

## **The Middle East: Legacy and Challenges**

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- In a remarkably short period of time, the Middle East has faced a number of serious upheavals,
  - It has been swept by wave after wave of grand globalizing projects that had pretensions for re-making the region, and instigating a dynamic of democratic reform.
  - Yet, after being recruited into a succession of disparate paradigms, the region continues to stagnate economically and socially, and most authoritarian regimes in the Arab world have been able to maintain the well-worn structures of governance that have persisted since the end of World War II and the process of decolonization.
  - We will look how the structuring framework of the region has evolved, at how international pressures have interacted with local and regional forces, how the various factors have helped or impeded the growth of democracy in the region, and at some of the new elements in place that might affect the prospects for democratization going forward.
- The Cold War provided a structuring global paradigm for almost 50 years.
  - In our region, this took the form of well-known stability pacts.
    - In the first and most durable of these pacts, the West gave conservative regimes protection from Soviet encroachment, support for internal political and social control, and acceptance into international economic arrangements dominated by the United States. In exchange, the West got easy access to reasonably-priced oil (with preferential treatment to American oil companies), containment of Arab nationalism, and de facto, if reluctant, acceptance of Israel.
  - The lingering Israeli-Palestinian conflict, including the seizure and continued occupation of new Palestinian territory by Israel after the 1967 war, was a persistent irritant in this relationship with the West, but never fundamentally disrupted the pact.
    - It also provided a useful rationale for militaristic and authoritarian policies of local regimes.
      - ♦ In fact, with the Camp David agreement, the most populous Arab country, Egypt entered into an upgraded version of the pact, exchanging full recognition of, and normalization of relations with, Israel, for

generous and continuing foreign aid (in a 3:2 ratio with Israel), and, of course, support for Egypt's essentially one-party regime.

- At the end of the Cold War, with the United States left standing as the lone superpower, and the Palestinian situation showing no further signs of progress, Middle Eastern regimes begin to be anxious about their continued value to the west.
- Then, eager to oust Saddam Hussein from Kuwait, the United States organized an international coalition, recruiting Arab states from Syria to Morocco based on an appeal based on the application of international law and United Nations resolutions.
  - They were assured that, once Kuwait's sovereignty had been restored, there would be a new paradigm of international justice. a "new world order," in which all U.N. resolutions would be consistently enforced - pointedly including resolutions demanding Israeli withdrawal from occupied Palestinian territory.
  - Accepting this new stability pact, most regimes of the region thus reconfirmed their support of, and by, the West, and were again effectively exempt from serious pressure for democratic reform,
- Within a few years, the formula for Palestinian peace and justice had morphed into the Oslo process. With the Serbia War, the revised paradigm for world order had morphed into one in which the United States and NATO, with or without United Nations sanction, would undertake "humanitarian interventions" to prevent destabilizing actions of a rogue states or nonstate actors.
  - Although they were not asked to participate directly, Arab regimes did support the US in the Balkans financially and politically, and were not challenged to reform. Thus, the pact prioritizing stability and compliance in our regimes was again extended.
  - But the circle of authority in the world had shrunk again to another level.
- After the attacks of September 11, a new project was promulgated, and, with the invasion of Iraq in 2003, put into action:
  - the United States now proclaimed that it would engage in aggressive interventions throughout the Middle East, in order to transform and stabilize the region in a way that would promote democracy and therefore prevent the spread of terrorism.
  - It would do this unilaterally, using military force in disregard of international standards if it deemed necessary.
  - The circle of authority had shrunk from the United Nations to NATO to the United States itself. It seemed that there would now be a single center of power, with infinite responsibility and reach.

- It also seemed that a new structuring paradigm was being proposed for the world, one defined by its most militant proponents in stark, Manichean terms, as a "clash of civilizations." Now, the grand conflict in the world was neocons vs. jihadis, otherwise known as the "war on terror."
  - One of the key ostensible ideological themes of this paradigm was that democracy was the best guarantor against terrorism, and that, therefore, rather than maintaining stability, consistently and thoroughly promoting democracy, by military force if necessary, would now be America's priority throughout the region.
  - This was certainly a cause for anxiety in some regimes. After all, Saddam's regime was not the only one with dictatorial and authoritarian characteristics. More than a few others would be threatened by such a change.
- The Arab public was, however, quick to see that the fervor for democracy was little more than cover for an agenda of military intervention. The regimes themselves also quickly learned to read the subtext of the increasingly mixed messages.
  - The theme of promoting democracy was always in implicit contradiction with the theme of waging ruthless war against everything "terrorist." Then, in the face of continuing resistance in Iraq, the United States began losing its aura of invincibility, and its triumphalist, benevolent rhetoric became increasingly hollow. Furthermore, the West was not terribly pleased with the democratic outcomes in Lebanon and Palestine, which favored Islamist groups.
- It was soon understood, if left unstated, that the stability pact was again the agenda.
  - It became clear that a facade of democracy would suffice, as long as there was cooperation in the "war on terror," and no serious challenge to American hegemony or Israeli interests.
  - Regimes learned how to tell their people that all would stand together against foreign intervention, while assuring the United States of their help in arresting Islamists, handling "enhanced interrogation" of "rendered" detainees, and containing resistance to its policies.
  - Authoritarian regimes regained their footing as reliable partners.
- Underlying these geo-political projects over the last 25 years was a global economic paradigm - generally known as "neo-liberalism."
  - Through structural adjustment programs, austerity measures, trade, tariff, and investment agreements enforced by international institutions - this economic model sought the widest possible privatization and deregulation of national economies and the global economy, the smallest possible role for state subsidies and interventions, and the largest possible sphere of autonomy for the global

movement of private capital.

- With the disappearance of the Soviet bloc and the uncontested financial hegemony of the United States, this paradigm was presented as the only alternative - economics at "the end of history."
- While neo-liberal policies did generate growth, they did so in a way that was very uneven, and, as has now become evident, prone to severe and sudden crisis.
  - Neo-liberalism neither alleviated the problems of poverty and inequality that plague our region, nor transformed our countries into dynamic forces in the world economy.
  - It did not, as promised, foster a more independent middle-class, whose newfound economic security would make it a demanding force for democratic reform.
  - In authoritarian states, whether monarchical or republican, the clientelist and submissive paradigm of middle-class social relations was not broken.
  - In short, the neo-liberal paradigm did not lead us on an inexorable path from economic liberalization through modernization and secularism to democracy. In fact, events have clearly demonstrated that no one of these things necessarily leads to any other.
- At the turn of the 21<sup>st</sup> century there was another, radically different paradigm being offered in our region. Islamism, in various forms, had emerged as a potent vehicle for expressing discontent and demanding change, even among traditionally leftist and secular constituencies.
  - The failure of the neo-liberal paradigm to solve problems of poverty and inequality, the failure of the Oslo process to bring justice for the Palestinians, and the general indifference of the West and of their own governments to the growing popular discontent, provided an opportunity for more militant brands of Islamism that had been incubating throughout the region.
- In many places, Islamism seized the banner of effective resistance that used to be claimed by the various forms of Arab nationalism.
  - New militant Islamist groups among Palestinians were fighting back with an arsenal that now included the vicious tool of suicide bombing.
  - Al Qaeda, of course, made its spectacular appearance on the world stage on September 11.
  - Not only Islamism, but radical jihadi Islamism was making its claim to be a paradigm of international reach, seeking to restore justice and dignity to the Muslim world, by remaking it into a bastion of Koranic fidelity - and willing to engage in dramatic acts of violence to achieve those ends.

- The rise of Islamist movements has greatly complicated any process of democratization in our region.
  - On the one hand, of course, it provides another excuse for authoritarian regimes which resist reform.
  - On the other hand, it has allowed some regimes to remodel themselves according to the "democracy/war on terror" paradigm. Now, rather than the state rigidly defending its monopoly of power against the people, it can present itself as defending "moderates" from all social sectors from their "extremist" confreres. Hence we see the emergence of a new divide-and-rule strategy within societies,
- Islamist politics also strikes at the core of the complex and problematic relation between Islam and democracy.
  - Secular and Islamist voices may both demand democracy, but each seeks something different: the former seeks a rights-delimited sovereignty of the popular will, based on internationally-accepted, modern political principles, while the latter wants an absolute sovereignty of the popular religious ideology, based on traditional Islamic doctrine.
    - There is a contradiction here, long unseen or ignored, and now forced into the open by Islamists themselves, who refuse to remain marginalized within the political space.
- In the countries where it is possible, both of these groups carry on a war of position in the common "democratic" territory where the two paradigms overlap: elections.
  - Islamists see elections as a means for the popular, permanent ratification of immutable Koranic law; secularists see elections as a means to involve all sectors of the polity in a perpetual process of adjusting policies to popular needs. The group that is more adept at this game in a given context will draw in and contain the other, at least provisionally.
  - Islamist parties like Hamas in Palestine and Hizbollah in Lebanon have been very successful at winning elections while rigorously respecting the rules of secular democracy. In their local contexts, where their popularity results from an intense focus on national goals shared by many parties, they defer the ultimate goal of an Islamic polity in favor of concrete achievements within the secular democratic paradigm.
- Still, the Islamist question haunts the politics of our region.
  - For democratization to advance significantly, at some point there must be a definitive resolution of the long conflict between a concept of democracy as an open, ongoing process leading to popular sovereignty versus one of democracy as a narrow, closed path to a new kind of theocratic authoritarianism.

- This process of resolving this issue will be complicated in our region.  
It will have to be worked out in different ways, at different speeds, in different countries. It certainly cannot be imposed from without.  
But there is no question more important.
- In order to maintain their power, authoritarian regimes have had to learn how to manage all of these new forces and pressures. This complex assortment of international, regional and local forces presents regimes with a number of challenges: a reservoir of discontented constituencies, international pressure, economic crisis, and anxiety about radical Islamism.
  - In response to these, the authoritarian state has become more adept. It has continually recognized and adapted to the changing needs of its international patrons and partners.
    - It has, as we have seen, found new ways to use one internal constituency's fear of the other to its advantage.
    - It has also learned to become more flexible in the tactics of political control.
- For example, elections do not have to be so blatantly fixed and exclusionary. More opposition parties can be allowed to participate. The ruling party can win by 70% or even 60%, rather than 90% of the vote.
  - More voices can be heard in the media, constrained within fewer, but still definite, red lines.
  - Fewer people need to be jailed, and for shorter periods of time.
  - The state can even create its own new media outlets, its own NGOs -- its own simulacrum of civil society.
  - The result is a *mise en scene* of reform and liberalization, a limited rationalization of the political order designed more effectively to preserve the regime's grip on power. The authoritarian state is not transformed by democratization, but upgraded with its accoutrements.
- Thus, over sixty years, our region has been buffeted by wave upon wave of grand global schemes - the Cold War, the new world order, democracy promotion spearheaded by the American army, economic development driven by neo-liberalism, the Islamist promise of a purified, triumphant *umma*.
  - After seeing all of these, we have to acknowledge the disappointing results. Each of these has demonstrated its own limitations, often with catastrophic results. Enamored of its own comprehensive mission, thrilled with its own cleverness, power and/or sanctity, each of these projects has been blind to the concrete populations, ideologies, and cultural and social conditions that would stubbornly

resist being reduced to, or paying the price for, the intended scheme.

- The result has been, it is fair to say, a situation of comprehensive political and economical crisis. Everything that was too big and smart and powerful to fail has.
- It is time -- it is past time -- to recognize that there is no single formula for democratization, development or stability, that there is no privileged power endowed with an assumed or divine right to remake the world according to its favored formula.
- It is time to recognize that simple Manichean paradigms of conflict are not only wrong but dangerous, and that we must approach to problems of different countries and regions with respect for the specificity of people's history, culture and society,
  - and with renewed respect for the norms of international behavior and socioeconomic development that had been so painstakingly learned in previous global crises.
- We need to take a breath, go back to basics, and pay attention to concrete realities. From Palestine to Pakistan, a confusing mix of forces and actors is in play. The potential collusions and collisions can have serious effects on the stability of the world as well as the region.
  - We can no longer have any illusion about producing an overarching explanation or an accurate prognostication about the result of this mix; we have to recognize that solutions will not come from abstract models created in think tanks, or from foreign armies tasked to promote them.
  - Decisive changes and real solutions will come from local and regional forces, engaged in a complicated and sometimes conflictual interplay with each other, and, to be sure, with various international parties and pressures.
  - We must be modest in giving any prognosis regarding the likely outcome of the confusion of actors and forces in our region. We can only take a look at the identity and likely trajectory of some of these forces, both old and new.
- The American military intervention in Iraq remains one of the most salient issues in the region. We have seen, with increasing clarity, the profound and unsettling effects of this intervention.
  - Though certainly underestimated by the proponents of intervention, these effects were not unexpected by astute observers, and they will reverberate throughout the region long after the Americans leave.
  - In military and geostrategic terms, far from advancing American power and cementing its influence in the region, the war in Iraq leaves America's reputation bruised among the region's elites, and in tatters among its people.
- It seems - it is to be hoped - that we are finally at a point where we can speak of the

"post-Iraq" regional landscape. It is increasingly likely -- though we should not say certain -- that the American army will have to leave Iraq completely and soon.

- The tortuous negotiations regarding the renewal of a status of forces agreement between the Americans and the al-Maliki government seem likely to settle on the withdrawal of American forces within two years.
- As American power recedes, we can glimpse of the emergence of new forces and actors. We can take a look at how some of these might affect the regimes and societies of the region going forward.
  - One of these is certainly the powerful new force of insurgent Shiism-a situation that results from the American intervention in Iraq. Indeed, 'the Shia community of Iraq and the region are perhaps the single biggest beneficiary of the American intervention.
  - The Shiites are now ascendant in Iraq, and Iran is now the dominant influence on the Iraqi Shiite parties.
    - Yet now, in a supreme reversal, it is the Shiites, the Iraqi group that benefited most from the overthrow of Saddam and did the most to enable the American occupation, who want the Americans gone. They are ready to exercise the full power given to them by the democracy promoted by the United States in Iraq.
- On the other hand, the Sunnis, Saddam's fiercest allies and the backbone of the initial resistance to the occupation - many of whom are now on the U.S. payroll as members of the Awakening groups -- are more ambivalent about an American departure;
  - they fear - not without reason - a resumption of the ethnic cleansing which has already gone very far in segregating Iraqi cities.
- It is hard to know, in the aftermath of an American departure, how long it might take to achieve equilibrium and stability among Iraq's contending ethnic and religious groups, or how democratic an independent Iraqi state will be. What is clear is that Iraqis themselves will have to resolve these problems, not a foreign army.
- The tense Sunni-Shiite dynamic in Iraq is woven into a network of shifting forces among Sunni and Shia in the region.
  - The ascendancy of Hezbollah in Lebanon, largely as a result of its staunch and effective resistance to the Israeli invasion of 2006, compares favorably in the public eye to the disarray and division in the Palestinian movement, and to the passive, and even complicit, postures of traditional nationalist forces - from Fatah to the moderate Arab states.
  - Iran's patronage of Hezbollah, its militant rhetorical anti-Zionism, and its steadfast refusal to surrender its right to nuclear enrichment, enhance its status as the



largest, most powerful, and most militant state in the region. A strong state, with an entrenched regime, it can present itself not only as a bulwark of resistance against feared American and Israeli designs, but also as a potential guarantor of stability in the region.

- In many respects, then, there is a sense that the banner of resistance may be passing from the forces and figures of traditional Sunni Arabic nationalism to those associated with Shiite Islam - from Iraq to Iran, for example, and from Arafat to Nasrallah.
  - This shift in the center of political gravity is, of course, unsettling for many of the Sunni powers in the region, from Egypt to the Gulf, who have grown accustomed to their centrality, both as patrons of nationalism and resistance within the region, and as guardians of stability in the eyes of the world.
  - Many of these countries, especially in the Gulf, have significant Shiite populations that have been treated poorly, and form a kind of regional underclass. The example of insurgent Shiite power and self-organization in Lebanon and Iraq can be uplifting to them, and threatening to the regimes.
- In the meantime, in the Sunni community, secular Arab nationalism has been increasingly displaced by radical Salafism, in an inconsistent and spasmodic process of "al-qaedization."
  - Extremist groups, influenced by strict Salafist doctrines, spring up here and there, attempting to enforce rigid sharia codes locally, and/or engaging in sporadic, dramatic acts of violence designed to demonstrate their participation in a grand, transnational project of recreating a newly purified *umma*.
  - These groups have had the propensity to forsake the terrain of the social and the economic in favor of the terrain of moeurs and dogma; they often lose sight of solidarity, and end up hectoring rather than helping local populations.
  - When this happens, their appeal wears thin, if an alternative is available. Thus, they often become roving bands of militants looking for conflicts in which to demonstrate their commitment to *jihad*.
- In both Sunni and Shiite communities, it is the groups that are most rooted in local, concrete struggles for political and national rights, and social justice, that gain and hold the allegiance of their popular constituencies, and are most successful in keeping their independence from, and resisting attacks or cooptation by, outside powers.
  - Hamas in Palestine and Hezbollah in Lebanon are the prime examples. Each has its own Islamic character, but both maintain a disciplined focus on the social, political and national demands that are the major concerns of the people they represent. They are staying where they are. This focus fosters a strong loyalty in the communities in which they are rooted, and produces successful results that

even their enemies can respect.

- As might be expected, the rise of Shiite prestige and influence in the region has caused some consternation among the traditional Sunni powers.
  - Saudi Arabia, because of its association with one of the most conservative schools of Islam, and its role as the guardian of Islam's holy sites -- which has the basis of its legitimacy at home and its identity in the world -- casts a particularly anxious eye on the rising influence of Shiite movements in Lebanon and Iraq. These movements increase the profile and power of Shiism -- and its natural patron, Iran -- throughout the region.
    - Saudi Arabia would like to be seen as a pillar and the guardian of stability in the region, and its financial power has always allowed it to play a leading role.
  - For its part, Egypt, the most populous Arab state and the historic center of Arab nationalism, has seen its reputation compromised by its complicity with Israel, particularly in enforcing the closure of the Gaza strip. Its cooperation with America and Israel, in exchange for massive amounts of foreign aid, makes it look increasingly like a dependent client, and compares unfavorably in the popular consciousness with Iran's independent stance.
  - The influence of these two important states will remain strong, but it is doubtful that they can keep the insurgent Shiite movements in Lebanon and Iraq, let alone the populous and militarily powerful Iranian state, off center stage.
- Saudi Arabia has its own special cards to play to maintain its geo-political influence.
  - The Saudi leadership has played a constructive role in the Israeli Palestinian peace process, and their 2002 peace plan--which was well received in the world, but belittled and ignored by the Israelis at the time--is now being revived by none other than Peres and Barak.
  - Whether or not this is a another diversionary feint by the Israelis, it is an acknowledgement, however belated, of Saudi Arabia's seriousness and good faith regarding a crucial issue for the region and the world.
- Precisely because of their particular position within the world of traditional Sunni Islam, Saudi Arabia has also been able to take on a potentially crucial role regarding the Afghan conflict.
  - The Saudi leadership has recently been able to facilitate and host preliminary negotiations between the Taliban and the government of Hamid al-Karzai -- an initiative that everyone now understands will be necessary to pursue.
  - Thus, Saudi Arabia retains a unique ability to mediate delicate situations, particularly with Islamist groups for whom Shiism is heretical.

- In the context of these new Sunnit-Shiite tensions in the region, religious authorities have issued contradictory statements.
  - Last year, in a gesture of unprecedented theological conciliation, X (mufti of Lebanon?) issued an opinion saying that the differences between Sunnism and Shiism were not fundamental within Islam; this year, Y has said ..... Clearly, this is an ancient and enduring rift, and it will be a long, uneven road to adjust to the realities of the new relations between these groups in the region.
  - Relations between Sunni and Shia are changing in the region, and this is unavoidable.
- What must be avoided is any attempt to inflame tensions or overturn indigenous political changes by proxy interventions.
  - In Iraq and Lebanon, Shiites have gained new political power that is commensurate with their popular constituencies and is irreversible.
    - Saudi Arabia, Egypt and their Sunni allies will be faced with the choice of either confrontation or accommodation with the rising power of Iran and Shiism, and it is certain that they will be pressured to follow the path that the West prefers.
- It would be ill-advised to support other militant Sunni groups within countries like Lebanon and Iraq, as was rumored to have happened recently.
  - There may also be a temptation among Sunni regimes to stoke populist religious resentment against Iran and Shiism for their own purposes.
  - The specter of a heretical, nuclear-capable Iran and its allies threatening the Sunni world has the potential to become another excuse for continuing repressive policies, replacing or running parallel to the well-worn excuse of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.
- It would be equally foolish, dangerous, and totally pointless, for Iran to try to stir up Shiite populations in the Gulf states like Bahrain.
  - Iran, too, must assure its neighbors in the region regarding its respect for their sovereignty and stability, as well as its peaceful intentions regarding its nuclear capabilities.
  - These emerging tensions will have to be the subject of extensive ideological, diplomatic, and political work within the region going forward.
    - They cannot become the excuse for foreign intervention or covert action schemes. Problems like these must be addressed by the countries of the region, with respect for all local cultural and political differences.
- In this regard, it is interesting to note that other Gulf States seem ready to pursue their

own new ambitions and agendas.

- Qatar has also been helpful regarding the Palestinian issue, acting as a mediator between Fatah and Hamas. It has also, discomfiting its friend the United States, already given us an example of a credible new worldwide media network.
  - Dubai, discomfiting its neighbors, has announced its intention to conform with all United Nations principles regarding the rights of workers, including immigrant workers.
  - Independent initiatives like these multiply the paths of reform that are rooted in, and credible to, the region.
  - The more ideas and strategies for reform that are in play, the better.
- Of course, none of this amounts to the kind of full-fledged liberal democracy many of us would like to achieve. We have to recognize that the climate created by triumphalist rhetoric, combined with military invasion, and now topped off by economic crisis, has left a bad taste for any grand political or economic design promoted by the West.
- Specifically, and tragically, it has brought discredit and scorn on the notions of "democracy" or "democratization." These words sound like, because they have been, tokens of ideological hubris, a kind of missionary discourse, that purports to deliver a gift from the West, again, at the point of a gun.
  - Talk of "democracy" will go nowhere in our region until it is completely disengaged from globalizing schemes, and re-engaged with local agents and movements working for effective change, with a clear focus on concrete indigenous concerns.
  - "Democratization" will be an indigenous project, or it will not be at all.
- Another dimension of the emerging landscape in our region is the fast developing economic crisis. Its sudden emergence and catastrophic potential have again revealed some of the weaknesses inherent in an uncritical embrace of Western-inspired globalizing projects.
- But, like all crises, this one may also provide an opportunity-in or case, an opportunity to develop a new progressive discourse that can steal the thunder from radical Salafiist movements.
    - As we suggested, a weakness of "Al Qaeda," the Taliban, and their various wannabes is that their passion for enforcing *sharia* law often trumps their interest in promoting social justice.
  - We are at a moment where the failure of neo-liberal economic policies has become evident. They did not lead, as promised, to the growth of modernizing middle classes, secularization and democracy; they led to uneven growth,

increasing social inequality, and economic crisis - all of which are prime fodder for Islamic extremism.

- If we can develop a progressive secular discourse, combined with effective programmatic action, that addresses the issues of poverty, inequality -- even looming starvation in many places -- we may be able to move political debate and popular consciousness in a direction more amenable to democratic ideas.
- For such a shift to be effective and durable it must, as I have suggested elsewhere, be accompanied by a renewal of secular Arabic culture. We cannot continue to accept a situation in which
  - educated, multilingual Arabs can only do their academic and intellectual work in other languages, outside of their country,
  - a situation in which Arab youth participate in the world's multilingual, vibrant mix of political debate and cultural production,-- on the Internet, and, at the same time -- in their own language, in the public spaces of their own communities -- have their intellectual and cultural expressions constricted by narrow limits of political or religious orthodoxy.
- As Robert Fisk recently pointed out, Arabs too often must rely on American, British, French, or even Israeli sources for their own history:
  - "While Israeli scholars have been able to deconstruct the traditional story of little Israel - proving that there were no Arab radio stations calling for the Palestinians to leave their land, that the Arabs were indeed ethnically cleansed from their towns and villages by Irgun and the Hagana - there is no Arab scholar who can balance the books by drawing on the archives of his own history."
  - Until Arabs scholars - in their own language, in their own countries-can similarly deconstruct the quasi-mythical nationalist narratives on which so many regimes in our region have based their legitimacy, we will remain dependent on intellectual emigration.
  - This is intellectual and cultural impoverishment, and we must forcefully make the case that it is no more acceptable than, is as damaging as, and in fact contributes to, political and social impoverishment.
- We need to stand against orthodoxy and for more "profane" forms of cultural production using the great power of the Arab language - in the hands of scientists, intellectuals and artists, and in the hands of ordinary people in their own communities.
  - A flowering of creative activity like this will revitalize Arabic as a dynamic force in world culture, and provide the cultural ground for progressive political change.
- In the political, economic and cultural dimensions, then, we must create a dynamic of change from the bottom up, one that is rooted in local communities, not imposed by the

so-called "international community" - a phrase that too often means the United States and its friends.

- We cannot predict or designate who will emerge as an agent of progressive change. Effective political forces for reform will probably coalesce as a result of lateral inroads rather than frontal assaults, from new agents that will emerge at every level of society, and from directions we cannot anticipate.
- In Egypt and Pakistan, judges and lawyers bravely resisted the crushing of judicial independence.
  - In Pakistan, in the aftermath of unforeseen and deadly events, new political actors did spearhead a political movement for change. In Morocco and Algeria, journalists have been engaged in a struggle for true press freedom.
  - New theologians throughout the Muslim world are forging fresh connections between Islam, democracy and modernization.
- These are not models, but examples of conjunctural intervention, from surprising directions, for which there are no models.
  - The authoritarian state has been adept at absorbing and deflecting change, but it is not a perfect and impenetrable machine. The spaces it has created for its own maneuver, as well as the actions - even the ostensibly supportive actions -- taken by international forces, also create real spaces of political opportunity.
  - There will be breakthroughs. We can expect the unexpected.
- To be ready for such opportunities when they come, to revive a project of democracy from the discredit and failure of the interventionist project, we must concentrate on "re-indigenizing" a message of progressive change in our home countries, foregrounding the issues of justice and respect--for the citizen, the family, the community.
  - These are themes that all local actors-states, agents of progressives change and moderate Islamists-can embrace. We need to offer, something other than every-man-for-himself economic competition, submission to an authoritarian state, or repressive Islamism.
  - People need to have a secure, decent life in their homes a voice that is heard, and a sense of empowerment in their polity. They need to feel that life opens before them and their children, rather than closes around them. This is the great hunger of the people of our region.
- Beyond that, we need to create a renewed sense of shared purpose that
  - includes the nation and Islam, but is not confined by them,
  - a vision that speaks to people's local concerns while it connects them to wider projects of peace and democracy in the region and the world.

- This is the ground from which people can become engaged in progressive political action. Whatever words are used to describe it, this is the ground on which a political order that is democratic in form and substance will ultimately be built.