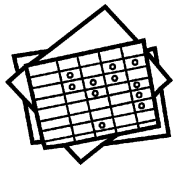
QUICK STUDIES



AS YOU CHART IT

What Does It Mean, "Promoting Democratization"?

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A Basic Typology of Projects Promoting Arab Democratization

Electoral Representation	Legal–Judicial Sector	Civic Sector
	Research	
Pilot/background studies	Legal sector analysis	Studies of civil society
Needs assessments	Human rights reports	NGO directories
Mapping exercises	Legal documentation	Research grants
Elections monitoring	Legislative records	Gender analysis
Public opinion surveys	Translation of documents	Publications
Parliamentary records	Constitutional research	Documentaries
Studies of gender quotas		
	Tutorial	
Voter education	Expert consultations	NGO workshops
Party campaign training	Law schools & programs	Women's empowerment
Women candidate programs	Human rights training	Advocacy training
Parliamentary exchanges	Media campaigns on rights	Websites/handbooks
Poll-worker training	Seminars/workshops	Media seminars
Elections publicity	Professional exchanges	Study tours
Local monitor training	Commercial harmonization	Fund-raising manuals
	Institutional	
Elections commissions	Courts recording	Think tanks
Parliamentary offices	Penal system	Media centers
Local councils	Introducing legislation	Women's advocacy
Automated voting	Law libraries	Chambers of commerce
Ballots, ink, boxes	Bar associations	Universities
Elections monitors	Human rights organizations	Global NGO networks
Parliamentary libraries	Transnational institutions	Labor unions
	Iraq's High Tribunal	Arab regional conferences

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Political speeches and even policy analysis from Washington, Ottawa, and the capitals of Europe about promoting democratization have tended in the past two decades toward generalities and platitudes. This research asks what Western and international agencies actually do on the ground in the Middle East to foment democracy. Taking my inspiration from the sociologist Albert Hirschman, who decades ago observed that *projects* are "privileged particles"[1] of socioeconomic development assistance, I have collected well over 1,200 examples.[2] This summary table illustrates the aggregate finding that most projects cluster around electoral representation, legal or judicial development, and support for liberal elements of civil society—and that they are mostly about collecting or distributing information or supporting institutions to do this work.

The most newsworthy projects surround national and/or local elections, in some countries bringing in scores of technical experts, dozens of trainers, and delegations of international observers for a special event. The activities listed in the first column prioritize procedural aspects of democratic representation, especially voting by citizens and elected officials; they are about process. Projects in the legal or judicial sector include programming under the quite different rubrics of human rights, the rule of law, and harmonization of commercial law and practices. This is a highly professionalized sector; most of the participants on both sides of the exchange share specialized legal skills and knowledge. Overlapping at the edges with conventional development assistance channeled through welfare nongovernmental organizations, civil-society promotion as a subfield of democracy programming mainly fosters professional advocacy and intellectual services on themes like gender empowerment, environmental awareness, or press freedom.

This knowledge-intensive industry specializes in collecting and analyzing certain kinds of data, teaching ideas and practices, and supporting Arab institutions to do this work. The rows in this table show examples of research, tutorial, and institution-building projects in each of the three main sectors. There is a veritable library of studies by expats and Arab professionals about electoral and legal systems, women's participation, and the public civic realm. From advanced academic/legal training to workshops for activists/monitors to mass outreach, education is a primary mission. Finally, support for institution building prioritizes information services like documentation, whether inside the halls of parliaments and judiciaries or outside government in the civic sector.

Overall, the most commonly supported institution is what I call a think tank, with a professional, bilingual staff who raise funds for research and education by writing grant proposals. These tasks overlap in conferences where professionals meet at the provincial, national, Pan-Arab, and international levels, forming networks, associations, and websites along the way. Compared with the material element of conventional development aid, expenditures on democratization are heavily skewed toward travel, per diems, consulting fees, and computer software. By and large, projects encourage engagement via the ballot box, the courts, the Internet, or roundtable discussions.

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I conclude from this exercise that both empirically and normatively promoting democratization is about procedural democracy, justice (although this particular word is not used much), and the empowerment of the liberal intelligentsia. Assessments should be made accordingly.

NOTES

[1]Albert O. Hirschman, *Development Projects Observed* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution, 1967), 1.

[2]For notes on my methodology, see "Foreign Aid for Promoting Democracy in the Arab World," *Middle East Journal* 56 (2002): 379–95. The sample size has expanded considerably in the interim.

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