately falls, Syria face or will face the dual burden of managing political transition while recovering from protracted violent conflict. (In Yemen, conflict with separatist elements was continuing in the restive south as of early 2012.) This will require physical reconstruction; amelioration of sectarian, regional, and other intergroup animosities exacerbated by conflict; and disarming of militias and other armed elements. These countries will face many of the same stabilization and state-building challenges that other postconflict countries faced in recent decades, including security sector reform, reintegration of former fighters, and reform of state institutions. Libya will need to build a framework for governance and institutions of civil society virtually from scratch.

Compared with its neighbors, *Libya* faces a much starker problem of weak internal cohesion, given tribal and regional splits within the country and the lack of state institutions that often serve as glue in countries riven by such internal divides. Libya may be unique as a middle-income economy with a level of institutional development akin to that of a failed state. In this regard, Libya's transition will be more severely tested than Egypt's or Tunisia's.

The lack of cohesion is evident also in the competing visions for Libya: Islamist versus secular and centralized versus federal. Tensions between easterners and westerners and between expatriate returnees and those who continued to live under Qadhafi feed into these fractures. The array of militias that are tied to different tribes and locales makes these fractures especially dangerous. Ethnic divisions between

Berbers and Arabs are surfacing as well. Libya's lack of cohesion is far more acute than in any of the cases we examined. Turkey continues to face ethnic divisions (between Turks and Kurds), and competing visions of the role of Islam in politics continue to be salient, but these have been managed against a background of much greater institutional strength than Libya has.

Libya also has the challenge of building a democratic state in a country systematically depoliticized by the former regime. The lack of competitive elections, absence of political parties, and tight regulation of civic life deprived Libyans of any avenue for genuine political participation.

Moreover, the external environment figured much more heavily in Libya's revolution than was the case in Tunisia and Egypt, where the revolutions were internally driven. The ability of the Libyan opposition to depose Qadhafi was dependent upon NATO intervention. It remains to be seen whether external assistance artificially inflated the support commanded by the then-opposition forces, papering over residual support for Qadhafi from those who benefited from the regime and have much to lose in the new Libya.

Efforts in Libya to disband or bring under control the groups of fighters cobbled together to challenge Qadhafi's forces could prove much harder than subordinating an institutionalized military to civilian control. The Libyan militias have disparate motivations and characteristics; they have no barracks to return to; they may not have regular employment; and they may not trust political leaders in a landscape of uncertainty.

Yemen is a tribal society riven by internal divides, with pockets where the central government has essentially ceded control. However, unlike Libya, the nascent transition in Yemen appears to share important characteristics with some preceding democratization experiences. In particular, as of early 2012, Yemen had initiated the type of negotiated, or pacted, transition seen in many of the Latin American cases, as well as in Spain. In Yemen, the pacted nature of the transition pertains narrowly to Saheh's relinquishment of the presidency and the fate of those tribes, military units, and public sector personnel that were loyal to him. As in Latin America, it appears those constituencies will need to be provided a soft landing for a stable transition to unfold.

An additional challenge facing Yemen is that it operates as a distributive state with few resources to distribute. Although Yemen's neighbors in the Gulf Cooperation Council have the means to purchase popular acquiescence through the distribution of oil rents, the Yemeni central government has had to rely on its sovereignty as a currency to bargain with. The Yemeni central government ceded control of large portions of the country in return for loose allegiance from the periphery. If Yemen embarks on a genuine democratic transition, center-periphery dynamics will be a major obstacle to consolidating democracy. Unlike Egypt and Tunisia, Yemen will need to overhaul the structure of government and adopt a federal model that offers autonomy to its periphery in return for support for state institutions. In this respect, constitutional reform processes in Spain, Iraq, and elsewhere can provide helpful positive and negative lessons.

Many of the same lessons that apply especially to Tunisia may also be relevant to *Syria*. If the Assad regime falls, a likely precipitating factor will be a large-scale defection by the Syrian army against the regime's elite internal security forces. That scenario would be similar to what occurred in Tunisia in that it was the regular army's refusal to fire on demonstrators that sealed the regime's fate. Syria's crackdown has been far bloodier and more prolonged than Tunisia's, however, and the conflict has a sectarian dimension that Tunisia's revolution lacked. Post-conflict social tensions would likely remain high. The external dimension of the Syrian conflict (Iran backing the regime; Turkey hosting the armed opposition; and Saudi Arabia backing the Muslim Brotherhood and Sunni tribes in the East) suggests that foreign interference could be significant after a regime change.

In Syria, both intramilitary conflict and military rule are potential risks if the military sides with the demonstrators. Some units could remain loyal to the regime with others defecting, leading to force-on-force fighting. And if military elements overthrow the regime, it is not certain that they would hand over power to civilian leaders. Syria has a rich history of military coups, and of minorities seeing the strong hand of the state as protective. Those factors, along with the fact that a power vacuum could transform Syria into an arena for civil war and regional proxy competition, would make it easy for the Syrian military to justify remaining in power.

Syria resembles Tunisia in terms of single-party control over the political sphere, although, again, to a more heightened degree. The Baath Party in Syria can be understood as a more totalitarian version of the Constitutional Democratic Rally in Tunisia. If Baath Party rule ends, Syria would face a similar problem of how to uproot that structure without provoking opposition from those who joined the party merely because it was the only game in town. On this issue, it will be useful to look to the process of de-Baathification in post-2003 Iraq—for what it suggests negatively and positively about navigating this challenge.

Policy Implications

The lessons described above can be used as a basis for developing policies and diplomatic approaches that reflect reasonable expectations for Arab countries' transition paths, offer a deft mix of incentives and pressure, and draw useful ideas from past experiences. Here we highlight some specific policy implications of the preceding conclusions and the volume as a whole.

First, an overarching word of caution emerges from our analyses of past transitions: *beware of rules of thumb and simplified predictions* regarding how political change will occur in the Arab world. Many countries have defied expectations, doubtless because democratization is a complex, multidimensional process. The lack of simple lessons learned is a *reason for optimism regarding the Arab Spring*. Regardless of the hurdles and setbacks experienced by many countries, trends worldwide and within most regions have been toward greater democracy, even in places that were once regarded as infertile ground. Moreover, the structural indeterminacy of democratization leaves considerable room for the policy choices of domestic actors to shape the course of events and for international actors to try to influence events.

Though the Arab Spring is sometimes characterized as a unified phenomenon, past experiences show that even transitions inspired or triggered by external events unfold in accordance with their own particular dynamics. Thus, *policy approaches toward democratizing or potentially democratizing Arab countries should be individualized*, while bearing in mind that differential treatment based only on U.S. or other foreign interests rather than on internal conditions will be regarded

skeptically. *The same deference to local conditions should influence the approach to transitional justice*, which should be guided principally by the sentiments of the population rather than by efforts to advance external agendas.

The course of events in Egypt and Tunisia—the countries that launched the Arab Spring—will likely influence the perspectives of authoritarians and oppositionists elsewhere. As of early 2012, Tunisia seemed to have the best chance of a successful democratic transition of any of the Arab countries that has seen a political opening. *Although Tunisia is a small country and not geopolitically significant, its transition process merits strong and well-coordinated political and material support from the United States and the EU.* Success there could set an important, positive example for a region that has been mired in authoritarianism, while failure could have a pernicious effect.

Policies should *take into account the long-term nature of democratization*; particularly in Libya and Yemen, democratization, if it occurs, is likely to take many years. Public messages should avoid suggesting that the international community can reach into a toolkit to help speed transitions to democracy.

In formulating policy approaches, it is important to *recognize the limits of outside influence on transition processes* once they are under way. Foreign aid in the aggregate has been shown to have no significant effect on democratization. The relatively small portion of foreign aid directed specifically at building democratic institutions and processes *has* been shown to have intended effects but, on the whole, modest ones. Elections and civil society support appear to be the most effective types of such aid. But overall, democracy assistance has not accounted for most of the variation seen in levels of democracy.

Foreign assistance intended to promote the consolidation of democracy in Arab states undergoing political change should be carefully targeted. *Elections support should be an important priority*, not only because it is likely to have greater intended impact than other types of aid but because elections can set transitions on a positive trajectory, particularly where the elections are consequential for political restructuring through constitutional reform. Elections are not sufficient to create democracy, but they are clearly necessary.

While recognizing the long-term nature of governance reforms and the limited proven effectiveness of foreign assistance programs aimed at supporting such reforms, opportunities should be maximized for *promoting institutional reform and helping democratic processes to work more efficiently and effectively*. Priorities for institutional reform should include building or strengthening accountability institutions, including effective and independent judiciaries; professional and independent electoral administrations; parliamentary committee structures and staffs; and political parties that are internally democratic and externally effective.

Civil society building should be another priority because civil society institutions have helped to propel democratization. This should include aid not only to independent organizations that promote democracy but also independent media, anticorruption and human rights monitoring groups, and organizations that provide civic education. But at the same time, care should be taken not to undermine local organizations with the taint of foreign money.

Among the institutional reform processes on which it will be important to focus is *development of civilian, democratic control of security institutions*. Such processes can be influenced through new or continued military-to-military relations; assistance in professionalizing militaries and internal security organs; and creation of strategic interdependence through security assistance, security agreements, joint exercises, and related measures. *Reform of police institutions is especially important* because these are the security organs that interact most closely with the population and will thus strongly affect a public's calculation of the extent to which democracy has brought real change.

Because the choices made by leaders in countries undergoing political change will be critical to the pace and outcomes of transitions, *encouraging policies likely to help consolidate democracy* will be important. In this regard, however, the United States has rather less leverage in the Arab world than it did with respect to the post-Cold War transitions, in some Latin American countries, and in places such as the Philippines. The United States is likely to find it challenging when the transition processes stumble (as they usually do) to set the bar higher for new Arab regimes than it did for the old ones. Prior to the

Arab Spring, the United States preferred stability to reform in the Arab world, even though stability has been achieved *through* political reform in many places (Indonesia and many Latin American countries, for example). Pivoting to support reform may be viewed skeptically among Arab leaders and publics.

Economic assistance may purchase some leverage, but in Egypt any amount of economic assistance the United States reasonably could provide would be small relative to the size of the economy; Tunisia is largely successful economically; and Libya has oil resources to pay for its reconstruction and development. *Economic assistance is more likely to provide leverage in aid-dependent countries*, though experience in sub-Saharan Africa suggests that such leverage cannot be counted on to produce democracy.

The international community, through multilateral actions or international organizations, should *encourage creation of mutually reinforcing and supporting structures* in the Arab world, such as a regional organization for democracies that could attract and facilitate the delivery of institution-building assistance and reinforce democratization through moral suasion. It may be possible to emulate in modest ways the norm-setting and technical assistance elements of the European integration framework. Channeling Western assistance through a regional organization may also be politically more palatable than bilateral assistance for some countries.

Mutual reinforcement of democratization could occur, and be encouraged, among civil society groups across the Arab world, as well as among state institutions. In this sense, the democratization process could build on the shared experience of many people in the Arab world in seeing the vulnerability of authoritarian regimes exposed, realizing new possibilities, and being inspired to forge a new future.