

The Impact of US Aid Policy on democracy and political reform in Jordan and other Arab countries

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Abstract:

Democracy promotion in the Arab World did not emerge as a central pillar of American foreign policy until the final years of the twentieth Century. During the last decade however, billions of American's Dollars were given to some Arab countries to encourage economic development and political reform. This paper explores the impact of the U.S. aid policy on democracy and political reform in Jordan and other Arab countries. It advances three arguments: First that the impact of US aid has not yet made any significant difference in the reality of Arab political affairs. Second, that US aid has some positive effects on democracy and political reform in the Arab World. Finally, there are some strong signs indicating that dictatorships, anti-Americanism, poverty, unemployment and corruption are still the main features of the socio-political reality of this region until the present day.

1. Introduction

For decades, the United States had ignored any concerns about freedom, human rights and political reform in the Arab World, valuing regimes stability for the sake of its economic and security interests. Over the course of the last decade, however, the US administration has begun changing its policy toward the entire region. This change came as a result of September 11 terrorists' attacks which made it clear that these policies were in fact breeders of anti-Americanism and extremism. First the American adopted a policy of regime change as the case in Afghanistan and Iraq and when they faced serious problems in both countries they adopted a new policy that calls for democracy and political reform in the entire region. Economic aid was used as a practical tool to achieve the goals of this policy and indeed they started to provide Jordan and other Arab countries with millions of Dollars to encourage development and political reform. It was hoped that such aid help transform the area into democracy and economic prosperity. Unfortunately, all Arab states reacted negatively to US and other internal and external calls for democracy and consequently, dictatorships, anti-Americanism, poverty, unemployment, corruption and terrorism are still the main features of the region today.

1.1. Objectives:

The main objectives of this study are to increase our understanding of the United States aid policies to Jordan and other Arab countries and assess

their impact on democracy and political reform during the last decade; to examine United States level of aid funding to Jordan and other Arab countries; to conduct interviews with relevant policy makers, regarding future policy that will be followed for the allocation of US aid for the MEPI goals and criteria for democracy, and finally to write a research paper and 20 page policy study with recommendations for relevant policy makers, parliament, political parties and other institutions in Jordan, USA and other Arab countries.

1.2. Study Questions:

The Study tries to find answers to the following questions: What are US policies towards political reform in the Arab World before and after 9/11? What are the objectives of USAID in general and the Middle East Partnership Initiative in particular (MEPI)? What is the size of US aid allocated in MEPI budget for political reform in Jordan? Can the United States promote political reform at the expenses of instability and cooperation of Arab regimes on the war against terrorism? Can the United States risk the emergence of unfriendly Islamists regimes to replace the present ones? Can the United States afford the consequences of losing its military bases and control over the oil production and supply in Gulf if it antagonizes Arab regimes by demanding them to change into democracy? Is it feasible for the United States to promote political reform effectively amid Arabs' widespread anti-Americanism and grievances against the occupation of Iraq and its support to Israel? What are the reactions of Jordanian and other Arab regimes to the US efforts to democratize the area? What are the specific steps if any that Jordanian government had taken toward democracy and political reform? Finally, what are the main obstacle to democracy in Jordan and the Arab World?

1.3. Methodology:

To achieve the above objectives and find answers to the previous questions first, I conduct extensive literature review about US policy and the size of the United States' aid to Jordan and other Arab countries. Second I conducted a survey study regarding the Middle East Partnership Initiative (MEPI) its goals, programs and funding allocated to Jordanians' institutions and organizations; conducted interviews with government officials, policy makers, leaders of political parties, academics, and experts to understand their positions and views regarding the US aid and political reform policy and the region reaction to it. I conducted similar interviews with policy makers, experts, academics from, Georgetown university, Carnegie foundation, Brooking Institute, George Washington university, Washington Institute for near East policy, OSI, International

republican Institute, International Peace Institute and the State Department. This was done during my stay as a visiting scholar at Georgetown University in summer 2005.

2. The Arab World and democracy

The Arab World is a huge stretch of land, from Morocco to the Oman total to about 13 million square kilometers, with about 85% of its population feels and identifies themselves as Arabs and about 15% of other racial, religious and ethnic minorities mainly concentrated in Iraq, (Kurds) Algeria and Morocco (Berber) and Sudan (Africans). The total population of the Arab World is about 300 Millions people, living in 22 States, 12 of them in Asia (Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq, Yemen, Palestine, and the six GCC Arab Gulf States) and 10 in Africa (Egypt, Libya, Tunisia, Algeria, Morocco, Mauritania, Sudan, Geputy, Somalia, Gummer Islands. The Arab World is part of the broader Islamic World, which includes 1.2 billion people, who form a majority in 55 States, and are significant presence in many more, constituting one fifth of the world's population (Ibrahim, Said 1985).

2.1. Perception of Democracy in the Arab World

Although a consensus is forming within the Arab World's political elite that democracy and political reform is necessary, there is no corresponding agreement on what democracy and political reform means. Instead, democracy and reform have become a widely used terms with different meaning and perspectives. There are however, three main perspectives dominating the Arab thought today these are: Hawthorne, 2004).

The first perspective is the modernization approach which is advocated by many Arab regimes. It calls for gradual reform, but without changing the present power sharing structure .

It rejects the US administration and the Western call for real reform that would change the character of power distribution including the submission of the regimes to the will of their people. The Arab League's June 2003 reform initiative and its May 2004 declaration on reform, both capture the essence of the modernization perspective Arab business council, declaration, 2004).

The second perspective is the one held by Islamists. They call for political reform on the hope that democratic election would enable them to win the elections in most Arab countries. Their ultimate goal is to create an authentic Islamic political systems governed by Sharia' law, not Western-style democracies ruled by secular laws. Brotherhood manifesto 2003).

The Third perspective is the liberal democratic outlook, which defines democracy as the process needed to establish Western-style democratic institutions, presidency or constitutional monarchies. The Alexandria

declaration issued in March 2004 by a group Arab intellectuals, former diplomats, and businessmen reflects to a certain degree of the liberal perspective Alexandria declaration, 2004).

2.2. Arabs position from democracy and political reform

For the past 20 years political dynamics in the Arab World have been shaped by two major internal forces: the regimes on the one hand, and Islamist opposition on the other. It is fair to say that neither of them represents a majority, since a large middle ground is occupied by politically marginalized or impoverished sectors of the society. The demand for democratization is increasing through out the Arab World. This demand became the only banner it can be raised without any question regarding its credibility, legitimacy, necessity or importance. However, the entrance of Arab World to the 21st Century, make one wonder about the direction and the process of political, social and economic transformation. Are the Arabs going to enter the 21st century under traditional regimes, which depend in its rule on tribal or military elite, and suffer from absolutism, backwardness and dependency? Or are they going to succeed gradually and peacefully to change to democracy, which allows freedom and wide political participation in the political decision making process and sharing responsibility?

Indeed during the last decade democratic calls have swept across the entire World. The Arab world, however, has been largely unaffected by this political revolution or what Huntington called it the “Third Wave” of democratization (Huntington 1991) and until the present day not a single Arab country qualifies to be called democracy (Karatnycky 2000; Sivan 2000:70). However, some Arab countries enacted limited programs of political liberalization under internal and external pressure. For the most part, however, these reforms were part of a containment strategy designed to increase regime life. Accordingly, most of these democratic experiments were slowed or even abandoned by the end 1990s. As Anderson wrote in 1999, the political landscape was littered with “the remnants of so many of the democratic experiments—from the spectacular crash and burn of Algeria’s liberalization to Tunisia’s more subtle but no less profound transformation into a police state, from Egypt’s backsliding into electoral manipulation to the reluctance of Palestinian authorities to embrace human rights” (Anderson 1999:6).

This situation is acknowledged by Arab intellectuals as well as Western scholars. A Lebanese political scientist writes that unchecked authoritarian rule is “paving the way to a deep crisis in the fabric of society” (Khashan 1998:43-44). Similarly, according to a Jordanian journalist,

“one of the leading sources of instability and political-economic distortion in the Arab world is the unchecked use of state power, and the use of the rule of law for its own political ends” (Khoury 2000).

Intellectuals from thirteen Arab countries attending conference in Amman, Jordan, in 1999 issued a communiqué emphasizing the need for “greater political freedoms and intellectual pluralism” (Al-Farawati 1999). Their concern is that “Arab countries do not allow freedom of thought; their surveillance spares neither the telephone nor the mail, neither the fax nor the Internet” (Talbi 2000:62).

However, there are some partial exceptions to this depressing characterization. In Jordan, Morocco, Lebanon, Kuwait, Qatar, and the Palestinian Authority, there have been accomplishments as well as setbacks in the struggle for democratic governance. Nevertheless, taken as a whole, the Arab world clearly stands apart from the rest of the World with respect to the authoritarian character of its regimes and the limited influence of institutions and individuals working for democracy. This point was emphasized by Arab Human Development Report (AHDR) of the United Nation’s Development Program, published in 2002. The report observes that, as in the 1980s, political openings remain “heavily regulated and partial” and political systems “have not been opened up to all citizens; “political participation is less advanced in the Arab world than in other developing regions” and “transfer of power through the ballot box is not a common phenomenon” (AHDR 2002, chap. 7).

There is disagreement about the reasons for the persistence of authoritarian rule in the Arab world, just as there is uncertainty about the prospects for Arab democratization in the years ahead. Research on democratic transitions has emphasized the importance of structural factors, such as institutional reform and economic development, and also political culture. Both have been discussed in relation to the Arab world. On the one hand, many scholars have emphasized the resistance of Arab leaders to power sharing and meaningful reform (Sivan 1997; Brumberg 1995; Korany 1994). A widespread popular perception in the region, according to the report of a Moroccan political scientist, is that the primary motivation of many Arab kings, sultans, and presidents “is to remain in power and protect their personal interests . . . [and as a result they often have] to defend themselves against their own people” (Bennani-Chraïbi 1994:243). Much of the explanation for the political situation in the Arab world “lies in the fact that many Middle Eastern states have no greater enemy than their own governments” (Cordesman 1999). Students of democratization also stress the importance of citizen attitudes and values. Relevant orientations include both generalized support for democratic political forms and the embrace of specific democratic values, such as respect for political

competition and tolerance of diverse political ideas (Rose, Mishler, and Haerpfer 1998:98). Thus a democratic citizen is one who “believes in individual liberty and is politically tolerant, has a certain distrust of political authority but at the same time is trusting of fellow citizens, is obedient but nonetheless willing to assert rights against the state, and views the state as constrained by legality” (Gibson 1995:55).

Some analysts suggest that these normative orientations may be a precondition for democratic transitions (Huntington 1993:13). Much more common, however, is the view that democratic values need not precede, but can rather follow, elite-led transitions involving the reform of political institutions and procedures (Rose 1997:98; Schmitter and Karl 1993:47). Indeed, according to this argument, attitudes and values conducive to democracy tend to emerge among the citizens of countries experiencing successful democratic transitions. At the very least, however, the presence of appropriate attitudes and values would seem to be necessary for democratic consolidation. As expressed by Inglehart (2000), “Democracy is not attained simply by making institutional changes through elite level maneuvering. Its survival depends also on the values and beliefs of ordinary citizens” (p.96).

Evidence in support of this assessment comes from a number of empirical investigations. According to a recent study conducted in Taiwan and Korea the consolidation of democracy requires that “all significant political actors, at both the elite and mass levels, believe that the democratic regime is the most right and appropriate for their society, better than any other realistic alternative they can imagine” (Chu, Diamond, and Shin 2001:123). A cross-national study in Latin America makes the same point: an important factor “that has contributed to the greater survivability of Latin American democracies revolves around changes in political attitudes, toward a greater valorization of democracy” (Mainwaring 1999:45). Thus, as Harik has noted with respect to the Arab world, “a democratic government needs a democratic political culture, and vice versa” (Harik 1994:56).

There are differing scholarly opinions about whether citizen orientations conducive to democracy can emerge and flourish in the Arab world. The influence of Islam is the focus of particular attention in this connection (Tessler 2002). This is due, in part, both to the nature of Islam and to the religion’s political resurgence during the last few decades. Islamic law includes numerous codes governing societal relations and organization. It guides that which is societal as well as personal, corporate as well as individual (Esposito 1992:3-5). As Voll (1994) explains, Islam is a total way of life; it represents a worldview (p. 211). This is one of the reasons that popular support for Islamist movements and parties has grown significantly in recent years (Tessler 1997). Amid these assumptions, there have long been

debates about Islam's proper role in political affairs, including, more recently, its compatibility with conceptions of governance based on democracy, pluralism, and popular sovereignty.

Some Western observers, assert that democracy and Islam are not compatible. Whereas democracy requires openness, competition, pluralism, and tolerance of diversity, Islam, they argue, encourages intellectual conformity and an uncritical acceptance of authority. According to the late Elie Kedourie, for example, the principles, institutions, and values of democracy are "profoundly alien to the Muslim political tradition" (Kedourie 1994:5-6; Huntington 1984:208). Equally important, Islam is said to be anti-democratic because it vests sovereignty in God, who is the sole source of political authority and from whose divine law must come all regulations governing the community of believers. Thus, in the view of some observers, Islam "has to be ultimately embodied in a totalitarian state" (Choueiri 1996:21-22; Lewis 1994:54-56).

Comparable assertions are sometimes advanced in debates about "Asian values," in which it is asked whether Confucianism's emphasis on consensus, order, obedience, and hierarchy is compatible with such democratic values as individual freedom and identity, diversity, competition, and political accountability (Wei- Ming 2000:266; Flanagan and Lee 2000:653; Welsh 1996; Zakaria 1994).

But many knowledgeable analysts reject the suggestion that Islam is an enemy in the struggle to establish a responsible government. They point out that Islam has many facets and tendencies; making uni-dimensional characterizations of the religion highly suspect (Halliday 1995:116; Esposito and Piscatori 1991).

They also report that there is considerable variation in the interpretations of religious law advanced by Muslim scholars and theologians, and that among these are expressions of support for democracy, including some by leading Islamist theorists (Abed 1995:127-128). Finally, they insist that openness, tolerance, and progressive innovation are well-represented among traditions associated with the religion, and are thus entirely compatible with Islam (Hamdi 1996; Mernissi 1992).

As the preceding suggests, one can find within Islamic doctrine and Muslim traditions both elements that are and elements that are not congenial to democracy; and this in turn means that the influence of the religion depends, to a very considerable extent, on how and by whom it is interpreted. There is no single or accepted interpretation on many issues, nor sometimes even a consensus on who speaks for Islam. As one study demonstrated with respect to Islamic strictures about family planning and contraception, different religious authorities give different advice about what is permissible in Islam (Bowen 1993). In addition, serious doubts have

been expressed about the motivation of some religious authorities, particularly in connection with pronouncements pertaining to governance. As one Arab scholar asks, “Can democracy occur if the *ulama* or jurists have sole charge of legal interpretation? May not the *ulama*’s ability to declare laws compatible or incompatible with the teaching of the *shariah* lead to abuse?”

There are numerous examples of *ulama* manipulating Islamic teachings to the advantage of [undemocratic] political leaders” (Al-Suwaidi 1995:87-88). In conclusion, there is little evidence, at least at the individual level of analysis, to support the claims of those who assert that Islam and democracy are incompatible. The reasons that democracy has not taken root in the Arab world must therefore lie elsewhere; perhaps in domestic economic structures, in relations with the international political and economic order, or in the determination of those in power to resist political change by whatever means are required. But while these and other possible explanations can be debated, what should be clear is that cultural explanations alleging that Islam discourages or even prevents the emergence of support for democracy are misguided, indeed misleading, and thus of little use in efforts to understand the factors shaping attitudes toward democracy in the Arab world.

Finally, the process of democratization in the Arab World faces several socio-political obstacles on the fore of it: different economic systems, different racial, religious, tribal, affiliation and political ideologies of the ruling regimes. In order to achieve a successful transformation to democracy the Arab World needs to change the traditional concept of rule and authority dominant in people minds. This concept must be replaced by a democratic perception that sees authority as a political function, performed by rulers according to public well, and based on general election, and true political plurality. Moreover, that success for transformation to democracy requires consensus between both the ruling classes and the Peoples.

3. US Policy and relations with the Arab World

America direct contact with the Arab World started during World War One; intensified after War World II when America became the undisputed leader of the Western World. It gradually filled the vacuum created by the departure of the old colonial powers, Britain and France, from the Middle East. Since then the Americans dominated the oil business in the Arab World especially in Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and UAE. The Arab World was not an important focus of American aid policy until the early 1970s. Before that time, Arab nations received aid generally in the tens of millions of dollars per year as part of the American food and

poverty assistance effort. The enormous growth of aid in the 1970s was directly linked to the increasing importance of the region in the Cold War. American money was perhaps the essential tool in this effort, and beginning in the mid- 1970s right through the present day; Israel and later Egypt have been the largest recipients of American foreign assistance Alsoudi, 2005.

Starting after the 1973 War, the United States made clear that it was willing to provide Egypt with vast sums of money, essentially on par with the economic aid received by Israel. The Camp David aid package was truly assigned nearly \$5 billion to the two sides. The funds were to help both countries deal with the costs of implementing the deal, and to support them as American allies Mack, 2004.

Until World War II America was popular in the Arab World as it was seen a liberal and non colonial power especially after its opposition to the joint British French and Israeli aggression against Egypt in 1956 Alsoudi, 2005. But unfortunately there were several factors that complicated and poisoned the US–Arab relations and affected US policy towards the region among them the followings:

3.1. The Arab Israeli-Conflict:

The first and most important factor that has affected US-Arab relation, in negative way and still until today, was Washington decision to support the creation of Israel in 1947, and later its policy of unlimited support for Israel in its conflict with its Arab neighbors. America provided Israel with massive economic, political and military assistance especially after 1967 war. The annual amount of US economic assistance to Israel is about three billion dollars and totaled to about 100 billion Dollars since the creation of Israel in 1948 Alsoudi, 2005. It could argue that the Arab-Israeli conflict was and still the essence of the pan-Arab cause, and American “support for Israel was too massive to allow for healthy relationships with most Arab countries, let alone with Arab public opinion Hudson 2005: 287).

3.2. Oil:

The other important factor that affected US policy toward the area is oil, which became extremely important to America and the rest of the developed World after World War Two. Given the strategic importance of securing the supply of cheap Arab oil, “US administrations determined that their main tasks were to exclude Soviet influence from the region and prevent any local forces from nationalizing Western oil companies, reducing or restriction production, raising prices and overrunning the friendly regimes” Hudson, 2005: 287-89). The importance of oil led the United

States to increase its military presence in the GCC countries, including permanent naval and air bases, and to provide those countries with arms and trained their military forces. The Americans' military presence was seen by the local population as a form of domination and a new type of colonialism not different from their predecessors the British and the French.

3.3. The Soviet danger

After World War Two, America considered the Soviets' threat as a fundamental threat to its security and even to its survival. The Americans realized that "the entrenchment of Soviet power in that strategic region would bring a decisive shift in the World balance and could disrupt the economy of the free world" Hudson 2005:284). They believed that "the triumph of communism in the heart of the Islamic World could be the prelude to its triumph through Asia, Africa and Europe" Campbell: 1958:4-5.

Arguably, from the end of World War II until the early 1990s, "the underlying rationale for providing foreign aid was the same as that for all U.S. foreign policy —the defeat of communism" Therefore the aim of U.S. aid programs, to Arab countries during this period, were designed "to create stability and reduce the attraction to communist ideology and to block Soviet diplomatic links and military advances" Tarnoff and Nowels, (2004. Ottaway, summarizes this US policy as follows: "The old concerns that guided U.S. policy in the Middle East is well known: security, oil and Israel" .. ,the perceived Soviet threat led the United States to be tolerant of autocratic but reliably Arab anti-Soviet governments" Ottaway 2005).

3.4. The Iraq-Iran War:

During the Iraq-Iran war America followed a policy of "dual containment", which practically meant keeping the two states fighting each others without any clear winner. The reason for the United States and Europe's assistance to Iraq during its war with Iran was to prevent the Iranian revolution from extending its anti-American influence to the vulnerable pro-Western GCC countries. They also were pleased that the war practically led to the destruction and consequently weakening both unfriendly countries Hudson 2005 285).

3.5. The first Gulf War /occupation of Kuwait:

When Iraq occupied Kuwait in 1991 the United States led a coalition of more than 25 countries including Egypt, Syria and many other Arab Gulf States to liberate Kuwait. And indeed America started its first direct war against a major Arab country, and succeeded in driving the Iraqi forces out of Kuwait in a humiliating fashion not only to the Iraqi but to entire

Arab nations. Many Arabs analysts believe that the United States strategic aim was to destroy the Iraqi Army for the sake of Israel security and not just to liberate Kuwait (Attwan, 2004).

So one could argue that until the end of the 1990s there were no American or European serious talks about democracy, political reform and freedom in the Arab World, and every thing was fine with America and the West as long as they have access to cheap Arab oil and no threat to Israel's security.

3.6. US military Bases in the GCC countries:

The other important factor that poisoned US Arab relation is its military bases in "Jazeera Alrab" (Arab Peninsula) which includes Saudi Arabia, the GCC states and Yemen. During the 1990s the US needed the cooperation of Arab regimes to establish military bases to secure oil supply. Such presence was provocative to Muslims feelings and beliefs, as believe that Aljazeera Alarabeyah (Arab Peninsula) is holly area, and, non Muslims are not allowed stay in it. The permission of Arab regimes to American forces to use Arab land, to attack and occupy Iraq was seen by the majority of Arab people as "Kheyanh" (betrayal) to the Arab nation and understanding this situation may help explain the 9/11 attacks .

3.7. American occupation of Iraq 2003:

The Americans' War and occupation of Iraq and before it the severe economic sanctions that last about ten years caused the death of thousands of Iraqi innocent civilians, men, women and children. The suffering of the Iraqi people was broadcasted in all Arab television satellite channels, watched by million of powerless Arab masses from the Morocco to Oman. Moreover America cooperated with many of authoritarian Arab regimes in Syrian, Egyptian, Saudi Arabia and other GCC countries during the first war against Iraq in 1991 the same regimes they trying to change now. These developments strengthened anti-Americanisms through out the Arab and Islamic Worlds in particular and among the majority of the world nations in general (Alsoudi 2005).

4. US policy and Aid to Jordan and the Arab World

4.1. US policy before 9/11

As regarding economic aid, the Arab World was not an important focus of American until the early 1970s. Before that America was interested primarily in access to oil, stabilizing its friendly Arab oil producing countries, and the security of Israel. In the 1980s, military and strategic

cooperation became increasingly important between America, Egypt, Jordan, Morocco and the GCC countries. The aim of the new cooperation was to protect access to cheap oil supplies, to establish US military bases in the region and to facilitate U.S. military operations in Asia and Africa. The US administration used economic aid to foster its relations with some of those Arab countries and later to encourage them to take some steps for democracy and political reform. They typically direct such aid at one or more of the following institutions or political processes: elections, political parties, constitutions, judiciaries, legislatures, local government, NGOs, civic education, trade unions and media organizations.

The enormous growth of aid in the 1970s and 1980s was directly linked to the increasing importance of the region in the Cold War. In the 1970s, the US administration succeeded to pull Egypt out of the Soviet camp by sponsoring a peace agreement between Egypt and Israel. Since then US aid played an essential role to achieve and maintain the peace treaty and stability in the region. Israel and later Egypt have been the largest recipients of American foreign assistance with about 3 billion dollars annual assistance to Israel and 2 billion to Egypt *Ruttan, 1996, P. 279.*

In the 1980s, the United States aid policy focused increasingly on economic growth as a crucial component to maintain stability in the region. Among US initiatives was the U.S.–Egypt Partnership for Economic Growth in 1994, the U.S.–North Africa Economic Partnership (USNAEP) in 1998, and Free Trade Agreement with Jordan, the Palestinian Authority, and Israel to establish the joint Qualifying Industrial Zones (QIZ) 1996 *USAID, 2005).*

Promoting democracy and political reform in the Arab World was not on the US foreign policy agenda until 2002, mainly because of the serious security problems that faced its forces in Iraq. Before that many U.S. experts and policy makers believed that political reform in the region should be gradual and controlled entirely by the ruling regimes and by moderate elements of their allies *Carothers 1999.* However, by the end of the 1990s, the US administration realized that economic reform did not lead to political reform; that lack of political reform was impeding progress on economic reform and more importantly breeding terrorism *Levin, 2003.*

4.2. US Policy after 9/11

The traditional US policy of remote domination of many Arab countries and the noninterference in their internal affairs, especially regarding freedom, human rights and democracy has changed dramatically after the terrorist attacks of 9/11.

Arab world's democracy deficit suddenly became the focus of wide discussion among US policy circles and media. Many US commentators and experts blamed the spread of terrorist groups such as Al Qaeda and the rise of militant Islamic fundamentalist movements on political repression and economic stagnation in Arab World. Neoconservative analysts in particular criticized autocratic Arab governments, including close U.S. allies such as Egypt and Saudi Arabia, for spawning radical groups and stifling moderates and appealed to the Bush administration to make the democratic transformation of the Middle East a cornerstone of the war on terrorism. Hawthorne, 2004.

The American administration accepted this analysis of the roots of terrorism. It responded to the question raised by President Bush "why do they hate us?" by putting the responsibility on Arab regimes rather than on the United States. They deny that animosity toward the United States stemmed at least in part from US policies in the Middle East, and refused the notion that the United States' policy towards the Arab-Israeli conflict had contributed to the rise of terrorism and should reconsider its policies. Alsoudi 2005. "Democracy promotion in the Middle East thus became for the first time an important professed tenet of the United States' Middle East policy" Hawthorne, 2004.

New assistance programs include the Middle East Partnership Initiative (MEPI), launched in December 2002; the Broader Middle East and North Africa Initiative, formally unveiled at the June 2004 Group of Eight industrialized nations (G-8) summit at Sea Island, Georgia.

Bush in a speech at the National Endowment for Democracy, on November 6/ 2003, said: "Sixty years of Western nations excusing and accommodating the lack of freedom in the Middle East did nothing to make us safe - because in the long run, stability cannot be purchased at the expense of liberty." He added therefore, "the United States has adopted a new policy, a forward strategy of freedom in the Middle East.

This new policy is in contradiction to America's longtime rationale for supporting Arab regimes as strategy to guarantee their stability and securing cheap oil supplies. The US administration realized after 9/11 that the stability of these regimes was deceptive and that the price for maintaining such policy was so high and unaffordable Wittes, 2004.

The new US foreign policy rested on the belief that America should aggressively go abroad and forcibly destroy or change hostile regime, especially those who may assist or harbor terrorists. That was the logic behind US decision to invade and occupy both Afghanistan and Iraq. As Vice President Cheney put it: There's no question but what it is going to be cheaper and less costly to do it now than it will be to wait a year or

two years or three years until they developed even more deadly weapons, perhaps nuclear weapons.

Although Washington's newfound interest in Middle East democracy may be real, "the United States continues to have strong economic and security interests that point to a need for close ties with many of the region's autocratic regimes" Carothers: 2005.

The US administration does not consider Arab regimes, except Syria, as hostile regimes deserve to be changed and has no policy goals to change them. Rather it considers them friendly regimes and adopts a policy of providing them with technical and economic assistance, to help them stay in power. It is a policy of friendship and close cooperation; a policy of economic assistance, political patronage, military protection against any internal or external threats.

It is a policy of mutual benefits between the US administration and Arab regimes based on the following: the US continues to support and protect Arab regimes in return for securing American interests. Arab public opinion understands this policy, hated it and this was and still one of the main reasons for Anti-Americanism, Islamic extremism and terrorism. Arab public opinion sees clear alliance between US administration, Israel and Arab regimes against them. They see on their screen daily oppression, humiliation, killing on the hands of Israeli on Palestinian territories, the Americans on Iraq and Arab regimes in every Arab country (Alsoudi, 2005)

US policy towards the Arab world is practically helping the oppressive regimes against their people, and this is exactly one of the causes of extremism and terrorism against America. This is the answer for President Bush why the hate us?

What is required here is a new US policy to support democracy, and political reform in the Arab World, a policy of alliance between America and the Arab people to get red of oppression and stop its alliance and support to such corrupted failed regimes.

What the Arab World needs from the United States, in my view, is a clear policy declaring that authoritarianism is not acceptable in the World in general and in Arab World in particular, and to use all available means to replace it with democratic governments. What is required is a policy of alliance between the United States and the Arab people to replace the present US policy of protecting and supporting Israel and the same regimes that oppress them.

5. USAID and MEPI funding in Jordan

5.1. USAID policy in Jordan

For the past 25 years, the United States has provided Jordan Egypt and other Arab countries with billion of Dollars as economic assistance. Overall, assistance has evolved through four overlapping phases. The first phase (mid-1970s to early 1980s) focused on improving Arab countries' physical infrastructure. The second phase (1980s) shifted the primary focus to economic development, education, health, water and family planning. Phase three (1990s) focused on environment and economic reforms. Phase four began On 2002 and continues focused on economic growth, and political reform and development. The total USAID assistance to Egypt reached \$24.3 billion dollars and about 4.1 billion dollars to Jordan. USAID, <http://www.usaid-eg.org/detail.asp?id=47>.

Working in partnership with the government of Jordan (GOJ) , US provided funds to help increase citizen participation at all levels, provide for citizens' basic needs, complete political, legal and economic reforms, and implement a host of other initiatives focused on the economy, transparency, education, and governance and gender equity.

The overall goal of the USAID program in Jordan is to address the long-term development needs of Jordan's population while also accelerating the pace of political, social and economic reform.

USAID assistance is part of the overall U.S. Mission strategy to advance prosperity and stability in Jordan. The goals of economic growth, education, democracy and governance, and empowerment of women, articulated in the Middle East Partnership Initiative (MEPI), provide a major part of the strategic underpinnings of USAID assistance to Jordan. The USAID strategy is closely coordinated with and reinforces U.S. Government strategic dialogue, public diplomacy efforts, MEPI-funded activities, and Jordanian government priorities.

The strategic goal of US aid, to Jordan is to support the development of a more effective and accountable system of governance. Its aims at building democracy by increasing citizen participation, expanding the role of civil society, increasing the flow and diversity of information to citizens, and strengthening selected democratic institutions. It also addressed the special needs of women and to improve the ability of female parliamentarians to perform their role in the recently elected legislature, and ensure that the status of Jordanian women improves through greater advocacy by non-governmental organizations.

To date, the government of Jordan (GOJ) has not made the same strong gains in liberalizing Jordan's political system that have been realized in economic reform. As a result, the majority of Jordan's citizens report a sense of political isolation.. Consultation by the GOJ takes place in an ad-

hoc manner and generally does not extend beyond a small circle within the ruling elite and its private sector allies. Democratic institutions such as the Parliament and the courts do not yet have the technical and analytical capacity to govern in an efficient and responsive way. Furthermore, the role of the media is limited as the GOJ constricts the flow of information to the public domain.

In November 2002, the GOJ launched Jordan First – an initiative designed to promote political openness and expand the role of civil society in public decision-making. Under this initiative the government should be more responsive and accountable through a more effective Parliament, greater levels of public accountability, a more free and open media, greater civic participation, expanded civic education, and a more efficient judiciary. As stated by His Majesty King Abdullah the second, in Washington, D.C., in September 2003, “The issue of political reform will be a key part of our future development process, and one that will have my personal attention.”

However, many of Jordan’s key democratic institutions and civil society organizations have inadequate technical, organizational, and policy skills to effectively perform their respective roles in a competitive, efficient, and responsive way. Further, the role of the media is limited due to a system of self and de facto censorship. To address these challenges, US aid program and other donors provided significant support to civil society organizations to improve their technical and analytical capabilities, expand their role in public discourse, protect human rights and facilitate the sharing of information on the issues of human rights, gender, and democracy in Jordan and the region. In addition, donors provided funds to support small grants program aimed at promoting human rights and democratization through local and international non-governmental organizations such as strengthening the capacity of civil society organizations, raise public awareness of democratic principles and human rights, promote the freedom of expression and independent media, encourage the improvement of the legal system, and strengthen women’s, children’s and youth rights through greater participation of these marginalized sectors

In direct response to requests received by a number of Members of Parliament (MPs), USAID worked with the GOJ, civil society organizations, and the media to strengthen the capacity of Parliament to fulfill its three core responsibilities: legislation, oversight, and representation. Specifically, USAID worked to increase the technical skills of MPs and key legislative staff as well as engage in activities

designed to strengthen the institutional capacity of the Parliament as a whole. It aimed at strengthening the abilities of key non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to engage in the policy-making process, strengthening the capacity of the press to responsibly report on issues of parliamentary process and technical issues being debated in Parliament. Regarding US aid to improve Parliament capacity it funded different activities, including: technical training for MPs, including female MPs, on issues such as budget and finance, health, education, the environment, women's issues; increasing the capacity of committee staff to support the legislative process; strengthening the ability of NGOs, including women's advocacy groups, to engage on substantive policy issues and represent constituent interests before Parliament; and building Parliament's research capacity.

USAID provided funds to help the GOJ, civil society stakeholders, and the media to raise public awareness about the costs of corruption and the need for transparent processes of resource allocation and use in the GOJ. These activities directly supported the broad-based economic reforms that are taking place in the Kingdom and serve as a catalyst for increased foreign investment in Jordan.

USAID assistance, in coordination with GOJ and other Jordanian counterparts, identified specific mechanisms through which corruption may be curbed, and encouraged cooperation between selected government institutions, civil society actors, experts, and the media. This cooperation facilitated sharing of expertise and knowledge about corruption and initiate pilot projects to reduce it

Additionally, assistance provided to the GOJ's Higher Media Council or other body to promote change within the media sector so that a freer and more enabling environment is developed. This environment would allow the media to play a strong role in investigating corruption and promoting public sector accountability.

The Emergency Assistance to Jordan was approved in May 2003 to implement the supplemental appropriation of \$700 million to assist Jordan to recover from the negative economic and political impacts of the war in Iraq.

The cash transfer program provided a means for the GOJ to pay down external nonmilitary debt that would help strengthen its foreign exchange position. While Jordan's relative external debt has declined in recent years, the debt service burden remains high.

However, due to the large size of the cash transfer in FY 2003 and FY 2004, much of the cash transfer was utilized to pay debt service. Through conditionalities, the cash transfer program has strengthened the legal and

regulatory environment, encouraged important policy reforms, and decreased Jordan's international debt burden. However, the cash transfer program significantly impacts the Mission's ability to conduct programs that contribute to GOJ objectives, and assist in the pursuit of MEPI and other USG assistance goals. While the Mission understands the desire of the GOJ to maintain a large cash transfer program, USAID/Jordan recommends a careful annual reassessment of the balance between the cash transfer program and support for USAID-funded activities in economic growth, democracy and governance, education, health, and water resources

On December 12, 2002, Secretary of State Colin Powell announced the creation of the Middle East Partnership Initiative (MEPI) (Powell, 2002). The (MEPI) is a program designed to promote political, economic, and educational development in the Middle. It has received an estimated \$284 million in funding since its creation in 2002 (Sharp, 2005).

MEPI's objectives are divided into four overarching categories: political reform, economic reform, educational reform, and women's empowerment. In order to secure Arab cooperation with MEPI, U.S. officials have stressed that MEPI is a "partnership" with the Arab world and not an attempt to impose Western values on the region. MEPI came as an attempt to find a middle ground, where the United States can encourage reforms without challenging the legitimacy of the host Arab government.

Some analysts believe that the MEPI can have a positive impact on the region by promoting democracy and economic development. Others suggest that MEPI will have little effect in both encouraging political change and countering anti-Americanism in the region. Observers note that MEPI's underlining strategy of funding small-scale projects has proven ineffective in the past when faced with the challenge of reforming closed economies and entrenched state bureaucracies (Witts 2004). Other skeptics even suggest that MEPI will only encourage opponents of U.S. policy in the region, who may perceive the program as an exercise in U.S. imperialism or an imposition of democracy from the west. Some critics of U.S. policy assert that there is an inherent contradiction in U.S. foreign policy in the Middle East, in which the United States advocates liberalization in the region, while bolstering ties with autocratic regimes with similar strategic interests. Others suggest that no amount of public diplomacy can overcome the Arab perception that the United States is too closely aligned with Israel (Sharp, 2005)

5.2. MEPI and USAID funding in Jordan

MEPI has received about 282 million dollars since 2002. Since then the State Department has organized over 50 programs, some of which are already operating, under each of its four main pillars. MEPI programs can either operate in one or two countries or cover the entire Middle East region. Morocco is one of the biggest beneficiaries of MEPI, together with Jordan, and Yemen. Many of MEPI's host countries have taken some steps to create quasi-democratic institutions such as parliaments, or have allowed some political opposition parties to organize and run in elections. However, MEPI has a small presence in Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and other GCC countries where the authorities are more sensitive to reform-minded initiatives *Sharp*, 2005.

In the political arena, MEPI has funded voter registration programs in Yemen, judicial reform seminars in Jordan, Oman and Bahrain, and training sessions for female candidates for parliament in Morocco and Jordan. In the economic sphere, the program has funded commercial law initiatives, debt reform, and the development of information technology infrastructures in Algeria, Tunisia, and Morocco.

US Aid to Jordan 1952-2004

Fiscal year	total 000\$
1952 - 1960	184,600
1961-1970	311,800
1971- 1980	720,900
1981- 1990	414,900
1991- 2000	810,200
2001- 2004	1,681,725
Total US Aid	4,128,125

US aid to Jordan by sector 1997-2004

Fiscal year	US 000\$
Health	141,800
Water	439,600
Education	9,200
Governance	11,150
Economic	242,050
Cash transfer & emergency	1,507,525
Total	2,351,325

6. Arab responses to US aid Policy and MEPI Funding

The Middle East Partnership Initiative has received mixed reactions, varying from country to country in the Arab world. At the governmental level, MEPI has been largely welcomed by the Arab monarchies of Jordan, Morocco, Bahrain, Qatar and Yemen. However, even among these enthusiastic Arab countries, there is still a high degree of sensitivity toward western programs designed to promote what is perceived as western-style democracy. The governments of Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and Oman have been more tepid in their response to MEPI, while the United Arab Emirates has shown less interest than some of the other small Gulf monarchies Sharp, 2005

At the unofficial level, the initial reaction in the Arab world to MEPI was largely negative, primarily in the Arab press. Jihad al-Khazin wrote that “there is an insult here, which I do not believe Powell intends. This sum [\$29 million] means that only 10 cents will be spent on every Arab man, woman, and child to teach them democracy.” al-Khazin 2003. Joseph Samahah wrote the purpose of MEPI was to link “the ambitions of some people in the Arab world to the objectives of the United States, not the objectives of the United States to the ambitions of people in the Arab world.” Samahah 2003 . Mustapha Al-sayyed argues that US aid is not only ineffective but that some part of the Arab public do not see that aid as a sign of US commitment to promote democracy: rather they look at it as instrument for furthering US foreign policy goals” Al-sayyed, 2000: p.4). According to one recent evaluation by the Brookings Institution, “MEPI tends to fund programs carried out by American NGOs that do not cross the red lines of regime-sponsored reform, or that simply do not match the political realities Arabs face.” Witts 2004. In addition, MEPI’s economic and social programs are designed to foster modernization, reform, and development over the long term. Moreover, there is no agreement among the different branches of the US administration on the issue of democratizing the Arab World. The neoconservatives and the hawks in the Department of Defense for example are skeptical about the wisdom of democratizing the Arab World. Such tensions do not always help the promotion of democracy in the region Ottaway: 2005).

Add to this the administration's worry that assertive democracy-promotion in the Arab world will exacerbate tensions with Arab regimes whose cooperation on other issues is highly valued in the State Department and the Pentagon. There are many Arab regimes America has supported for years, and whose cooperation is necessary to US security, economic interests, and the war on terrorism. In the past, the U.S. government has subordinated its concerns about democracy and human rights to cooperation against the Soviet Union and the security of Israel Ottaway.2005).

Many US experts and academics argue that the US has no power or it is not in a position to press Arab regimes for political reform. (Author interviews, 2005). Others including myself believe the America has political, economic and military power to push Arab regimes for democracy and political reform if it wants to. It is well known that the stability or even the survival of many of those Arab regimes depends on America's political and military patronage or economic assistance (Alsoudi 2005). In fact the US administration has no desire to push Arab regime for reform because such a thing is against its own interests. Indeed such policy has great consequences for US military bases, cheap oil supplies, Israel security, terrorism and other US geo-strategic interests (Alsoudi 2005)

Arab regimes are very fragile and manage to continue their rule with the use of naked military power and violence. They are hated regimes with no much legitimacy. Therefore I believe that real pressure from America and Europe and clear position against oppression and authoritarianism will be more than enough for those regimes to start a real democratization process. A UN resolution prohibits oppression and dictatorship will be the ideal step in this direction. Uncovering the secret accounts of billion of dollars in Europe and the United states owned by Arab rulers, ruling classes and officials will help US image and credibility among Arab public opinion. Such policy does not serve the Arab people alone rather it serves the interests of America, the peace in the region and stability. It is the only policy to sever the cause of freedom and democracy in the region for securing a friendly relation between America and the Arab people.

Controlled liberalization that creates nominal-democratic institutions with no real power is not democratization. Elections are important, but they are not democracy, the existence of weak political parties is not pluralism, women controlled voting is not free participation, parliaments without proper authorities, constitutions without implantation are not institutions.

The Arab World today according to Ottaway (2000 p. 21) is the only region of the globe in which democracy deemed extremely weak and impossible to develop in the near future. She argues that the large amount of US money "are never spent in the recipient country but paid to expatriate consultants, administrative overhead and that the data is often imprecise or incomplete" (P33). The study concluded that "civil society assistance has not been decisive for democratization in Palestine or in Egypt, nor it is likely to become a force in the foreseeable future" (p. 44). The study showed civil society assistance to Egypt was about 1 percent of the total US 2.3 billion aids to Egypt (p.33).

However, despite mistrust of the Americans, many government officials and other members of the elite have basically accepted the message that Arab countries need positive political, economic, and social change. Thus, as U.S. rhetoric on democracy became more prominent in 2003 and 2004, domestic opponents of Arab regimes coupled their criticisms of U.S. policy with calls for reform. Some Arabs who had privately supported democratic reform but had hesitated to voice their opinions publicly were also emboldened to weigh in. For their part, Arab rulers, suddenly no longer able to depend on the protection offered by U.S. silence about their poor governance and human rights records, found it difficult to reject such criticism outright as they had long done Hawthorne, 2004.

Indeed since the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001; the question of Arab reform has become a dominant theme of discussion in the Arab World itself. Arab satellite television stations broadcast talk shows featuring vigorous discussions about the persistence of authoritarian rule in Arab countries and the incompetence of incumbent regimes. The opinion pages of Arab newspapers are full of articles championing democratic reform as the only way to strengthen the region against Western control. Civil society groups, political parties, and even business organizations are promulgating reform manifestos with increasing regularity. Even Jordan Egypt Qatar Algeria and other Arab governments have acknowledged the need for reform in principle and have announced their own reform initiatives. Some of them introduced new legislations; new election and press laws; hold regular parliamentary and presidential elections.

Thus, as U.S. rhetoric on democracy became more prominent in 2003 and 2004, opposition groups, academics, parliamentarians through out the Arab World, held conferences, wrote articles, TV interviews, panel discussions, establishing associations for democracy, human rights, and even organized demonstration demanding democratizing the entire region.

Some Arab activists who had privately supported democratic reform but had afraid to voice their opinions publicly were also encouraged to weigh in. Most Arab rulers declared that they want to advance democracy but in a gradual manner and in a way that fits with Arab culture and conditions. They were no longer able to depend on U.S. silence about their oppression of their people.

Arab civil society groups and opposition parties also started to put forward their own reform initiatives in 2003 and 2004 as mentioned earlier in Alexandria, Yemen, Beirut and Amman. They too sought to seize the reform agenda from the United States to counter

neoconservative suggestions that the Middle East was a passive region needs to be reformed by US intervention.

Egyptian sociologist Saad Eddin Ibrahim, argues that the prospects for liberal democracy in the Arab World have never been so bright *Ibrahim, 2004* Fared Zakaria concluded after a visit to the region that “everywhere in the Arab world, people are talking about reform” *Zakaria, 2004*. President Bush acknowledged the demand for reform in the Arab World as he declared in a June 2004 speech that: “voices in that region are increasingly demanding reform and democratic change. He added that "For decades, free nations tolerated oppression in the Middle East for the sake of stability. In practice, this approach brought little stability, and much oppression. So I have changed this policy" *Bush, 2004*.

However, such enthusiasm about the inevitability of democratic change in the Arab World is premature. So far, talk about reform exceeds actual reform implemented, and the reforms that Arab governments have actually carried out in the past decade are quite modest and do not affect their fundamentally authoritarian character. Furthermore, there is no popular movement for democratic change in the Arab world, only a growing willingness among some members of the elite to question existing systems and deliberate future options *Hawthorne, 2004*.

Nonetheless, the context for reform varies considerably from one Arab country to another. But the ferment is real and should not be dismissed as inconsequential. Calls for reform have surged and receded, however, without altering the core of authoritarian rule. Governments often have used promises of reform as a smokescreen for inaction. *Hawthorne, 2004* And by 2001, the Arab world remained the least free and democratic region of the world, according to the annual surveys of the Freedom House and UNDP Arab development reports *Freedom House, 2000–2001*.

The reform ferment of the post–September 11 period represents an evolution of this earlier liberalizing trend, rather than a wholly new stage in Arab politics. Three characteristics mark the present reform environment. First, political reform has become a topic of regional concern. Advocates of democracy from most Arab countries are speaking out in the pan-Arab media and at regional conferences. Almost every Arab government has committed itself rhetorically to the concept of reform, and the issue has forced itself onto the agenda of Arab League summits. Second, Liberal democrats are the most outspoken, openly raising previously taboo issues such as instituting term limits for Arab rulers and lifting emergency laws. Third, voices challenging the very need for reform are somewhat fainter. The current debate revolves more around what reforms are needed and the role of outsiders, particularly the United States, in supporting change, than around whether change is necessary at all *Hawthorne, 2004*.

The US democracy initiative, in the beginning at least, enhanced many Arab regimes' desire to portray themselves internally and internationally as reformers. They sought to demonstrate that they support US call for democracy in principle and that they are taking steps in this directions. Indeed some Arab regimes introduced new laws, constitutions, allowed the establishment of societies, political parties conducted elections, all this to avoid being targets of future U.S. interventions or occupations in the name of democracy and human rights Alsoudi,2003.

However, Arab regimes strategy for reform is based on the principle of gradual and top-down controlled liberalization has worked perfectly and kept them in power for the last four decades. This strategy practically prevented any political force to emerge, beyond the state and the Islamist opposition. They maintain total control, and the Islamists remain the main opposition. This situation was and still convenient to the regimes own survival and in their dealing with American quest for democracy Hawthorne, 2004.

Furthermore, reforms have been introduced from the top, by governments acting on their own initiative rather than in response to specific demands from their citizens. Some governments, such as in Egypt, Jordan, Bahrain and Saudi Arabia, have organized national dialogues on reform, but participants and topics discussed at such gatherings are tightly controlled. They are primarily public relations exercises and opportunities for carefully selected members of the elite to blow off steam. Attempts by citizens to petition their governments for change have met with mostly vague responses or with arrests and pressures on the petitioners to desist from further activities. Notably, most Arab rulers have made general statements in support of reform but have not yet implemented any significant measures Hawthorne, 2004

Arab governments understood US conflicting interests, and difficulties therefore they rejected US demand and argued that democracy cannot imported or imposed from outside; that they know about their conditions and circumstance more than Americans do Mosa, 2004).

Some of them even, tightened their controls over their people; others reversed some of their previous liberal steps on the name of fighting terrorism. They are confident that the Americans wouldn't ask them to reform and at the same time request their cooperation in fighting terrorism.

Unfortunately, US occupation of Iraq has influenced the reform environment in a negative way. Widespread anger over the US occupation of Iraq and over some Arab governments' direct or in direct support for that occupation exposed America to new charges of colonialism and Arab the governments of betrayal or incompetence.

Numerous demonstrations spread through out the Arab World but most of them were by the sheer of military force. Further more, Many Arabs in fact questioned the United States' intentions and commitment to promoting democracy in the region, arguing that its policies are inconsistent and even hypocritical (Alsoudi, 2005).

Many Arab analysts used US failure to bring democracy or stability to Iraq as an indicator to its ignorance in Middle East Affairs. They started to question Americans' real aims in the area, and accused it of becoming yet another colonial power trying to secure its interests through full control over Arab oil (Wittes: 2004)

U.S. discussions about the need for democracy in the Middle East have triggered a strong negative reaction by Arab commentators and journalists, including in discussions of democracy in the Arab press. Arab commentators have treated democracy as a foreign policy issue, asking why the United States is suddenly discussing democracy in the Arab world and what true intentions it is trying to hide behind the smoke screen of democracy talk (Ottaway, 2003).

Arab governments and publics have reacted negatively to US reform policy. They have reacted with suspicion to Washington's attempt to recast itself as a champion of democracy and as the friend of all Arab reformers. Such hostility is hardly a surprise given the unfriendliness of the environment into which the Bush administration was attempting to project its democracy message. Long-standing Arab suspicion of U.S. motives in the region was only exacerbated by the administration's unconditional support for Israel and later the occupation of Iraq on false ground, (Hawthorne, 2004).

The many contentions that the United States lacks credibility as a promoter of democracy in the Middle East revolve around two major themes. First, is the contention that the U.S. administration has no credibility when it calls for respect for democracy and human rights because of its disregard for the rights of Palestinians, Iraqis, Syrians and other Arabs. "The United States cannot claim today to be the champion of freedoms while it is waging 'vicious' wars against the Arabs in most of their countries, from Egypt to Saudi Arabia, and from Iraq to Yemen. . . . This superpower, which protects and sponsors Sharon's mass killings and systematic destruction of Palestinian life, cannot emerge as an 'angel' in region, calling for democracy!" (Salman, 2002). A Jordanian commentator asked rhetorically: "And what does Bush have to say about the so-called Israeli democracy, which has produced the worst kind of far-right, extremist government, led by General Ariel Sharon, who is committed to continued occupation, the demolition of more Palestinian houses, the expropriation of Palestinian land, the assassination of Palestinian

activists, ethnic cleansing and all-out state terrorism?" Fanek, 2002.. The second factor Arab commentators cite as undermining U.S. credibility is the long-standing U.S. support for autocratic Arab regimes that are willing to accept U.S. policies in the area, maintain the status quo, and supply the United States with cheap oil. "The US is not the country that people of this region can rely upon to generate a foreign climate conducive to fostering and supporting a true process of democratization. The US has a long record of supporting dictatorships and of plotting to overthrow democratically elected governments. Whenever the defense of democratic values has come into conflict with the defense of US interests, the latter always win out." Nafaa, 2002.

Arab League Secretary-General Amr Musa said in an exclusive interview with Aljazeera, that the GMEI is lacking a lot of logic in its premises. "I do not think there is any logic in piling up Morocco and Bangladesh in a vision of that sort," he added "It is illogical to speak of an initiative which requires the cooperation of the Arab states without consulting those very states on the nature and details of such ideas. "It is unacceptable to attempt to dictate to peoples the developmental paths they should take. So, in short, I think this sort of initiative won't fly the way it was launched and promoted." Musa, 2004.

However, despite mistrust of US efforts toward reform, many Arab officials and other members of the liberal elite have basically accepted the message that Arab countries need positive political, economic, and social reform. Most Arab states admit their socio-economic failures, and seek to reform in ways that improve governments and economic performance but without changing the distribution of political power. And some of them, Jordan, Egypt, Morocco, Qatar, Bahrain, have placed some power in the hands of their peoples through constitutional and electoral reforms, but the majority tries to create false impression that they are moving forward on the road to democracy but practically strengthening their grip on political power.

It is save to say that the issue of political reform has so far generated far more debate than actual democratizing change in the Arab world. The main reason is that reform is still closely controlled by the authoritarian regimes. They took some cosmetic changes to show the outside World that they are taking certain steps toward democracy in a way that is suitable to the needs and circumstances of their people. And sense they do not feel that they are under immediate domestic pressure to introduce far-reaching reforms, they will continue on the path of authoritarianism. Ottaway 2004,

Whether the reform process will remain largely in the sphere of discourse, or lead to real change, depends on numerous factors. One is the capacity of liberal reformers to attract the popular support they are now lacking, by developing an appealing socio-political agenda to accompany their abstract political demands.

Another is the ability of liberals and Islamists to forge strong alliances able to challenge the present regimes. A third factor is the future trajectory of the war on terrorism and the outcome of the situations in Iraq and Palestine. All are currently fueling anti-American sentiment that complicates the US reform agenda in the region. Hawthorne, 2004.

Finally, the willingness of the United States and other Western countries to press for democratization, rather than to accept modernizing measures as a sign of democratic progress, will help determine the long-term significance of the current reform efforts Ottaway 2004.

9. Conclusion and Recommendations:

9.1. Conclusion:

Since the end of World War Two, the situation in the Middle East has been a major issue of US foreign policy. During the last two decades, the US has sent more foreign and military aid, sent more troops and weapons fought more wars, lost more lives and invested more political capital in the Middle East than in any other region of the world.

The policies of Western governments and international institutions regarding democratization in the Arab world have ranged from what one might term failure to take action in support of democratization or in defense of the political and civil liberties necessary for its smooth functioning to deliberate efforts to strengthen authoritarian regimes against the forces of democratic change.

For the most part, US policy towards the Arab World has been driven both by the strategic concerns of the Cold War, by domestic politics, the peace process and oil supply. As a result, US policy has been designed to provide uncritical support for Israel, maintaining a sufficiently stable US-Arab relationship and to guarantee an uninterrupted flow of oil to provide for US and world-wide consumption needs.

The commitment to democracy by the US administration is based on an assumption that democratic Arab World would be less hostile and less dangerous to the security and interests of the United States. To achieve these objectives, the United States provided Arab governments with

billion of dollars through USAID programs and few hundreds millions under the MEPI. It was hoped that it will help transform the region into democracy and economic prosperity. Unfortunately, dictatorships, anti-Americanism, terrorism, poverty, unemployment and corruption are still the main features of the socio-political reality of this part of the World until today.

As for the effectiveness of US Aid policy on democracy and political reform the results are not promising if there are any results at all. In its first few years the Middle East Partnership Initiative allocated about (284) millions to be spent on four main programs with less 10 percent on political reform and to be spent within the approved ceiling set out by the Arab regimes themselves.

There is a widespread perception in the Arab World that the Bush administration is embracing the cause of democracy promotion not out of real commitment, but because doing so provides a convenient justification for US occupation of Iraq and its unconditional support of Israel. Such perception feeds a widespread feeling that the U.S. government cannot be trusted thus undermining its credibility as an advocate of democracy and political change in the region. The United States will fail to gain such credibility unless it invests much more money in the Middle East Partnership Initiative and similar projects and to end its support to Israel and quit its military bases in the region.

The issue of political reform has so far generated far more debate than actual democratizing change in the Arab world. The main reason is that reform is still closely controlled by Arab authoritarian regimes that, while eager to demonstrate to the outside World that they are not as retrograde as it is often portrayed to be, feel under no immediate domestic pressure to introduce real reforms.

Arab liberals, who are issuing the most pointed and extensive demands for democratic reform, are still weak and isolated. The attention paid to them by the Bush administration and by Western democracy advocates have isolate them even more within their own. The other important opposition group is the Islamists. The dominant political theme preached by Islamists is still hostility toward both Arab regimes and U.S. policies and Western cultural influence. Therefore, Arab governments and the American administration do not trust Islamists, fearing they are simply want to grab power as soon as there is a democratic opening.

The 9/11 changed US traditional policy, though not in a positive way. In response to the shock of the terrorist attacks, hard-line neo-conservatives called for, and, to a degree, implemented some revolutionary changes in

US-Middle East policy, focusing on: the use of pre-emptive war against targets identified as threatening to US interests and security; direct US involvement in promoting political reform throughout the Middle East; and Closer identification of US and Israeli political and military objectives and tactics in confronting terrorism.

It was this change in course that led the US into war and occupation in Afghanistan and Iraq. And it was this new vision of the Middle East that has altered the ground rules for resolution of the Arab-Israeli conflict; and engaged the US in an experiment in regime change and nation building in Iraq as a precursor to what is viewed as a democratic transformation that should be spread to the rest of the Arab World.

The US democratization efforts in the Arab world have traditionally been modest, undertaken in consultation with Arab regimes, and aimed at liberalizing the economy and delivering technical assistance rather than changing, in any meaningful way, the distribution of political power. Indeed the US administration has supported many Arab regimes' own survival strategy of controlled liberalization for more than two decades. The aim of such policy was to avoid the risk of destabilizing the region or establishing hostile Islamists regimes, which may form a threat to US security, oil supplies and the peace process.

The irony here is that the longer the U.S. governments support for Arab regimes' policy of gradual and top-down liberalization without real political change the more the Islamists benefit from such limited political openings and the more some of them became more popular and perhaps extremist.

A crosscutting theme among Arab public opinion is the rejection of or suspicious attitude toward the role of the US in promoting democracy in the Arab World. They see America as assisting their enemy Israel, stealing their oil, occupying part of their countries, establishing military bases around the holy places and protecting their authoritarian rulers.

As Arab governments stand to become net losers in any real reform effort. Therefore, most government-sponsored initiatives towards democracy are motivated by self-preservation and a desire to maintain the status quo rather than a wish to implement genuine change.

Arab liberal reform initiatives share key common demands. These include calls for free and fair elections; constitutional reforms increase legislative and judicial powers; the repeal of emergency laws and the abolishment of exceptional courts; an end to the practice of torture; and the lifting of restrictions on civil society, NGOs, and the media. However, the role of

and influence of Arab liberals is fading because they are not trusted by Arab governments. Islamists in the other hand, are the most influential grassroots opposition element in most Arab countries. They have been largely excluded from both government and nongovernmental initiatives. Bridging the divide between Islamists and secularists will be a critical component of successful reform efforts. Bringing together secular and Islamist reformers could accelerate the momentum for political change.

9.2. Recommendations:

There is no US aid policy that fits all Arab World and Middle East democracy promotion and political reform. Therefore, different policies must be designed to suit each Arab country, taking into consideration local political, economic and social conditions. The paper suggested the following general recommendations to be seriously considered by United States building on what the US administration has already devised for region.

- Political reform and democracy promotion is a long-term effort, requiring consistent practical steps to demonstrate United States seriousness and sincerity over the coming decade. Toward this end, the United States must shift from its traditional policy of preserving the status quo and to try to foster a Middle East aid program and policy that help encourage the present regimes to take gradual steps for democratization. Calling for sudden transfers of power would lead for Islamists governments and this would not lead to democracy or protect American interests. America should not accept or endorse cosmetic reforms on the ground that they will satisfy Arab public opinion and. Every Arab country declared that it needs some political change, but the longer such steps toward real change are delayed, the more serious the socio-political and security problems will become and the more difficult to be solved. Practical steps should include allowing new political parties to form, multiparty elections, lifting emergency laws, empowering women, improving human rights, allowing greater freedom of press and speech and granting greater powers to parliaments. As the study showed US democracy-aid programs have so far little impact on democracy and political reform in the region.
- The United States should concentrate its main efforts on people and governments, recognizing that if actual democratization takes root, and if regional tensions abate, the United States will have more allies within the Arab World. It is well known that Arab regimes hold almost all cards in the game of democracy and political reform. The United States has more influence on those

regimes through political, economical and military assistance than its influence on societies. However this influence should not be overestimated; in particular, the United States has less leverage with non-friendly countries like Sudan and Syria and with GCC countries that supply it with oil and with those on whom it depends for access to military facilities and fighting terrorism. There is no doubt that all Arab governments do care what America thinks and likes, therefore the United States government must take into account Arab governments' position from political reform and treatment of their citizens when determining the size of its economic and military assistance to those countries. To this end, the United States should follow a pro-active aid policy that makes democratization and engagement in political reform top priorities. In countries where it provides significant economic aid, such as Egypt, Morocco, Yemen and Jordan, the United States should think of practical steps to link aid to political reforms. But America should introduce such steps slowly and deliberately, through open and frank discussions with each Arab government, rather than impose them abruptly. The United States should compliment those Arab governments that are taking positive steps, but resist the tendency to over praise them, as it has in the past. It should speak out and criticize those governments including its close friends when they pursue undemocratic policies or violate human rights. Such polices will not change any Arab regime immediately but they will antagonize some and create a degree of anger against the United States. The advantage of such policy would certainly add a new calculation to Arab governments' decision making that is the position and reaction of the United States.

- Democracy-aid programs through USAID or MEPI must first be increased substantially and secondly taken more seriously by the US administration. This require conducting honest evaluations to those aid programs to determine what is the realistic amount of aid required for democracy promotion in all Arab countries and for each country and to succeed and to avoid public relations programs. This also means understanding democracy aid as just one aspect of a broader effort, not as a substitute for diplomatic action. Finally it is desirable that such program must be run by US non-government organization to avoid Arab popular accusation that the aim of such aid is to serve the interest of the United States.
- The United States should embark on serious policy of gradual democracy promotion and to accept the out come of such change. Returning to US traditional policy of preserving the status quo in the region would only increase extremism and terrorism. Islamists

proved to be a fact of life in the Arab and Muslim Worlds politics as they govern in Palestine, Iraq, Turkey and Iran, ignoring this fact or refusing the outcome of the democratic process as the case with Hamas is counter productive. The goal should be to help create conditions that will help the present regimes to continue their rule but also to allow the empowerment of liberal, regime reformers and moderate Islamist who accept democratic principles. This should be a cornerstone of the process of democratic transition in any Arab and Muslim country.

- The United States should follow impartial policy towards the Arab Israeli conflict, work seriously for achieving a fair and lasting peace between the Arabs and Israel, solving the Palestinian issue, ending its occupation to Iraq and closing its military bases in the Arab World.
- The United States should pursue reform and democratization with every Arab country with different modes of engagement. It should make reform and democratization a persistent theme in its talks with Arab officials and keeping the issue on its bilateral relations with the Arab World.
- U.S. policymakers should raise the urgent need for reform, as emphasized by Arab reformers, at the bilateral level. Consistent yet quiet diplomatic pressure, coupled with financial enticements for positive movement on reform offers the greatest chance of success.
- Given the Islamists' strong popular appeal, the United States can no longer afford to call for democratic change in the region while ignoring one of its most powerful political forces. The United States should underscore the commonalities among the demands of secular and Islamist reformers, leveraging the overlap between them to inject greater momentum toward broad reform in the region.
- The United States should consider establishing a non-governmental foundation as the key mechanism for administering political-reform promotion projects. Such foundation would also provide an instrument for addressing policy interests that, by nature, are extremely long term and go beyond the traditional policymaking apparatus.
- What the Arab World needs from the United States is a clear policy declaring that authoritarianism is not acceptable in the World in general and in Arab World in particular, and to use all available means to replace it with democratic governments. What is required is a policy of alliance between the United States and the Arab

people to replace the present US policy of protecting and supporting Israel and the same regimes that oppress them.

- The United States should try to press for democracy and political reform in the Arab World, using its economic, political and moral power and should not wait, under any pretext, the change to come from Arab regimes as such thing would not happen in the foreseeable future.

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