

## The Baby, the Bathwater, and the Freedom Agenda in the Middle East

In reassessing how to secure U. S. interests while stabilizing the Middle East, the new U.S. administration might well decide to postpone or even repudiate democracy promotion. Democratic systems have hardly bloomed in the region since President George W. Bush announced a “forward strategy of freedom” during a speech commemorating the twentieth anniversary of the National Endowment for Democracy in November 2003.<sup>1</sup> In fact, U.S. attention seems to have caused more problems than it solved, particularly in Iraq and Palestine. No one can guarantee that the United States can promote democracy in the Middle East without risking stability and critical interests, making it tempting to at least try to set aside the policy until clearer answers emerge, potentially under the guise of a policy review.

Yet, the new U.S. administration will undoubtedly encounter early challenges and opportunities related to democratization, which Arabs themselves increasingly recognize as essential to solving their countries’ internal political, economic, and social problems.<sup>2</sup> In the next four years, there will almost certainly be presidential succession in Egypt after three decades of President Hosni Mubarak’s rule—and possibly in Algeria, Yemen, and several other Arab countries as well—that will embolden those calling for political reform. Elections are becoming commonplace in Arab states, and the United States will need to decide whether to promote increasingly free and fair contests or ignore them altogether. Iraqis, Lebanese, and Palestinians will continue to try to resolve their respective power struggles, unleashed at least in part due to U.S. actions. The

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**Lessons from less publicized cases show how to support regional democracy more effectively.**

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United States will not be able to remain neutral toward the question of democracy in these situations.

Will the new administration address these challenges, or will it ignore the freedom agenda because of its failures in Iraq and Palestine, and because it bears too strong a stamp of its predecessor? Limiting judgments of the ongoing regional legacy of democracy promotion to Iraq and Palestine overlooks other less publicized cases—in places such as Egypt, Bahrain, and Morocco—that show how

the United States has managed to make some headway in promoting democracy without sacrificing strategic interests. Sidelining the freedom agenda in the Middle East without taking into account these lessons would be a historic mistake, paralleling the Bush administration's "ABC" (Anything But Clinton) error in initially discarding the Arab-Israeli peace process. Instead, the new administration should incorporate lessons from these less publicized cases to help support democracy in the Middle East more effectively.

### **Beyond Iraq and Palestine**

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Analytical objections to democracy promotion in the Middle East fall into several categories. Some argue that democracy cannot be spread by coercion, whether military or otherwise, as shown by the unstable and violent situations in Iraq and Palestine.<sup>3</sup> Others assert that it is not possible to promote democracy in Arab countries while simultaneously maintaining critical strategic cooperation with undemocratic Arab governments. Still others object that even if democracy promotion succeeded, the result would bring Islamists to power, which would be unfavorable to U.S. interests.<sup>4</sup> The logical conclusion is that the new administration should disassociate itself fully from the freedom agenda, and only return to the democracy issue once it has come up with entirely new methods and goals.

Objections to democracy promotion by military force or other forms of coercion are well taken, at least on the surface. In this regard, Iraq and Palestine have dominated discussion of the Bush administration's freedom agenda. In Iraq, the United States removed an authoritarian government by force and pressed new Iraqi leaders to adopt democratic procedures. Yet, whatever Bush's rhetoric, spreading democracy was never at the core of the U.S. rationale for invading Iraq. It was a secondary benefit that administration officials hoped would accrue from the primary objective, which was to rearrange the strategic balance in the

region. However misguided those objectives might have been, if the United States was going to preside over the emergence of a post-Saddam Hussein Iraq, how could it have done anything other than promote democratic governance? Despite the efforts of the Bush administration, democratic practices have not yet provided a peaceful mechanism to resolve the power struggles unleashed by the U.S. invasion. On the other hand, democracy certainly did not cause these problems, and few experts would argue that Iraq would be better off now if the United States had simply replaced Saddam with a friendlier dictator.

Many observers have cited the 2006 Palestinian elections as a case that precipitated a political crisis. Rather than causing the problem, however, the elections merely clarified what many already knew: that the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) was on the verge of collapse and the Islamic Resistance Movement, Hamas, had effectively taken its place to lead the Palestinian national cause. Unfortunately, the United States had played a major role in sowing the seeds of this disaster over the past decade. During the 1990s, the Clinton administration looked the other way while PLO Chairman Yasser Arafat developed a corrupt, inept Palestinian Authority, as Arafat was cooperating in negotiations with Israel at the time. Once he ceased cooperating with Israel and began supporting a violent uprising in 2000, the Bush administration pressed Palestinians to undertake political reforms to shift power away from the presidency toward the more cooperative then-Prime Minister Mahmoud Abbas. When Abbas succeeded Arafat as president and Ismail Haniyya of Hamas became prime minister, the United States reversed its former stance, pressing for power and financial control to move back to the presidency. In coordination with European allies, the United States also applied heavy pressure to bring about the failure of the Hamas-led government. U.S. objections to Hamas—a group that refuses to recognize Israel’s legitimate existence and uses terrorism as a political tool—were entirely legitimate, but the cynical manipulation of democracy promotion to obtain specific political outcomes was not, and backfired.

Yet, beyond these two headline-grabbing special cases, the freedom agenda was also supposed to include other Arab countries, which for the most part are stable and some even quite friendly toward the United States. While debate about these other countries has been dominated by the fear that promoting democracy hurts strategic cooperation with friendly Arab states and benefits only Islamists, these objections are based on a misreading of what has happened in the Middle East in the last few years. In fact, democracy promotion’s effect on U.S. relations has varied a great deal from one Arab country to another—it has even boosted some relationships—and has not at all weakened the United States’ ability to obtain strategic cooperation on other issues. And in peaceful Arab countries, although Islamist groups participating in politics have benefited from political openings, they have generally done so only by adopting more

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pragmatic political agendas, an outcome that is in the U.S. interest over the long term.

Egypt, Bahrain, and Morocco are good examples of friendly Arab countries in which the Bush administration engaged—for a short time—in democracy promotion efforts. Distributed geographically across the Arab world, the three countries illustrate not only the different types of relationships that the United States enjoys in the region, but also the various approaches which Arab leaders have taken toward the democracy issue. Egypt has been a

close military and political ally of the United States for more than thirty years, while Bahrain hosts the U.S. Navy's Fifth Fleet. Morocco is less important militarily to the United States, but has become a darling of Washington, due in part to King Muhammad VI's fairly vigorous program of reform in human and civil rights. The Bush administration generally has also viewed King Hamad Bin Isa al-Khalifa of Bahrain as a reformist, although in Bahrain there is much disappointment with reform to date. Egypt's Mubarak, on the other hand, has resisted significant political reform. Taken together, the three cases show how the United States has managed to make some headway in promoting democracy without sacrificing strategic interests—and how the United States might have done more had the Bush administration been more persistent.

### **Egypt: Where Push Met Pull**

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With a quarter of the Arab world's population and a geostrategic location connecting Africa to Asia, Egypt is the most important friendly Arab country in which the Bush administration made an effort to promote democracy. It is also a major regional ally, receiving more annual U.S. assistance than any country except Israel—nearly \$70 billion between 1975 and the present.<sup>5</sup>

From 2002 to 2006, the Bush administration used public statements, private urging, and assistance programs to nudge Mubarak's government toward meaningful political reform. The efforts complemented increasing demand for change within Egypt, where the political logjam in place since the 1980s was beginning to break up as maneuvering increased in anticipation of succession to the aging Mubarak (now 80 years old). Opposition groups—including Islamists, liberals, and Nasserists—began to demonstrate more openly than they had in years, calling explicitly for Mubarak to step down and opposing efforts to install his second son, Gamal, as the new president. Such groups were by no means strong enough to force Mubarak out, but they succeeded in winning several

concessions in 2004–2005 such as direct popular election of the president, civil society monitoring of parliamentary elections, and greater media freedom. Their success was partly due to the unequivocal support of the United States, which used public statements, private diplomacy, and assistance programs to encourage a gradual transition to a freer political system.

The Bush administration's enthusiasm for urging political reform in Egypt wavered in early 2006, however, after several painful events. First, the January victory of Hamas in Palestinian elections, combined with the Muslim Brotherhood's strong showing in Egypt's parliamentary elections in the fall of 2005, raised questions in Washington about whether the freedom agenda would only benefit Islamists. Second, in January the Bush administration took a difficult decision to cancel planned free trade talks with Egypt after a court sentenced Ayman Nour, a young liberal politician who ran against Mubarak in 2005, to five years in prison on trumped-up forgery charges. The decision provoked intense controversy within the U.S. government as well as in Egypt, with some arguing that the United States was hurting pro-reform elements within the regime by abandoning free trade talks and others arguing that the freedom agenda would lose all credibility should the Bush administration proceed with such talks and advance the U.S.–Egyptian relationship despite Nour's conviction. Finally, Iraq's descent into sectarian violence after the February 2006 bombing of the Samarra mosque occupied much of the administration's attention and increased U.S. criticism of all Bush policies in the Middle East.

The Bush administration backed off significantly from the freedom agenda in Egypt in 2006 and 2007. The administration kept mum (ironically squandering the credibility Washington had tried to save by forgoing a free trade agreement) while the Egyptian government slid backward on civil liberties. Authorities reacted to the Brotherhood's electoral strength by arresting hundreds of its members, attacking its sources of financing, postponing scheduled local elections, passing constitutional amendments that damaged human rights protections and banned the Brotherhood from forming a political party, prosecuting opposition journalists and bloggers, and forcing several U.S. democracy promotion organizations to freeze their activities in the process. At the same time, members of Congress kept up the pressure by sponsoring various amendments to cut aid unless Egypt improved its human rights record, culminating in a fiscal year 2008 budget withholding \$100 million in military assistance, which the Bush administration circumvented by claiming that vital national security interests were at stake.

What can the next administration learn from the bumpy course of U.S.–Egyptian relations since the inception of Bush's freedom agenda? First, Egypt at no time withheld or even seriously threatened to withhold cooperation

on military, counterterrorism, or regional diplomacy due to the freedom agenda. If anything, Cairo tried harder to please Washington in these areas in 2002–2006 in the hope of relieving pressure for political reform. Mubarak, for example, reversed his initial opposition to Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon's 2004 proposal for a unilateral withdrawal from Gaza, and became actively supportive.

Second, the United States made a critical difference by adding its voice to those proposing domestic reform in Egypt and, particularly in 2004–2005, helped to bring about several promising changes such as the first widespread electoral monitoring, freer campaigning by opposition candidates, and the establishment of independent media. The Muslim Brotherhood was best positioned to benefit at the ballot box in the 2005 parliamentary elections, but the unprecedented openness of the campaign also forced the Brotherhood to adopt a much clearer and more pragmatic political and economic agenda in order to compete. Unfortunately, the lack of U.S. consistency and follow-through from 2006 onward left Egyptian reform proponents (liberals as well as Islamists) exposed to government backlash, and angry at Washington for apparently abandoning them.

### **Bahrain: Early Achievements, Later Disappointments**

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Bahrain differs from most Arab countries because it has a political opposition with large popular support, based in a majority Shi'i population living under a Sunni ruling family and establishment. The U.S.-Bahraini relationship was already on an upward trajectory when Bush came into office, built on a foundation of strategic cooperation throughout the 1990s including basing the U.S. Navy's Fifth Fleet in Manama from 1995 onward. During that same decade, however, Bahrain experienced an intense opposition campaign by the country's underprivileged majority Shi'i Muslim population. In response, the Sunni ruling elite used repressive measures including exile and imprisonment of dissidents. Such measures barely caused a ripple in U.S. support for the Bahraini government. After King Hamad succeeded his father in 1999 and undertook reconciliation and liberalization efforts, including amnesty for political opponents and a 2001 National Charter that promised significant political reforms, there was all the more reason to praise Bahrain.

Even before the Bush administration turned to democracy promotion as part of the answer to terrorism from 2002 on, Bahrain had become a favorite in Washington, being mentioned frequently in Bush's speeches as an example of enlightened, top-down reform. During Hamad's May 2001 visit to Washington, Bush described the king as being "on the leading edge of reform. He believes in human rights and believes in the full participation of the people of his land."<sup>6</sup> The relationship continued to flourish, with Bahrain becoming a major

non-NATO ally in 2002, and partner to the United States in a free trade agreement in 2004. The bilateral commercial relationship nearly doubled in value (from \$500 million to over \$1 billion annually) between 1999 and 2006.

On the democracy front as well, U.S.–Bahraini cooperation grew, with the arrival of the National Democratic Institute (NDI) in 2002 to help educate political “societies” (as with most Gulf countries, Bahrain does not permit the establishment of parties). NDI’s country director quickly made his mark, in particular establishing relations of trust with members of Shi’i Islamist political societies such as al-Wefaq, which had heretofore boycotted electoral politics. Even after King Hamad promulgated a new constitution in 2002 that afforded the elected parliament fewer powers than did the 1972 constitution, al-Wefaq and other opposition groups cooperated with NDI in dialogue and training programs despite their disappointment. In time, the NDI representative helped to persuade al-Wefaq to take part in parliamentary elections for the first time, an important goal of the Bahraini government.

By the time the Bahraini parliamentary elections took place in November 2006, however, NDI had been chased out of the country and U.S. democracy promotion efforts were at a standstill. Bahrain refused to renew the NDI director’s residency permit (later claiming that his activities were not in keeping with new laws restricting foreign funding of political societies), effectively preventing NDI from organizing domestic or international monitoring of the elections. The U.S. embassy in Manama expressed “great disappointment” and delivered numerous private demarches requesting that NDI be allowed to resume activities, to no avail. At the same time, official visitors of the U.S. Departments of Defense and Commerce continued to visit frequently and to praise the Bahraini government without mentioning the NDI issue.

Meanwhile, a new scandal rocked the Bahraini political landscape in September 2006 with revelations by Salah Bandar, a former civil servant, of an elaborate plan to marginalize the Shi’a in politics and change the demographic balance by extending citizenship to tens of thousands of non-Bahraini Sunni Muslims from countries such as Iraq and Syria. The U.S. government made no statement on the issue. In the November 2006 parliamentary elections, members of the Shi’i -supported al-Wefaq won 17 out of 40 seats, fewer than expected. Several secular opposition figures who were widely expected to win—and to join al-Wefaq’s bloc—were defeated in contests in which the government was accused of bussing soldiers to specific electoral districts to stuff the ballot box. At the time, U.S. officials remained silent about the elections, but during a January 2008 visit to Bahrain, Bush praised King Hamad for “providing hope for people through democracy” and holding “free elections,” remarks that infuriated Bahraini democracy activists.<sup>7</sup>

The Bahrain experience holds several lessons. As with Egypt, Bahrain never stopped, or even hinted it would cease, military or other cooperation with the United States due to its pro-democracy efforts in 2002–2006. These efforts did help an Islamist movement, al-Wefaq, to gain a larger share in political life, but this was a goal desired by the Bahraini government and in no way threatened stability or U.S. interests. As probably intended by the Bahraini government, al-Wefaq's participation in parliament has compelled it to take more responsible stances and has created a rift between it and more militant opposition. The early collapse of U.S. democracy efforts in Bahrain in 2006 also is instructive, showing the weakness of assistance programs (however well executed) when they are not supported by effective U.S. diplomacy with the host government.

### **Morocco: The Belle of the Ball**

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Far from causing bilateral tensions, the Bush freedom agenda has been a boon to U.S.–Moroccan relations, contributing to unprecedented growth in bilateral ties between 2003 and 2007. In June 2004, the United States declared Morocco to be a major non-NATO ally, and in the same month the two countries signed a free trade agreement. U.S. bilateral economic assistance, which had dwindled to \$9.1 million in 2003 and was scheduled to be reduced further, was instead increased to \$27.5 million by 2008. Furthermore, in August 2007, Morocco signed a five-year compact worth \$698 million with the Millennium Challenge Corporation, the first such agreement with an Arab country and a quantum leap in the relationship.

Burgeoning U.S.–Moroccan relations were not due solely to the Bush freedom agenda—other factors included sympathy for Morocco as a fellow victim of terrorism after 2003 bombings in Casablanca, counterterrorism cooperation, and Morocco's traditionally tolerant attitude toward Israel—but it played a pivotal role. Promoting democracy in Morocco was, in the words of one U.S. official, “pushing on an open door.” Building on a process begun under the late Hassan II, the young King Muhammad had already begun to improve human rights practices by firing an infamous interior minister, establishing a justice and reconciliation committee to investigate past abuses, and revising the family law code to expand women's rights. Muhammad was also clever in managing the United States, perceiving that the freedom agenda was important to Bush, and offering to help lend it credibility. For example, in December 2004, Morocco hosted the first Forum for the Future, a meeting of government officials and NGO activists associated with the broader Middle East and North Africa initiative that Bush had championed with G-8 leaders.

Aside from his own reformist impulses, another reason for Muhammad's decision to cooperate with the freedom agenda probably was his desire for U.S.



support of the Moroccan position on the Western Sahara dispute. When the Bush administration came to office, former Secretary of State James Baker had already been appointed as the UN Secretary General's special envoy to the conflict, and had offered a proposal for Western Sahara autonomy within the Moroccan state, a plan acceptable to Morocco but not to the Polisario movement or its backer, Algeria, because it did not offer the possibility of independence. In 2003, Baker came up with a new plan that was highly objectionable to Morocco because it offered the Western Sahara a referendum on independence following a period of autonomy. Faced with stiff Moroccan resistance, Baker resigned in 2004. Since then, the Bush administration has supported Moroccan offers of "real autonomy" (but not independence) and facilitated talks between the two sides.<sup>8</sup>

The United States sponsored various democracy activities in Morocco beginning in 2005 including projects on local governance, strengthening the parliament, educating voters, polling, and fighting corruption. U.S. democracy promotion organizations engaged actively to train various political parties, including the Islamist Party of Justice and Development (PJD), whose leader came to Washington on a U.S. Department of State-sponsored visit in 2006 (though the PJD later announced it would boycott such programs due to opposition to U.S. policies in the region).

In public statements, Bush administration officials consistently praised Morocco as a regional model of reform, despite growing criticism in the country of human rights abuses against terrorism suspects and harassment of members of the independent media.<sup>9</sup> The Millennium Challenge Corporation determined independently that Morocco's performance on its "ruling justly" criterion was high enough to merit the second-largest compact the corporation had given to date.

There is some evidence of gentle behind-the-scenes U.S. diplomacy to weigh against potential anti-democratic measures by the government. The United States reportedly urged Muhammad not to abolish the PJD in the anti-Islamist fervor that followed the 2003 bombings, and also to short-circuit draft legislation that would have curtailed polling after a controversial poll by the International Republican Institute (IRI) in the spring of 2006 predicting a PJD electoral victory later that year.

Although the benefit that cooperation on democracy activities brought to U.S.–Moroccan relations is clear, can one say as clearly that the Bush administration made a notable contribution to reform in Morocco? This is a more complicated assessment than in Egypt, where at least in 2003–2005 the United States clearly urged Mubarak further along than he might otherwise have gone, or in Bahrain, where NDI made a small but important contribution. In Morocco, on the other hand, what the Bush administration did was to reward but

**The freedom agenda did not even endanger strategic cooperation with Egypt, Bahrain, or Morocco.**

not to push. It helped Muhammad carry out his own agenda of limited reform and perhaps persuaded him to avoid backsliding in a few areas.

Programs by NDI, IRI, and other organizations have helped Moroccans become more capable and self-sufficient in areas such as polling, electoral administration, campaigning, and voter education. NDI offered detailed assistance to help get out the vote before 2003 elections, for example, but by 2007 a Moroccan NGO was able to carry out an extensive and sophisticated campaign on its

own. Parliamentary elections in 2007 generally won praise from observers, but also contained difficult lessons for Moroccan participants. Voters expressed their dismay with the effectiveness of political parties through a low turnout and many spoiled ballots, and the Islamist PJD fell far short of the plurality it was hoping to win.

Morocco is a case in which the leader has been willing to do enough in liberalization and reform—although falling well short of an actual transition to democracy—to please the United States and apparently to placate most Moroccans so far. The Islamist PJD has benefited from reforms and from U.S. assistance programs, but has had to make many compromises (for example, accepting enhanced legal rights for women) and has by no means dominated the political scene. The time may yet come when independent political forces emerge and begin to push in a serious way for constitutional changes that would shift power from the king to the elected parliament. Or, as some scholars have argued, extremism bred of frustration might make political reform more urgent at some point.<sup>10</sup> So far, however, promoting democracy in Morocco has involved no difficult choices for the United States.

## **Going Forward**

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The United States did not sacrifice or even endanger strategic cooperation with Egypt, Bahrain, or Morocco because of the freedom agenda. The policy clearly helped improve relations with Morocco, had little discernable effect on ties with Bahrain, and at least introduced some fresh air into the musty 30 year old alliance with Egypt. The only Middle Eastern countries in which the freedom agenda significantly increased bilateral tensions were those in which the United States used it openly to undermine the regime, namely Iran and Syria. Indeed, there is no reason to expect democracy promotion to damage bilateral relations

with Arab leaders unless the United States explicitly adopts a policy of “regime change” rather than gradual reform, or pushes so hard that the government in question believes its existence is threatened. It is difficult to imagine the United States doing that to an ally unless opposition in the country becomes extremely strong, as eventually happened in the case of Chile and the Philippines in the 1980s. In the three cases discussed here, Egypt is the only one in which the Bush administration pushed the government at all.

**D**emocracy promotion should not damage relations unless the U.S. seeks “regime change.”

These cases also show that increased participation helped Islamists develop more pragmatic positions, but did not lead to their dominating the political sphere. The United States might also have accomplished more in this regard, at least in Egypt and Bahrain, had it been prepared to weather the storms that inevitably arose. In Egypt, for example, the United States might have persuaded Mubarak to retain more human rights provisions in the constitution and to encourage emerging pragmatism in the Muslim Brotherhood instead of slamming the door on the opposition movement. In Bahrain, the United States might have persuaded the government to allow domestic and international monitoring of the 2006 elections, possibly resulting in a Wefaq-majority parliament that would have pushed to shift more powers to the legislative branch and improve the rights of the Shi’a population.

These less discussed cases show that the new administration can support democratization in the Middle East effectively while protecting other critical interests, as long as it works more consistently than the Bush administration did and has more realistic expectations. Bush and other senior officials said that they viewed the building of democracy as a generational project in the Middle East, but the administration’s behavior showed that it was unprepared for a sustained effort with its inevitable ups and downs. In order to promote democracy more effectively, the new administration should take four key steps.

First, the administration needs to keep democracy on the agenda. Democracy cannot trump all other U.S. interests, but it belongs on the short list of strategic objectives for the Middle East. In many cases, it conflicts far less with other priorities such as military or diplomatic cooperation than U.S. officials tend to imagine. Precisely where democracy fits on the bilateral agenda, and the balance of diplomatic persuasion and democracy programs to be employed, should depend on where that specific country is on its own political journey. It makes sense to support democracy more assertively—and to prioritize it above other interests—in a country that already has the necessary infrastructure and where

**Few U.S. officials really understood or accepted the regional democracy agenda.**

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there is significant popular pressure for change, as opposed to a country with few institutions and which is unprepared for transition.

Second, the administration needs to be prepared to adjust tactics frequently. As with any long-term, strategic objective, the United States cannot expect to win every democracy promotion battle. There will be setbacks along the way, whether in the form of resistance by Arab governments or electoral gains by forces critical of the United States. Such develop-

ments require flexible strategy and tactics to cope with new realities, rather than complete retreat and inaction, as was seen in the case of Egypt.

Third, the administration needs to quell any instinctive fear of Islamists. Most scholars and democracy practitioners dealing with the Middle East have long since accepted the distinctions among armed jihadists (such as al Qaeda), militant organizations (such as Hamas and Hizballah), and peaceful Islamists (such as the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood, Jordanian Islamic Action Front, and the Moroccan PJD) and the need to include the latter group in democracy promotion efforts. It took a while for Bush administration officials, who hoped initially to work primarily with Arab liberals, to come around to this position. The next administration should avoid turning back the clock, and should encourage Arab governments to open up enough political space so that peaceful Islamists are tested by the public and compelled to come up with practical positions on key issues.

Finally, the administration needs to provide sufficient leadership to achieve democracy goals. Democracy in the Middle East during the Bush administration suffered from inadequate strategic thought and uneven implementation due partly to the newness of the policy, but also to the fact that few U.S. officials really understood or accepted it. The most important step a new administration can take is to appoint officials to key positions (relevant officials at the assistant secretary level at the Departments of State and Defense, National Security Council, U.S. Agency of International Development, and U.S. Trade Representative) who fully accept democracy as a strategic goal and will coordinate assistance programs, private diplomacy, public statements, and military as well as trade cooperation. Putting the right people in key positions will be far more effective than creating new policy instruments that enjoy little support from the foreign policy bureaucracy.

By taking these four steps, the new administration can learn from the negative and positive experiences of the Bush administration, which went far beyond the exceptional cases of Iraq and Palestine that have dominated public discourse.

Discarding the democracy agenda in its entirety in a fit of “anything but Bush” would repeat the previous administration’s critical mistakes in casting aside the Arab-Israeli peace process. Instead, the new administration should show greater persistence in goals and flexibility in means than the Bush administration did, which will be a better way to advance U.S. interests and facilitate the desires of people in Arab countries to make their governments more democratic.

**The new administration should show greater persistence in goals and flexibility in means.**

## Notes

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