

Supporting the Arab Spring: Democracy Assistance in the Middle East and North Africa

A controversy paper proposal for the 2011-12 CEDA season

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Introduction

A few months ago it would seem unlikely to suggest that the 2011-12 college debate season should focus on questions of US foreign policy toward the Middle East. The remarkable past few months have encouraged us to review this topic. The rise of widespread public opposition to governments across the Middle East and North Africa, often referred to as an Arab Spring, has clearly emerged as one of the significant issues in world politics today. Our proposal for this topic is guided by an interest in having the college policy debate community actively research and examine these changes over the coming season. I don't believe that there can be any certainly provided about how events will develop over the coming months, but the dynamic changes represent a tremendous opportunity for education and competition.

Mainstream options for policy change

The Revolutions – What is the Status Quo?

As more countries face substantial domestic opposition the scope of this potential topic becomes apparent. Even as some countries have already undergone a revolution (Tunisia, Egypt) many others are attempting to address their people by changing the composition of their government (Jordan, Oman, Yemen, Syria, Kuwait), some governments are actively engaged in violence against their own people (Libya, Syria), and others are anxiously watching the demonstrations in their cities. Taken together the potential topic would be concerned with all of these stages of democratic transition. A recent article from the Atlantic outlines the uncertainty inherent in these transitions.

Steven Cook, Senior Fellow at the Council on Foreign Relations, March 28, 2011 “After the Arab Spring.” The Atlantic <http://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2011/03/after-the-arab-spring/73086/>

¹ I am responsible for the finished product and any mistakes. The fluidity of this subject likely ensures that I will have, either by omission or action, provided some generalizations that will be better explained by others. I want to thank Joel Lemuel, Michael Antonucci, and Jeff Buntin for their support and great dialogue throughout the writing process.

Perhaps we are witnessing the "birth pangs of the new Middle East" in the words of former Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice. After all, countries in Europe that experienced revolutions of 1848 went through phases in which counterrevolutionary forces were successful, but democracy ultimately prevailed. History often provides insights that are hard to see during the present crisis, but it is not a roadmap for the future. **It does not seem likely that the countries of the contemporary Middle East will follow the same path of mid-19th-century France. The defenders of the status quo will use everything from bribery to violence in an effort to try to roll back the demands for political change. These regimes are amplifying uncertainty and sowing general instability -- even if, in the end, they prove unsuccessful. Both oppositions and elites will risk fracturing under the pressure** as different groups with different interests and different levels willingness to accept concession and compromise seek political advantage. **Factions of revolutionaries may ultimately determine that non-violent resistance can only get them so far, and choose to take up arms in an effort to force change on unwilling elites. This kind of scenario plays directly into the hands of counterrevolutionary forces.**

It seems likely that states in the Middle East and North Africa could divide into three camps. The first, composed of Jordan, Morocco, and the small Gulf states, will do whatever they can to insulate themselves from the revolutionary and counterrevolutionary fray. In the second, Egypt and Tunisia will struggle to realize their revolutionary promise and ideals while resisting the counterrevolutionary forces of the old regimes. And, finally, there is the consortium of Saudi Arabia, Syria, Yemen (if President Saleh somehow manages to hold on), Algeria, Bahrain, and even an outlaw Libya, that all work -- not necessarily in concert --to contain and rollback democratic change. There have always been fissures and schisms among the Arab states, but never along these issues and alignments. The Middle East's two heavyweights -- revolutionary, struggling-to-be-democratic Egypt and status quo Saudi Arabia -- are likely to find one other at odds on a range of important issues including Hamas, Iran, Hizballah, and political change around the region. It is also possible that Egyptians, empowered by their revolution, will seek to support democracy activists elsewhere in the region. Many have already crossed the Libyan border in aid of the rebels there. Could they next turn their attention to, for example, Syria? Tunisians might seek to do the same in Algeria and Libya. This is not likely to sit well in Damascus, Algiers, and Tripoli, which would see regional democracy activists, and perhaps democracies themselves, as existential threats. One can imagine, in this way, the development of a divided, contested, and destabilized region. Welcome to the new "New Middle East." The spectacle of Ben Ali's and then Mubarak's ouster gave hope to dreams of a democratic Middle East, but it may turn out to be more of a nightmare, at least in the short run.

Even those more optimistic than Cook can agree that we have entered a prolonged period of transformation. Even those nations who succeed in replacing their current government must now begin the process of rebuilding their economic and political systems. Historical examples support a dynamic sequence of events.

Jack A. Goldstone, Virginia E. and John T. Hazel, Jr., Professor at George Mason University's School of Public Policy, Foreign Affairs, May/June 2011, "Understanding the Revolutions of 2011: Weakness and Resilience in Middle Eastern Autocracies" Volume 90 • Number 3, p. 14

In general, after the post-revolutionary honeymoon period ends, divisions within the opposition start to surface. Although holding new elections is a straightforward step, election campaigns and then decisions taken by new legislatures will open debates over taxation and state spending, corruption, foreign policy, the role of the military, the powers of the president, official policy on religious law and practice, minority rights, and so on. As conservatives, populists, Islamists, and modernizing reformers fiercely vie for power in Tunisia, Egypt, and perhaps Libya, those countries will likely face lengthy periods of abrupt government turnovers and policy reversals—similar to what occurred in the Philippines and many Eastern European countries after their revolutions.

Topical Action – Why increase democracy assistance?

The rapid changes taking place across the Middle East and North Africa have created a series of challenges for the Obama administration. Like many US administrations they encouraged greater democratic reform, but that enthusiasm for change was tempered by the pragmatic desire to support their allies. In June 2009 President Obama spoke from Cairo, Egypt and called for a new beginning in American relations with the Islamic world². Whatever the goals of that speech, as the demonstrations spread across the region it fundamentally undermined the uneasy balance in US foreign policy. The administration was now required to individually address each successive crisis in Tunisia, Egypt, and Libya while simultaneously developing a foreign policy doctrine to address future crises. This dual challenge has helped to spur a great deal of literature assessing the administration's conduct. The following assessment offers a defense of the current policy.

Marc Lynch, Associate Professor of Political Science and the Director of the Institute for Middle East Studies at The George Washington University, April–May 2011, *Survival* (53:2), “America and Egypt After the Uprisings” p. 31-32

The uprisings in Egypt were both a shock and predictable: an inevitable surprise. Egypt had for years been at the top of most lists of Arab countries most urgently in need of reform. Few could miss the signs of problems, from the stunning crisis of youth unemployment to the increasingly closed political system to the endlessly deferred transition from Hosni Mubarak to his son, Gamal. **The United States had been calling for reform in Egypt for over a decade, to little avail.** The regime, however unpopular, sclerotic, closed and isolated, seemed firmly in control and well-prepared to meet the challenges of new protests. After a decade of failed efforts to spark mass protest, few expected the demonstrations to catch fire as they did or for Egyptian stability to be seriously challenged. **As protests mounted, however, the Obama administration quickly concluded privately that Mubarak could not survive and that American policy must be designed to broker a post-Mubarak outcome amenable to core American interests.**

The Obama administration's reaction demonstrated a far different sensibility than that manifested by the George W. Bush administration. **To the frustration of American pundits, Obama did not attempt to lead a protest movement which neither needed nor wanted his guidance. Instead, he focused American efforts on restraining the Egyptian military from using violence** against protesters, demanding respect for universal rights, insisting that only Egyptians could choose Egypt's leaders, **and attempting to push for long-term, meaningful reform.**

The administration's attempt to straddle its competing commitments inevitably enraged all sides: the Egyptian regime and Arab allies railed against American abandonment, Egyptian protesters and Arab public opinion complained of American indifference, and American critics demanded more vocal leadership.

When Mubarak finally stepped down peacefully, however, the first stage of Obama's handling of the Egyptian crisis could only be judged a success. It played an important role in preventing, through constant, private pressure on the Egyptian military, the escalation into brutality which later happened in Libya, and ultimately helped to broker the departure of Mubarak. It also

² <http://www.whitehouse.gov/blog/NewBeginning>

left intact at least the chance that a more representative, accountable and transparent Egyptian regime could be built. **A final verdict will not be possible for months or years, when the composition and foreign-policy orientation of a new Egyptian government begins to take shape. But Obama's handling of Egypt has established a template for American treatment of other cases of domestic upheaval in the Middle East, from Bahrain to Libya to Iran.**

There are plenty of critics who disagree with Lynch and argue the administration must take a more aggressive position.

Shadi Hamid, Director of Research, Brookings Doha Center, March 30, 2011, USA Today, "How the United States Could Win Over Arab Street" http://www.brookings.edu/opinions/2011/0330_middle_east_hamid.aspx

Libya could very well prove to be the Obama administration's defining moment in the Middle East. Already, military action has prevented the slaughter of thousands in Benghazi and other rebel strongholds in the East. This marks a major success, and one that Arabs have taken note of. But if the United States wants to refashion its relationship with the region, this is only the first step on a longer, more difficult road.

Among Arabs, there is a broad consensus — among both leaders and citizens — backing international intervention to protect the Libyan people. But suspicion of Western motives runs deep. If Libya is a one-off intervention, it will reinforce the perception that the United States acts only when the targets are delusional anti-American autocrats. What about pro-American autocrats? Here, U.S. policymakers are in a bind, torn between the familiar policies of the past and the demands of a rapidly changing region.

According to the "responsibility to protect," the United States and the international community have a mandate to act not just in Libya but also in Yemen and Bahrain— two regimes that have employed increasing levels of violence on their own citizens. In one of the worst Arab massacres in recent years, pro-government forces in Yemen gunned down 52 peaceful protesters on March 18. More isolated than ever, Yemeni President Ali Abdullah Saleh's days appear numbered. Leverage is meant to be used, and the United States should use it to pressure Saleh to initiate an immediate transition and leave office. In Bahrain, home to the American 5th Fleet, the United States should work toward a prompt removal of Saudi troops, who in mid-March entered the country to put down massive protests. These are provocative acts that make further escalation more, rather than less, likely.

Taking a stronger pro-democracy stand with friends as well as foes might be wishful thinking, expecting the Obama administration to do what it should, but ultimately can't do. But this is the standard that the administration has insisted on setting for itself. As the president said in his Monday speech, "Wherever people long to be free, they will find a friend in the United States." **The trouble is that, three months into the Arab revolts, the administration repeatedly has failed to align its policies with Arab democratic aspirations. It sided with the protesters only toward the end in Tunisia and Egypt while continuing to back repressive regimes elsewhere, highlighting obvious double standards. To undo this mess of contradictions is no easy task.** It would mean a sharp break with decades of supporting, funding and arming authoritarian regimes that supposedly helped advance U.S. interests.

This — the tension between ideals and interests — is an old story. In his second inaugural, President George W. Bush said, "America's vital interests and our deepest beliefs are now one." Reportedly, one of the principals at the strategy meeting debating military action in Libya noted that "this is the greatest opportunity to realign our interests and our values." That's correct. **Libya does present an opportunity, but only if the standard there is applied consistently across the region. This requires a bold policy vision that prioritizes America's long-term interests over short-term considerations.**

With the region in turmoil and Arabs demanding democracy, the United States — if the political will exists — is well positioned to engage in a major strategic shift. If it does, it stands to reassert its influence, regain credibility in the eyes of the Arab public and, most important, help facilitate a historic transition in the Middle East. The intervention in Libya could be the start of an attempted realignment in American policy. But it could just as easily be the end, forcing the United States to resign itself to a diminished role in a region spiraling quickly out of control.

A particularly prescient article noted, only months before the demonstrations began, that American foreign policy to the Middle East historically lags behind new developments. This type of argument both helps to provide support for possible affirmative arguments and also demonstrate how pre-2011 research can inform the topic.

Robert Malley, Middle East and North Africa Program Director at the International Crisis Group and served as Special Assistant to the President for Arab-Israeli Affairs from 1998 to 2001 & Peter Harling, Heads the Iraq, Lebanon, and Syria Project at the International Crisis Group, September/ October 2010, Foreign Affairs, "Beyond Moderates and Militants Subtitle: How Obama Can Chart a New Course in the Middle East." Pg. 18 Vol. 89 No. 5

The West's tendency to adopt Middle East policies that have already outlived their local political shelf lives is occurring once again today: despite its laudable attempt to rectify the Bush administration's missteps, the Obama administration is hamstrung by flawed assumptions about the regional balance of power. Washington still sees the Middle East as cleanly divided between two camps: a moderate, pro-American camp that ought to be bolstered and a militant, pro-Iranian one that needs to be contained. That conception is wholly divorced from reality.

Paradoxically, such a prism replicates the worldview of the Bush administration, which, in almost every other respect, the Obama administration has rejected. Its proponents assume the existence of a compelling Western vision of peace and prosperity, which the region's so-called moderates can rally around, even as U.S. and European credibility in the Middle East is at an all-time low. It underestimates and misunderstands the role of newly prominent actors, such as Turkey, that do not fit within either supposed axis and whose guiding principle is to blur the line between the two. Most important, it assumes a relatively static landscape in a region that is highly fluid.

Ignoring the Middle East's changing composition makes it difficult to understand the significance of recent political adjustments. If the goal is to defeat the radicals in order to strengthen the moderates, how is one to assess Saudi Arabia's resumed dialogue with Hamas or its improved ties with Syria? What is one to make of a regime in Damascus that simultaneously ships arms to Hezbollah, deepens its intelligence and security ties with Tehran, and opposes important Iranian objectives in Iraq? And how is one to interpret Turkey's multifaceted diplomacy -- maintaining its ties to the West, deepening its relations with Syria, mediating a nuclear deal with Iran, and reaching out to Hamas?

By disregarding subtle shifts that are occurring and by awaiting tectonic transformations that never will, Washington is missing realistic chances to help reshape the region. Obama has an opportunity to change course by adopting a more elastic policy, but he cannot wait long: the United States might soon awake to a Middle East that it will find even harder to understand or influence.

The rich nature of the topic literature can be observed in the interactions of the response to each country's reforms. These dynamic changes will be reinforced by pressures for a clear American doctrine. As each individual crisis forces the Obama administration to define a position, the comparisons become apparent. With US forces engaged in Libya even as other demonstrations receive less attention, there is extensive interest in US foreign policy.

Shadi Hamid, Director of Research, Brookings Doha Center, April 11, 2011, "The Arab Spring: Protest, Power, Prospect." Open Democracy, http://www.brookings.edu/opinions/2011/0411_middle_east_hamid.aspx

In this second Arab spring, it is apparent that the euphoria of the opening phase, while well deserved, was somewhat premature. With Tunisia's Ben Ali and Egypt's Mubarak falling after just weeks of protests, there

was a sense that "it could happen anywhere - and just as quickly." But **Arab autocrats have redoubled their efforts, growing both more stubborn and more emboldened in their efforts to preserve power. The lesson many of them seemed to learn from Egypt and Tunisia was almost the exact opposite of what democracy advocates were hoping for. Ben Ali and Mubarak used force** (at least 380 people were killed in Egypt) **and lost**. Perhaps, then, leaders would learn to pre-empt opposition demands by granting early concessions. **Instead, in countries like Bahrain, Syria, and Saudi Arabia, they have granted fewer concessions while using even more force. Shooting into crowds has become frighteningly common. Saudi Arabia, meanwhile, is enthusiastically adopting the dubious role of leader of the Arab "counter-revolution".**

These revolutions, then, will take longer than was expected. Still, it's worth remembering the main lesson of this opening period: autocracies don't last forever. They are stable - until they're not. And then it's too late. Even if regimes manage to hold on to power, their stability is no longer guaranteed. With a new "protest ethic" taking hold in the region, the threat of the next revolt is now always present. The model is devastatingly simple: bring enough people into the streets and overwhelm the regime with sheer numbers. "No state", observed sociologist Charles Kurzman, "can repress all of the people all of the time."

In contrast to the courage of Arab protesters is the relative timidity and incoherence of the international community's response to the changes underway. The west's "stability paradigm" - the notion that interests could be exchanged for ideals - has collapsed under the weight of its inherent contradictions. While the intervention in Libya helped western nations gain some Arab goodwill, many in the Arab world are waiting to see if they will consistently apply the "responsibility to protect" with allied countries, such as Bahrain and Yemen, where civilians are clearly in need of protection. No one is asking for another military intervention, but what about putting real political pressure on regimes to respect opposition demands? With the region's various political stalemates, the role of external actors is - for better or worse - likely only to grow.

Further evidence of the increased sophistication of the literature is found in the just published new edition of *Foreign Affairs*. In these articles the discussion of US policy is extended, complete with detailed discussions of why the US should favor the essential principles of human dignity over the perceived benefits of stability. These types of examinations are exactly the kind of exchange that will be extended throughout the upcoming season.

Nassim Nicholas Tale - Distinguished Professor of Risk Engineering at New York University's Polytechnic Institute & Mark Blyth - Professor of International Political Economy at Brown University, Foreign Affairs, May/June 2011, "The Black Swan of Cairo: How Suppressing Volatility Makes the World Less Predictable and More Dangerous", Volume 90• Number 3, p. 39

Variation is information. When there is no variation, there is no information. This explains the cia's failure to predict the Egyptian revolution and, a generation before, the Iranian Revolution—in both cases, the revolutionaries themselves did not have a clear idea of their relative strength with respect to the regime they were hoping to topple. So rather than subsidize and praise as a "force for stability" every tin-pot potentate on the planet, **the U.S. government should encourage countries to let information flow upward through the transparency that comes with political agitation. It should not fear fluctuations per se, since allowing them to be in the open, as Italy and Lebanon both show in different ways, creates the stability of small jumps.**

As Seneca wrote in *De clementia*, "Repeated punishment, while it crushes the hatred of a few, stirs the hatred of all . . . just as trees that have been trimmed throw out again countless branches." **The imposition of peace through repeated punishment lies at the heart of many seemingly intractable conflicts, including the Israeli-Palestinian stalemate. Furthermore, dealing with seemingly reliable high-level officials rather than the people themselves prevents any peace treaty signed from being robust.** The Romans were wise enough to know that only a free man under Roman law could be trusted to engage in a contract; by extension, only a

free people can be trusted to abide by a treaty. Treaties that are negotiated with the consent of a broad swath of the populations on both sides of a conflict tend to survive. Just as no central bank is powerful enough to dictate stability, no superpower can be powerful enough to guarantee solid peace alone.

U.S. policy toward the Middle East has historically, and especially since 9/11, been unduly focused on the repression of any and all political fluctuations in the name of preventing “Islamic fundamentalism”— a trope that Mubarak repeated until his last moments in power and that Libyan leader Muammar al-Qaddafi continues to emphasize today, blaming Osama bin Laden for what has befallen him. This is wrong. The West and its autocratic Arab allies have strengthened Islamic fundamentalists by forcing them underground, and even more so by killing them.

As Jean-Jacques Rousseau put it, “A little bit of agitation gives motivation to the soul, and what really makes the species prosper is not peace so much as freedom.” With freedom comes some unpredictable fluctuation. This is one of life’s packages: there is no freedom without noise—and no stability without volatility.^o

Policy Mechanisms – What is Democracy Assistance?

The centerpiece of US foreign policy in this crisis is programs designed to help support democratic institutions. A series of policy mechanisms categorized as democracy assistance is now emerging from the Bush administration’s policies in Iraq and are now being closely looked at to support these new governments.

Doyle McManus, Los Angeles Times, February 27, 2011, p. A28, “Helping the Arabs help themselves; The U.S. must find a way, and funding, to promote democracy.”

A basic tenet of the U.S. war against terrorism under both George W. Bush and Barack Obama has been the need to “drain the swamp” -- to eliminate the conditions that drive young Muslims toward extremism. Now, in much of the Arab world, the inhabitants of the swamp have pitched in courageously to drain it themselves. Are we ready to help?

The Obama administration says yes, but in some cases, it's been slow to take action. And most members of Congress say yes too, but they're caught up in a frenzy of budget cutting that's likely to reduce the money available for the job.

The first step, of course, is helping democratic revolutions succeed. After some initial hesitation, President Obama pronounced himself fully on the side of the demonstrators in Tunis, Cairo and Tripoli. Critics have complained that the administration could have done more; administration officials promise that, once the dust settles, we'll learn that they did more than was publicly known. For example, one official suggested to me, the administration and allied governments have tried through back channels to persuade Libya's air force to ignore orders to fire on demonstrators.

But once a dictator has been toppled, there's much more work to be done. In countries such as Tunisia and Egypt, there are constitutions to write or revise, elections to be organized and monitored, voters to be registered.

In past years, some grass-roots democratic groups in the Arab world may have hesitated to accept American aid because they, or their potential voters, saw the United States as an enemy, not a friend.

"I don't think there's a problem now," said Kenneth Wollack, president of the National Democratic Institute for International Affairs. "There's great pride in all of these places that these protest movements were indigenous." **Luckily, the United States already has programs available to provide the kind of advice and training that Arab democrats may want** -- a legacy, in part, of the George W. Bush administration, but one the Obama administration has continued.

The State Department and the U.S. Agency for International Development, the foreign aid agency, are already designing a proposal for a package of "transition assistance" to newly democratic countries in the area. But that's likely to be a slow process. Tunisia, for example, overthrew its dictatorship more than a month ago, but it has yet to receive any new help from USAID.

More promising vehicles, in the short term, are the nimbler nongovernment organizations like Wollack's, which can launch small projects quickly. His National Democratic Institute, sponsored by the Democratic Party and funded by a combination of U.S. government and private donations, has sent an expert to Yemen to serve as an unofficial conduit between the government and opposition leaders. The International Republican Institute, the GOP counterpart, has already launched a public opinion poll in Egypt to show budding politicians what their potential voters think.

Once elections are held and new governments installed, there will still be work to do to make sure the fledgling democracies succeed. One crucial aspect will be economic aid to help improve the lives of millions of people who live in poverty even as their elites -- and neighboring countries such as Saudi Arabia -- live in opulence.

Why is this important? Democracies that fail to deliver material progress don't always stay democratic.

And that's where Congress comes in. The spending bill for the rest of this year that the Republican-led House passed last week cuts foreign economic aid by about 17% worldwide; it would cut the National Endowment for Democracy, the organization that funds those nimble democracy institutes, by 6%. And House Republicans have made it clear that they plan further cuts next year; some firebrands have even proposed eliminating foreign aid entirely, or eliminating it for every country except Israel.

In the short run, the Senate -- and common sense -- is likely to save U.S. democracy promotion from being gutted. "We're the flavor of the month," an executive at one of the institutes (not Wollack's) told me wryly. "Everybody's offering us money." But over the long run, if foreign aid is slashed overall, even the little democracy-promotion agencies will feel the squeeze.

The MacManus article is indicative of a growing body of literature that discusses the optimal role for US foreign policy in these transitions. As each of the new foreign policy journals releases their summer issues we see more extensive articles discussing how the topic could unfold. A recent example suggests the importance of assistance to Egypt.

David Ignatius, Foreign Policy, April 22, 2011, "What Happens When the Arab Spring Turns to Summer?: Ruminations on the revolutions of 2011."

http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2011/04/22/what_happens_when_the_arab_spring_turns_to_summer?page=full

Second, **we cannot be sure that, even with timely assistance, the democratic revolutions in Egypt and elsewhere will succeed. It is entirely possible that they will follow the downward course of other revolutions in history. The political awakening -- this magnificent opening to the world -- may produce a counterreaction that has the effect of reducing freedom and democratic action, as has been the case in Iran since its June 2009 election.**

In situations like this, where the outcome is unknown and unknowable, it's especially important to have a clear sense of where U.S. interests lie and make sure that they guide U.S. policy. I am indebted to conversations with FP blogger Stephen Walt for reminding me that this catalog of U.S. interests is actually quite simple to enumerate:

The United States has an interest in the secure supply of oil from the Persian Gulf, and Saudi Arabia in particular, to itself and to its allies. It has an interest in combating terrorist actions by al Qaeda and other groups that seek to target Americans. It has an interest in the security and well-being of Israel, America's closest ally in the Middle East, and a concurrent interest in a just resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian dispute. The United States also has an interest in the growth of stable, democratic regimes and the expansion of human rights. **The intersection of these interests is the zone of ambiguity in which foreign-policy choices must always be made.**

Obama has been wise to take a low-key approach to these developments -- to let Arabs write this new chapter in their history, without feeling they are taking dictation from the United States. He has been criticized for not being "tough" or "presidential" enough, but these criticisms are, to me, misguided. And I think he's absolutely right to let others who are closer to Libya fight most of that war -- and figure out, in the process, just who the good guys and bad guys are.

But there is a time for low-key, and there is a time for clarity. On the final two strategic imperatives I cited -- America's obligation to assist the democratic revolution in Egypt and its need to be clear and forthright about its own national interests -- I think Obama needs to speak as clearly and forcefully as Marshall did at Harvard's commencement 64 years ago: "I need not tell you, ladies and gentlemen, the future security of the United States depends on the success of the Arab Spring."

Debate may generally embrace liberal interpretations of policy goals, but there are plenty of more conservative critics of the current policy who worry about the decline of US commitments. The concern about the relative decline of US influence is apparent in a lot of the literature.

Ari Shavit, Haaretz.com, March 2, 2011, "The Arab revolution and Western decline"
<http://www.haaretz.com/print-edition/opinion/the-arab-revolution-and-western-decline-1.340967>

Two huge processes are happening right before our eyes. One is the Arab liberation revolution. After half a century during which tyrants have ruled the Arab world, their control is weakening. After 40 years of decaying stability, the rot is eating into the stability. **The Arab masses will no longer accept what they used to accept. The Arab elites will no longer remain silent.**

Processes that have been roiling beneath the surface for about a decade are suddenly bursting out in an intifada of freedom. Modernization, globalization, telecommunications and Islamization have created a critical mass that cannot be stopped. The example of democratic Iraq is awakening others, and Al Jazeera's subversive broadcasts are fanning the flames. And so the Tunisian bastille fell, the Cairo bastille is falling and other Arab bastilles will fall.

The scenes are similar to the Palestinian intifada of 1987, but the collapse recalls the Soviet collapse in Eastern Europe of 1989. **No one knows where the intifada will lead. No one knows whether it will bring democracy, theocracy or a new kind of democracy. But things will never again be the same.**

The old order in the Middle East is crumbling. Just as the officers' revolution in the 1950s brought down the Arab monarchism that had relied on the colonial powers, the 2011 revolution in the square is bringing down the Arab tyrants who were dependent on the United States.

The second process is the acceleration of the decline of the West. For some 60 years the West gave the world imperfect but stable order. It built a kind of post-imperial empire that promised relative quiet and maximum peace. The rise of China, India, Brazil and Russia, like the economic crisis in the United States, has made it clear that the empire is beginning to fade.

And yet, the West has maintained a sort of international hegemony. Just as no replacement has been found for the dollar, none has been found for North Atlantic leadership. But Western countries' poor handling of the Middle East proves they are no longer leaders. Right before our eyes the superpowers are turning into palaver powers.

There are no excuses for the contradictions. How can it be that Bush's America understood the problem of repression in the Arab world, but Obama's America ignored it until last week? How can it be that in May 2009, Hosni Mubarak was an esteemed president whom Barack Obama respected, and in January 2011, Mubarak is a dictator whom even Obama is casting aside? How can it be that in June 2009, Obama didn't support the masses who came out against the zealot Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, while now he stands by the masses who are coming out against the moderate Mubarak?

There is one answer: **The West's position is not a moral one that reflects a real commitment to human rights. The West's position reflects the adoption of Jimmy Carter's worldview: kowtowing to benighted, strong tyrants while abandoning moderate, weak ones.**

Carter's betrayal of the Shah brought us the ayatollahs, and will soon bring us ayatollahs with nuclear arms. The consequences of the West's betrayal of Mubarak will be no less severe. It's not only a betrayal of a leader who was loyal to the West, served stability and encouraged moderation. It's a betrayal of every ally of the West in the Middle East and the developing world. The message is sharp and clear: The West's word is no word at all; an alliance with the West is not an alliance. The West has lost it. The West has stopped being a leading and stabilizing force around the world.

The Arab liberation revolution will fundamentally change the Middle East. The acceleration of the West's decline will change the world. One outcome will be a surge toward China, Russia and regional powers like Brazil, Turkey and Iran. Another will be a series of international flare-ups stemming from the West's lost deterrence. But the overall outcome will be the collapse of North Atlantic political hegemony not in decades, but in years. When the United States and Europe bury Mubarak now, they are also burying the powers they once were. In Cairo's Tahrir Square, the age of Western hegemony is fading away.

Even when advocates encourage greater US support, the nuances inherent in these issues prevent the literature from uncritically engaging the subject. Nuanced advocates of change like the following are increasing common.

Jean-Marie Guéhenno, former United Nations under-secretary general for peacekeeping operations, is professor of professional practice at the Saltzman Institute of Columbia University and a nonresident senior fellow at the Brookings Institution, April 21, 2011, New York Times, "The Arab Spring Is 2011, Not 1989"
http://www.nytimes.com/2011/04/22/opinion/22iht-edguehenno22.html?_r=1#

Lastly, as we discover that 2011 is not 1989, and that we are no more the trusted reference, we will have to navigate in uncharted waters: our engagement in Libya will probably have less moral clarity at the end than it has had at the start. Political processes will inevitably be messy, and we will be tempted, especially in oil-rich nations, to pick winners and manipulate outcomes.

That would be disastrous for our long-term standing: in a region whose future has repeatedly been decided by foreigners since the end of the Ottoman empire, outside powers will have to demonstrate that this time they are genuinely willing to support home-grown political processes.

The West has to accept that it is not the central player anymore. But it need not be an indifferent and passive spectator. Finding the balance between engagement and restraint will be the policy challenge of this new phase.

Ideal topics have much richer debate than just among those who agree with the importance of topical action. One of the most difficult challenges in identifying an effective controversy is to make sure that there are both values and policy discussion on opposing sides of the question. This is especially pronounced when the traditional political spectrum offers conflicting rationales. Even as it appears a (Wilsonian) liberal impulse to assist democratic reforms, there is ample discussion of the (anti-globalist) liberal opposition. An example of the wholesale criticism of topical action is found at Al-Jazeera.

David Africa, principal associate at research and training consultancy Africa-Analysis.org, February 18, 2011, "Stealing Egypt's revolution: The people on the streets of Cairo got rid of their old enemy, Hosni Mubarak. Now they should be wary of new friends."
<http://english.aljazeera.net/indepth/opinion/2011/02/201121710152468629.html>

One could be fooled into believing the transformation currently taking place in Egypt is one that has been fought for by Western governments for years already - a long-sought change finally materialising.

Who would say that successive US, British and European governments have long argued that Egyptians, indeed all Arabs, are not ready for democracy - that "special circumstances" demand the denial of democracy, and that the brutality visited on them for thirty years was better than the risk of a free vote?

Until just two weeks ago, the newfound friends of the Egyptian revolution claimed - through the person of Hillary Clinton, no less - that Mubarak was the right man to lead a transformation of Egypt's politics, being the "reliable and stable" figure he has been for the past thirty years. At the same time Tony Blair, Middle East envoy of these same Euro-Atlantic powers called Mubarak "immensely courageous and a force for good". Pontius Pilate has surely washed his hands of the ancien regime, and has now thrown his arms wide open to the Egyptian people.

The revolution belongs to Egyptians

The expropriation of the Egyptian revolution by the Euro-Atlantic axis has begun, and the Egyptian people should be alert to the dangers of this underhand attempt to steal their revolution and blunt its transformative potential.

After Mubarak's forced departure - it was no resignation, the people kicked him out - one of the first speeches beamed to the protestors in Tahrir Square was a live feed of Obama's response to Mubarak's expulsion.

Eloquent as ever, Obama - in one move - distanced the US from its faithful servant, and embraced the Egyptian revolution.

His offer of assistance to promote democracy in Egypt is telling. Soon we will witness the influx of Euro-Atlantic advisors, NGOs and all types of specialists telling Egyptians what "democracy" is, and how to practice it. The Egyptian people, who sacrificed themselves and their kin, refused to be cowed into submission by the violence visited upon them by the "stable and reliable" Mubarak regime - and who ultimately succeeded in expelling this servant of Washington - know perfectly well what democracy is, and how to practice it. They have just held the first real Egyptian people's plebiscite in more than thirty years, voting Mubarak out of office with their feet and voices.

Western fear of alternatives

The embrace of the West is reminiscent of a similar experience in South Africa in the early 1990s, as the surge toward democracy and an end to the brutal apartheid regime became unstoppable. Suddenly the revolutionary movement found itself embraced by new friends in the British, US and West German governments. These same governments had previously sustained the apartheid regime for forty years, claiming that black South Africans, like Egyptians, were not ready for democracy.

They also preferred the brutal regime to what they alleged to be the "terrible alternative of a communist-inspired resistance movement", even though the latter had the obvious and overwhelming support of South Africans. As in the case of Egypt, the Euro-Atlantic axis assisted the apartheid regime through training its security forces, providing it with intelligence - such as the CIA information that led to the arrest and incarceration of Nelson Mandela for 27 years - and providing the regime with diplomatic support in the United Nations.

The post-1990 embrace of the South African revolution took the same form as Obama's promised "democracy assistance" to the Egyptian people. Advisors, training courses and policy specialists told us that democracy equals Western liberal democracy and free market economics. Our political leadership, for the most part, returned the embrace of the West with an unqualified acceptance of its authenticity and sincerity - adopting the common wisdom of Washington Consensus political and economic policy.

The results are clear for all to see: South Africa has become an even more unequal society and economic growth has benefited local and international business, while unemployment remains exceptionally high. The Egyptian people have shown the world that anything is possible when a united people are committed to the realisation of an idea. They should not listen uncritically to their newfound friends, who will first congratulate them on the enormity of their achievement - and then tell them that some things are just not doable; who will tell them they must not be unrealistic in their expectations, and must inevitably settle for less.

Unless the Egyptian movement for change remains alert and continues to assert its political independence, this embrace will squeeze the life out of the revolution and turn it into a polished version of the recently departed Mubarak regime - a new democratic order that, again, prioritises the interest of Washington, London, Berlin and Tel Aviv over that of the Egyptian people.

The significance of these social transformations is helping to produce a vibrant body of literature. The diversification of new media sources, like Al-Jazeera, helps to explain why debaters will have greater access to diverse perspectives on these events.

Unique educational opportunities

As I noted at the outset, there should be some initial skepticism about returning to debate the Middle East. It was not that long ago that the 2007-2008 topic examined constructive engagement with a number of nations in the Middle East and West Asia. The controversy guidelines encourage us to examine if students will gain new and unique educational opportunities from debating this controversy at this time.

My review of the literature suggests that there is a tremendous educational opportunity to debate these revolutions at this time. Not only is the selection of countries more diverse (and including sections of North Africa which have been far less regularly discussed), but the radical changes taking place help to ensure that engaging this literature today will be different from any previous attempts. Even journalists who have covered the region for decades note how the revolutions reflect a fundamental cultural shift.

David Ignatius, Foreign Policy, April 22, 2011, "What Happens When the Arab Spring Turns to Summer?: Ruminations on the revolutions of 2011."

http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2011/04/22/what_happens_when_the_arab_spring_turns_to_summer?page=full

For Americans, that must seem like a strange concept. They are shameless, in the anthropological sense. But **from the time I began covering the Middle East in 1980, I have seen what I now recognize was a shamed and broken political culture -- a culture of passivity and resignation, which often expressed itself in negative and self-destructive acts of political violence and accepted authoritarian governments and the slogans they used to justify themselves. As my Arab friends say, that was the culture of 1967 -- the culture of defeat, in which Arabs, with momentary exceptions, found themselves the pawns of a tiny but potent Israel and its superpower patron.**

This is the culture that ended in 2011. That's not to say that what lies ahead is necessarily benign, from an American standpoint. But Arabs are now embracing a culture of activism and self-determination, as opposed to one of passivity and victimization. They are defying army tanks, secret police, gangs of roving thugs, and their own ethnic and religious differences to unite in revolt.

One of the primary reasons for debating foreign policy topics is to expose students to issues facing the broader world. Historically, engaging questions of Islam has been important in encouraging our students (far more than their colleagues on our campuses) to understand how these subjects are politicized. If a traditional view held that democracy was incompatible with Islam, we can now allow students to engage that illusion is shattered and how demands for social justice are increasingly significant.

Jean-Marie Guéhenno, former United Nations under-secretary general for peacekeeping operations, is professor of professional practice at the Saltzman Institute of Columbia University and a nonresident senior fellow at the Brookings Institution, April 21, 2011, New York Times, “The Arab Spring Is 2011, Not 1989”
http://www.nytimes.com/2011/04/22/opinion/22iht-edguehenno22.html?_r=1#

The Arab revolutions are beginning to destroy the cliché of an Arab world incapable of democratic transformation. But another caricature is replacing it: according to the new narrative, **the crowds** in Cairo, Benghazi or Damascus, mobilized by Facebook and Twitter, **are the latest illustration of the spread of Western democratic ideals**; and while the “rise of the rest” may challenge the economic dominance of Western nations, the West will continue to define the political agenda of the world.

In that optimistic scenario, 1989 and 2011 are two chapters of the same story, which connect in a self-congratulatory way the political appeal of democracy and the transformative power of entrepreneurship and new technologies.

In reality, the movements that are shaking the Arab world are profoundly different from the revolutions that ended the Soviet empire. The Arab spring is about justice and equity as much as it is about democracy, because societies in which millions of young men and women have no jobs — and millions live with less than two dollars a day — crave justice as much as democracy.

As I heard one experienced Arab diplomat say, today’s revolutions are against “profiteers” as much as they are against dictators. **The movements are also profoundly suspicious of foreign interference, and Western nations**, which for many years have had a cozy relationship with dictators and profiteers, **will be utilized, but they are unlikely to be trusted or to serve as models as they were in 1989.**

The implications for our Middle Eastern policies are wide-ranging. The good news is that the focus on social justice and practical issues of development and redistribution has the potential to move the public debate further away from dreams of a return to the mythical past of the caliphate promoted by radical Islamists.

There is a powerful logic in understanding how the central core of the controversy is also relevant to the very transformations themselves. The very governments that have been the core of US foreign policy are collapsing and in their place, the people of these nations are now emerging as the central actors. The literature recognizes a frequent demand in some circles to recognize the traditional periphery of politics. Debating this topic at this topic is an opportunity to make such an examination.

Wadah Khanfar, director general of the Al Jazeera network, March 1, 2011, “We saw the Arab revolutions coming” (First appeared in The Washington Post),
<http://english.aljazeera.net/indepth/opinion/2011/03/2011317269573443.html>

The popular revolutions now sweeping the region are long overdue. Yet in some ways, they could not have come before now.

These are uprisings whose sons and daughters are well educated and idealistic enough to envision a better future, yet realistic enough to work for it without falling into despair. **These revolutions are led by the Internet generation**, for whom equality of voice and influence is the norm. Their leaders' influence is the product of their own effort, determination and skill, unconstrained by rigid ideologies and extremism.

It is now clear to all that the modern, post-colonial Arab state has failed miserably, even in what it believed it was best at: Maintaining security and stability. Over the decades, Arab interior ministers and police chiefs devoted enormous resources and expertise to monitoring and spying on their own people. Yet now, the security machineries in Tunisia, Egypt and Libya have disintegrated in short order, while the rest of the authoritarian and repressive regimes in the region can see the writing on the wall.

These revolutions have exposed not just the failure of traditional politicians but also the moral, political and economic bankruptcy of the old Arab elites. Those elites not only attempted to control their own people, but also sought to shape and taint the views of news media in the region and across the world.

Indeed, it should surprise no one that so many Western analysts, researchers, journalists and government experts failed to recognise the obvious signs of Arab youth movements that would soon erupt into revolutions capable of bringing down some of the most pro-Western regimes in the Middle East. That failure has exposed a profound lack of understanding in the West of Arab reality.

US and European allies, supporters and business partners of the Arab regimes persistently preferred to deal with leaders who were entirely unrepresentative of the new generation. They were detached from the emerging reality and had no way to engage with the social forces that now matter. It is the growing periphery of the Arab world - the masses at its margins, not its feeble and decaying centre - that is shaping the future of the region.

One of the most prominent ways in which these social transformations are taking place relate to women's roles. Women have unquestionably been central to these revolutions and there are now questions about how much these reforms can be sustained.

Xan Rice, The Guardian, April 22, 2011, "Women have emerged as key players in the Arab spring"
http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2011/apr/22/women-arab-spring?CMP=tw_t_gu

Arab women can claim to have been all these things and more during the three months of tumult that have shaken the region. Some of the most striking images of this season of revolt have been of women: black-robed and angry, a sea of female faces in the capitals of north Africa, the Arabian peninsula, the Syrian hinterland, marching for regime change, an end to repression, the release of loved ones. Or else delivering speeches to the crowds, treating the injured, feeding the sit-ins of Cairo and Manama and the makeshift army of eastern Libya. **But as revolt turns into hiatus and stalemate from Yemen to Tunisia, Egypt and Libya, Bahrain and Syria, one thing is clear: for all their organising, marching, rabble-rousing, blogging, hunger-striking, and, yes, dying, Arab women are barely one small step forwards on the road to greater equality with their menfolk. Women may have sustained the Arab spring, but it remains to be seen if the Arab spring will sustain women.**

It is common for observers to try to determine if the current revolutions are more similar to the profound changes in 1848, 1919, or 1989. Resolving that debate won't be too important for our competitions, but the interest in trying to determine a comparable frame of meaning is fantastic evidence of the breathtaking changes now taking place. The very idea that this might be called an Arab Spring evokes both the historical legacies of the Prague Spring and the seasonal metaphors with their rich mixture of hope and despair. As debate struggles to incorporate a wide array of political, cultural and philosophical perspectives there is tremendous utility in embracing a subject matter where all of these approaches find a strong resonance. Debaters have certainly researched and discussed the Middle East and North Africa, but debaters have not researched and discussed anything quite like this moment.

Potential directions for wording papers

The basic topic stem that informs this work is that the United States Federal Government should increase its democracy assistance to the countries of the Middle East and North Africa. If this topic is selected by the community there are two primary sets of issues to explore in the wording stage:

- The type and degree of democracy assistance and

- The recipient countries

Democracy assistance

There is ample history with foreign assistance topics. This core controversy calls for greater involvement so the first wording task would be to determine the degree to which assistance should be increased. The related, and far more sophisticated task, is to examine if the phrase ‘democracy assistance’ is the optimal term. It certainly is useful enough to serve as the starting point for review, as it is both very commonly used and widely discussed in scholarly and professional contexts.³ They may not always be easy to measure, but there are scholarly accounts of the inputs of these mechanisms.

Peter Burnell, Department of International Studies, University of Warwick, 2008, “From Evaluating Democracy Assistance to Appraising Democracy Promotion” *Political Studies*, (Vol 56, 414–434), p. 425

First, **there are the inputs into democracy promotion. These include: money; managerial ability; organisational expertise; professional competence; technical know-how; insights from political science; diplomatic skills; what President Bush calls ‘political capital’; trust or social capital among partners; military intelligence; and the ability to make credible threats and a capacity to coerce. In addition to such resources, all of which have played some part in attempts to promote democracy, there is the more passive side of international influence, where democracy effects have occurred but were not intended. Much of Nye’s (2005) idea of soft power probably works in this way. It is not obvious how rates of return to the different inputs to active promotion of democracy could be compared scientifically. There is no common unit of value for measuring them. Moreover, whereas some of the inputs must be regarded as consumables that are used up in the exercise, like money spent, other inputs could be self-generating and actually accumulate through use. In certain circumstances an exercise of power or influence begets yet more of the same, whereas different circumstances will see the stock drawn down.**

In the last few years a great deal has transpired in both the Middle East and North Africa as well as in the field of democracy assistance. I previously reviewed the state of democracy promotion as a foreign policy instrument in an earlier topic proposal.⁴ At present there is recognition that democracy assistance is emerging into approaches that reflect an emphasis on politics and development. These nuances should be explored for final wording options. It does offer some optimism that this is body of literature that offers debaters the opportunity to engage.

Thomas Carother, vice-president for studies at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, January 2009 *Journal of Democracy*, “Democracy Assistance: Political vs. Developmental?” Volume 20, Number 1, p. 5-6

As the field of international democracy assistance ages and to some extent matures, it is undergoing a process of diversification—in the actors involved, the range of countries where it operates, and the kinds of activities it comprises. Strategic differentiation is an important element of this diversification—**democracy-aid**

³ Democracy assistance is widely used in policy literature, but I was quite surprised to learn that the word ‘democracy’ has never appeared in a single-season college policy debate topic.

⁴ This proposal which bears some similarities to this proposal contains a discussion of the larger foundation of democracy promotion. I have post the older paper alongside this paper which, although outdated in the country analysis, does contain additional review of US instruments to promote democracy.

providers are moving away from an early tendency to follow a one-size-fits-all strategy toward exploring varied strategies aimed at the increasingly diverse array of political contexts in the world. **A defining feature of this process of differentiation is the emergence of two distinct overall approaches to assisting democracy: the political approach and the developmental approach.**

The political approach proceeds from a relatively narrow conception of democracy—focused, above all, on elections and political liberties—and a view of democratization as a process of political struggle in which democrats work to gain the upper hand in society over nondemocrats. **It directs aid at core political processes and institutions—especially elections, political parties, and politically oriented civil society groups**—often at important conjunctural moments and with the hope of catalytic effects. **The developmental approach rests on a broader notion of democracy, one that encompasses concerns about equality and justice and the concept of democratization as a slow, iterative process of change** involving an interrelated set of political and socioeconomic developments. **It favors democracy aid that pursues incremental, long-term change in a wide range of political and socioeconomic sectors, frequently emphasizing governance and the building of a well-functioning state.**

This basic division between the political and developmental approaches has existed inchoately in the field of democracy support for many years. It has come into sharper relief during this decade, as democracy-aid providers face a world increasingly populated by countries not conforming to clear or coherent political transitional paths. Such a context impels greater attention to choices of strategy and method. Moreover, with the overall enterprise of democracy promotion now coming under stress—as evidenced by the growing backlash against both democracy promotion and democracy more generally—the democracy-aid community is more actively debating the relative merits of different approaches.¹ Some adherents of the developmental approach criticize the political approach as too easily turning confrontational vis-à-vis “host” governments and producing unhelpful counterreactions. Some adherents of the political approach, meanwhile, fault the developmental approach for being too vague and unassertive in a world where many leaders have learned to play a reform game with the international community, absorbing significant amounts of external political aid while avoiding genuine democratization.

This emergent argument easily aligns with another important division in the world of democracy aid—the difference between U.S. and European approaches. A simplistic view, tempting to some policy makers and political observers looking for easy generalizations, sees U.S. democracy assistance as basically political and European democracy-building efforts as largely developmental. Thus arguments over the possible drawbacks of both the political and developmental approaches can become arguments over whether U.S. or European programs are more effective. This is an unhelpful, incorrect line of analysis. **The two core approaches—political and developmental—are indeed different in important ways. Understanding their differences is useful in grasping the evolving state of democracy assistance generally.** Yet both approaches have multiple pluses and minuses, which depend greatly on how they are applied in specific cases. Furthermore, although identifying the two core approaches helps to shed light on some of the similarities and differences in U.S. and European democracy aid, a simple one-on-one mapping is a mistake. Both approaches are present on both sides of the Atlantic, albeit in varying proportions. The existence of two core approaches should be seen not as a cause for conflict among democracy supporters but rather as a sign of strength—evidence that democracy aid is diversifying to adapt to a more challenging international landscape.

This literature base also helps to contextualize what falls within democracy assistance along with those instruments that may be on other points of a continuum of national power. In other words, the literature is rich enough to allow discussion of what is and is not democracy assistance.

Peter Burnell, Department of International Studies, University of Warwick, 2008, “From Evaluating Democracy Assistance to Appraising Democracy Promotion” *Political Studies*, (Vol 56, 414–434), p. 420-1

Democracy assistance, which consists of the concessionary and, usually, consensual provision of practical, advisory, technical and financial support through projects and programmes, is not the only game in town.

The instruments, tools or approaches that are associated with efforts to promote democracy abroad are wide-ranging and can be described or categorised in a number of ways. Thus we could make use of Joseph Nye's (2005) distinction between 'soft' and 'hard power', the former being the ability to get what you want through attraction, and the latter employing coercion or payments. Steven Levitsky and Lucan Way (2005) offer an alternative typology: 'leverage' and 'linkage'. Leverage plays on governments' vulnerability to external pressure; linkage operates via general 'ties to the West'. **A more flexible way of capturing the diversity rests on the idea of a continuum expressing different gradations of power, where power is understood as an umbrella concept that contains non-coercive ways of exercising influence at one end and physical coercion at the other. In the context of democracy promotion the middle ground is occupied by a cluster of more or less coercive relations such as diplomatic pressure, the attachment of political conditionalities to offers of commercial, financial or other concessions, and sanctions or threat of sanctions in the event of non-compliance. 'Diplomatic pressure' is an often-used term that while something of a black box to onlookers refers to more than just 'political dialogue' and 'quiet diplomacy'. Conditionalities can be either negative, which means a threat of penalties in the event of failing to comply, or positive, in which case they resemble incentives.** How far the actual conditionalities resemble coercion in practice depends in part on the baseline expectations, including any sense of entitlements that might normally have been in place, and how constrained are the choices facing the party on the receiving end. A positive conditionality can be compelling if the party is desperate and no alternatives are available. Diane Ethier's (2003, p. 100) notion of pseudo-conditionality adds a further twist, describing situations where the targeted party believes the threat of penalties is not credible, perhaps because the rewards for compliance are delivered early and cannot be reversed.

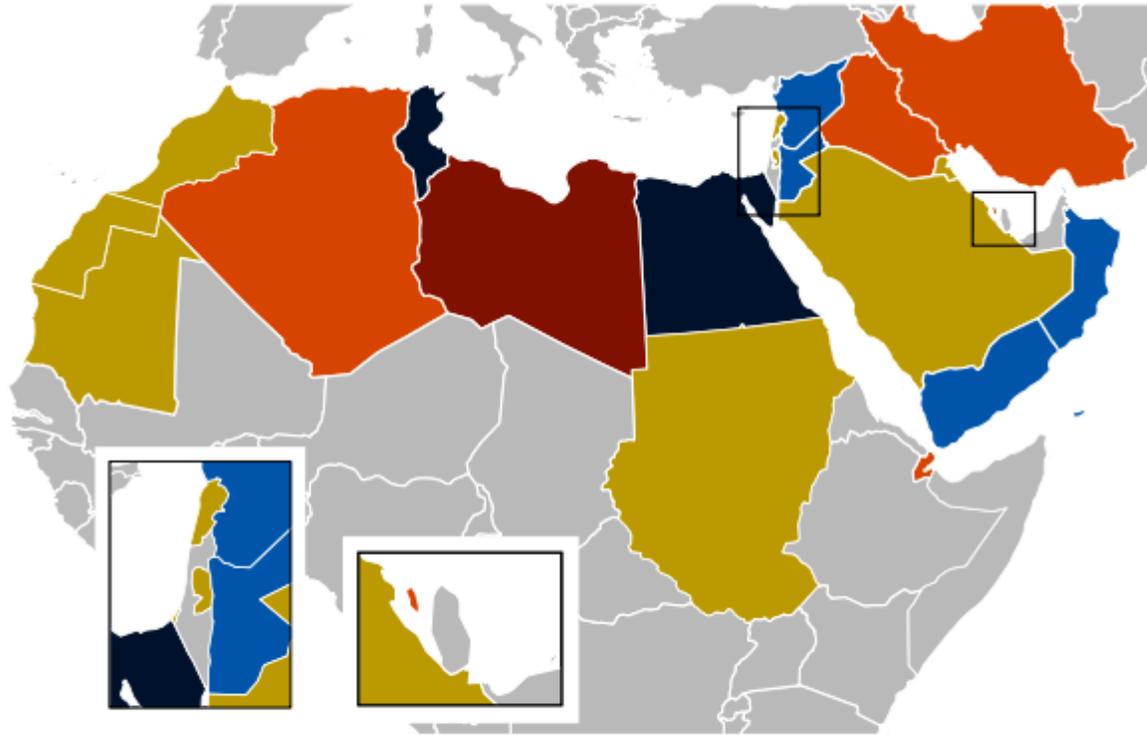
The topic committee and volunteers should conduct an investigation of both the optimal ways to express the degree and the type of assistance that should be included in the resolution.

Recipient Countries

The general region of countries that should be included is relatively clear. The popular revolts are largely concentrated in the Middle East and North Africa. If this topic is selected the topic committee should explore both geographic categories and specific lists of countries. Obviously there will be some form of hydraulic interest in adjusting the range of topical countries in relation to the scale of topical action (i.e., a broader set of policy mechanisms will likely find support with fewer countries). It is likely that the variance in including specific countries will likely provide much of the difference between final wording options.

The map⁵ on the following page outlines the current state of popular uprising in the region. The designations will change over time, but it helps to frame which countries are most promising to include in specific resolutions. The topic selection committee will revisit this information, but I offer a series of categories to help guide the choice of countries.

⁵ The Wikipedia entry is generally current on the state of the revolts
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2010%E2%80%932011_Middle_East_and_North_Africa_protests



Revolution ■ Governmental changes ■ Armed conflict ■ Major protests ■ Minor protests

Category 1- Generally favor inclusion (i.e., the core):

These eight countries should form the foundation of topical consideration. Each of the countries is experiencing a significant degree of public pressure for change. Many of these countries are the most visible and dramatic sites of what has been called the Arab Spring.

Bahrain	Egypt	Jordan	Libya
Oman	Syria	Tunisia	Yemen

Egypt is likely to be the core of any such topic. Its historically close relationship with the US and its transition into the post-Mubarak era promise a rich discussion in the coming months. With elections promised for the fall, Egypt is poised for a very significant time in its incredible history. It is already common to read discussions of democracy assistance to Egypt.

David Ignatius, Foreign Policy, April 22, 2011, “What Happens When the Arab Spring Turns to Summer?: Ruminations on the revolutions of 2011.”
http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2011/04/22/what_happens_when_the_arab_spring_turns_to_summer?page=full

Egypt, in particular, is decisive. It has roughly 25 percent of the population of the Arab world, and it was for much of the 20th century the region's engine of modernization. If democracy succeeds in Egypt, other countries will follow. Should the democratic experiment in Egypt be hijacked by the military or anti-democratic Islamist groups, the revolution will fail elsewhere.

This being the case, the United States must do everything it reasonably can to provide two things that post-revolutionary Egypt badly needs: financial assistance and help in creating a modern, democratic police and security service. The Egyptian economy is heading toward a severe cash squeeze this summer because of the drastic fall in tourism, foreign investment, and other economic activity since January. And insecurity is growing on Egypt's streets because of the disarray and demoralization of the Egyptian police.

Both problems are potentially fatal to the revolution.

This is a "use it or lose it" situation in terms of Western assistance. The United States will accomplish its goals best by acting discreetly, working with allies -- especially those in Eastern Europe that have made successful transitions from authoritarian governments. Visiting Harvard University in April as I pondered these issues, I inevitably reread the speech given there on June 5, 1947 by George Marshall as he outlined a program of assistance for the shaky democracies of Europe. He used language that was civilized, sexist, but also crystal clear:

I need not tell you, gentlemen, that the world situation is very serious. That must be apparent to all intelligent people. I think one difficulty is that the problem is one of such enormous complexity that the very mass of facts presented to the public by press and radio make it exceedingly difficult for the man in the street to reach a clear appraisal of the situation.... The truth of the matter is that Europe's requirements for the next three or four years of foreign food and other essential products -- principally from America -- are so much greater than her present ability to pay that she must have substantial additional help or face economic, social, and political deterioration of a very grave character.

The stakes in Egypt are so high that it is unimaginable to me that the United States would continue to spend more than \$100 billion this year in Afghanistan and leave aid to Egypt as a sorry afterthought. The Obama administration's only offer thus far, I believe, is Clinton's pledge of \$150 million.

Tunisia will also likely be a prominent source of topical discussion. Even the popular press has identified how the country that was the first site of revolution might be one of the optimal places for assistance.

Doyle McManus, Los Angeles Times, February 27, 2011, p. A28, "Helping the Arabs help themselves; The U.S. must find a way, and funding, to promote democracy."

Among the other countries, the United States will feel compelled to help Egypt, because it is so big, and Yemen, because a branch of Al Qaeda is operating from its mountains. But Egypt and Yemen are desperately poor countries that will take years to turn around.

But there's at least one country that deserves special attention because it holds such promise as a potential model for success: Tunisia. It's relatively small (about 11 million people). It's a middle-income country, with a per capita national income of about \$9,500. Its population is relatively educated; one reason for the revolution was that too many college graduates were unemployed. Its revolution was largely peaceful; it has no major ethnic or sectarian conflicts.

The people of Tunisia were the ones who started this wave of democratization. Now we should help them complete it.

Obama and his aides have used the uprisings in the Arab world as a reproach to the authoritarian government of Iran, which has attacked demonstrators in Tehran even as it praised them in Cairo. But the best way to promote democracy in Iran -- or Syria or Saudi Arabia -- is to help democracy succeed in Egypt, Yemen and Tunisia.

Syria was part of the last two Middle East topics, but in both cases their intransience prevents them from becoming central parts of the topic. The refusal of the Assad regime to work with the U.S. undermined the bulk of the initiatives designed to reach agreement. Today, however, the Syrian regime is locked in an increasingly bloody struggle with its own people. Like Egypt, Syria has been part of past topics but it is a very different nation today. As the death toll rises it is apparent that Syria's future is quite uncertain.

Arab News, April 20, 2011, "Syria On The Boil – OpEd" <http://www.eurasiareview.com/syria-on-the-boil-oped-20042011/>

Syria continues to hurtle down the precipice. The more the Baathist regime in Damascus tries to rein in the widening anti-government protests using the heavy-handed tactics, the more intense they become. At least 17 people were killed in the city of Homs on Monday when the security forces opened fire on demonstrators protesting against those killed on Sunday, taking the toll to more than two hundred. The killings come two days after President Bashar Al Assad promised to lift the infamous Emergency law imposed 48 years ago after the Baathist revolution in 1963, a key demand of the protest movement.

However, the government move is clearly seen as too little too late. More important, many fear, and perhaps not entirely without basis, that by lifting the draconian Emergency law and bringing in another one in its place, the regime is taking away with one hand what it's offering with the other. Most of the sweeping, extraordinary powers that the security forces and the governing Baathist officials currently enjoy under the Emergency law are likely to be retained under the proposed new law.

Not only is the Emergency law seen as violating internationally recognized fundamental rights and the UN Human Rights Charter, it overrides many rights guaranteed under Syria's constitution. As had been the tradition in many former socialist and communist states, under the Emergency law anyone could be arrested and detained incommunicado for long periods on catchall charges such as "working against the goals of the revolution." Detainees are often tried in military courts or the Supreme State Security Court with no access to a lawyer. Syria

The Emergency law also restricts public gatherings and the free movement of individuals. Security forces can enter private homes at any time or tap phones and e-mails. People need security approval for such ordinary and mundane things such as becoming a schoolteacher or setting up a small business. Of course, Syria is not the only country in the region to have such arbitrary laws. Many of the Arab socialist republics have had such laws in place for decades.

Clearly, though, it is time to move on. **The mounting pressure and widening protests in Syria, Yemen and elsewhere suggest that half-hearted and half measures or cosmetic gestures are not going to check the unprecedented unrest. People want real change and genuine comprehensive reforms. Change or be ready to be changed. That appears to be the stark choice before the countries facing the long pent up anger and frustration of their people. So instead of blaming outside interference,** which is an increasing possibility with the United States acknowledging its support to opposition groups in Syria and elsewhere, **regimes concerned would do well to address the genuine concerns and aspirations of their people before they are hijacked by external players.**

Because of its size and strategic eminence, Syria is as crucial to the Levant, the region stretching from Jordan Valley and Palestine-Israel to Turkey in the north, as Egypt is to the Maghreb or North Africa. **Any instability in Syria could affect and unravel the whole region. So big powers must desist from playing with fire in this crucial Arab country. And the regime in Damascus should avoid offering them ready excuses or opportunities to do so.**

Libya provides for a very interesting case. Even as US officials express concern with the No Fly Zone, rebel successes leave the future of the Gaddafi regime uncertain. The conflict is ongoing and the future

is uncertain. There are calls for greater support of the Libyan rebels now and if the regime fell there would be even greater interest in supporting democratic reform. One account lays out the wide-ranging predictions for Libya.

Rajan Menon, professor of political science at City College of New York/City University, April 20, 2011, "The future of Libya," Originally printed in the Los Angeles Times, http://www.tehrantimes.com/index_View.asp?code=239051

The fighting in Libya has reached a stalemate: Moammar Gaddafi has proved far more resilient than his adversaries anticipated, and he has also exposed the limits of what can be accomplished by war from afar.

If NATO decides to end the standoff by attacking his forces with greater ferocity, there's only one nation (you guessed it) with the requisite power.

This much is evident. **What remains unclear is the sort of political arrangement the anti - Gaddafi campaign will produce.**

Here's one possibility. Gaddafi's forces, pummeled relentlessly by NATO, shrink. This sets off more high-level defections (Musa Kusa, Kadafi's foreign minister and former spymaster, who fled to London recently, proves to be a trendsetter) and a flood of desertions.

The regime implodes, paving the way for a transitional government run by the opposition and, eventually, a democratic system.

This is the outcome that officials in London, Paris, Washington and Brussels hope for, though they seem clueless about what to do if it eludes them.

This scenario is hardly imminent or probable, and even if it occurs, there will be more fighting and dying, with the ragtag opposition and civilians getting the worst of it. **Indeed, additional suffering is the prerequisite for Gaddafi's demise** (whether physical or political) — the catalyst that would cause his lieutenants to see that he's finished and that they had best sue for peace and cut whatever deals they can before they are as well.

Meanwhile, the cost of creating a minimally functioning post-conflict Libya grows daily, as war destroys infrastructure, cuts oil exports and increases the refugee flow. These economic and social disruptions guarantee that Libya will require lots of care and feeding, even policing, once the fighting stops. The outsiders who will be called on to provide these services will work in a dangerous setting, and for a long time, unless their governments wish to leave chaos behind.

Power-sharing agreement

Here's a second scenario. Gaddafi's senior civilian and military officials oust him and bargain for a power-sharing agreement, immunity from prosecution and the right to participate in politics. Out of civil strife comes national reconciliation.

This won't happen easily. It will take some pretty powerful people to depose Gaddafi, which means that they will have plenty of blood on their hands. The opposition will balk at joining them in an interim political arrangement, and even if it comes about (because America and Europe cajole the Qaddafi camp) it could soon come apart.

A third possibility is a bifurcated Libya: a Qaddafi bastion arises in the west, encompassing the region historically called Tripolitania and its environs, **and an opposition government takes shape in the east,** in and around Cyrenaica. At least one prominent pundit, CNN's Fareed Zakaria, has already suggested this as a possible conclusion, adding that it won't necessarily be a bad one because Gaddafi would control much less of Libya and much less of its oil.

Yet this is a Pollyanna prognosis. It rests on the blithe assumption that the two Libyas, born of a savage war filled with vendetta-breeding atrocities, will segue into a stable peace sustained by mutually accepted borders.

Still, such an outcome is not impossible — not much is in politics. Perhaps Libya's two halves won't coexist harmoniously; but they may well forgo war because their leaders, though not necessarily enlightened beings, have had their fill of carnage.

This ending would be almost as nice as the first scenario of a united, democratic Libya.

Alas, it is far easier for prognosticators to imagine benign partitions than for politicians to produce them. **The historical record shows that partition is a bloody business, particularly when the parties are armed and loathe each other.** Don't expect a velvet divorce in Libya akin to what the Czechs and Slovaks were able to fashion.

Even if a partition can be imposed from without (and, who, we should ask, will do this?), it will leave Cyrenaica with the larger share of Libya's oil. Tripolitania, whose tribes dominated the political order under Gaddafi, will not readily reconcile itself to subordinate status. Having been forced to accept Libya's truncation only because NATO's bombs and rockets aided its foes, it will be tempted, sooner or later, to unify the country by force. But that is a contingency for which the eastern statelet will no doubt prepare.

In this outcome, given the two factions' abundant oil and strategic Mediterranean location, both will start building their arsenals and find outside patrons. This partition-gone-bad will unsettle the lives of Libyans as well as their neighbors' for a long time.

These are not the only possibilities, of course. One can imagine other futures for Libya. But this much is certain: Each, in its own way, will involve some combination of regime change, upheaval and nation-building under Western tutelage. The dust will not settle soon, and there will be plenty of it.

Those who think otherwise are engaging in self-delusion. There's no reason why the rest of us should do so.

Each of these countries provides a strong justification for inclusion in the topic.

Category 2 - Borderline Countries

This next list includes countries who have also experienced domestic uprisings in 2011, but who are not currently at the center of much of the literature. I have tried to focus on countries who are currently experiencing the greatest social transformations, not necessarily the countries that are typically considered geopolitically significant. There are certainly important developments taking place in each of these countries, but if we are looking to create tiers of possible countries, this should be understood as a second tier. If the topic is selected I would encourage these countries to be re-examined to determine if individual nations should be part of the core topic.

Algeria	Kuwait	Lebanon
Mauritania	Morocco	Sudan

Category 3 - Reasons to include and to not include:

Iraq	Iran
Palestinian Territories	Saudi Arabia

The final category of countries contains a list of incredibly significant nations. The rationale for them not being automatically included in a core version of the topic is two-fold. First these nations may not now be experiencing dramatically different social dynamics than the past few years. Ironically several of these nations have been experiencing social unrest longer than the nations of the Arab Spring, but they may have reached an uneasy stalemate in Iran and Iraq. I cannot assert that that stalemate will continue, but I do at least encourage the committee to review including these countries

with careful attention on the social situation in each nation. Saudi Arabia is a great example where it could soon resemble the debate taking place in Egypt or its inclusion could represent a very different kind of debate (i.e., trying to persuade a strong US ally to take democracy assistance even as it resists democracy reform). In the core countries the debate is enriched by an active opposition and that may not be the case for all of these nations. There is still ample reason to consider them and the following discussion of Saudi Arabia's concern about the revolutions provides evidence why it could be a significant topical element.

J. Scott Carpenter, Keston Family Fellow, The Washington Institute for Near East Policy, April 13, 2011, Testimony prepared for delivery to the U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Foreign Affairs Subcommittee on the Middle East and South Asia, "Shifting Sands: Political Transitions in the Middle East, Part 1" <http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/html/pdf/CarpenterTestimony20110413.pdf>

Similarly to Iran, a successful democratic transition anywhere in the region presents a real challenge for Riyadh. This might explain the reports in Egypt of Saudi money flowing into the coffers of the Salafiyun and the Muslim Brotherhood in advance of the coming Egyptian parliamentary elections. In my view, **the bigger challenge is the different prisms through which the United States and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia perceive developments in the region. For the United States, the changes being wrought in the region come as a consequence of legitimate grievances** than have built up over years of poor governance and are being expressed through unstoppable popular protests. The mantra of the Bush years of "evolution to avoid revolution" went unheeded and we are now reaping the results.

For the Saudis, however, there is an absolute paranoia surrounding the Shia, who they believe are being supported wholly by the revolutionaries in Tehran. They hear Iranian propaganda about the Egyptian revolution being a continuation of Iran's revolution as truth. It is for this reason that the Saudis have pressured the King of Bahrain and bankrolled the hard-liners within the Khalifa family to guarantee that Bahraini Shia demands are in no way met.

The Saudis risk creating a self-fulfilling prophecy which will be wholly negative for U.S. interests in the region. By urging the King of Bahrain to crush the uprising there, the government of Saudi Arabia has handed Iran, Hezbollah, and other Shia reactionaries, such as Iraq's Muqtada al-Sadr, a new rallying cry. The repression of Bahrain's Shia population is increasing public pressure on the government of Iraq, for example, and providing Hezbollah with a welcome distraction at a time when its patron in Damascus is struggling. **Clearly, the vehement anti-Shia rhetoric and violence used against Bahrain's Shia in recent weeks is contributing to the radicalization of Shia across the region** who, until Saudi troops rolled across the causeway, were content to be Iraqi, Kuwaiti, Yemeni, Saudi or Bahraini.

Ultimately, in my view, the forest fire that has been burning will continue to spread and no fire break of money alone will stop it. For this reason, it is critical that the United States convince Riyadh in some way that the focus should be on managing change rather than trying to stop or roll it back. Constitutional monarchies in Jordan, Bahrain and elsewhere can be tolerated and should even be considered enviable end states.

The other reason to be cautious when considering each of these countries in the implication of adding these recipient nations to topical action. In some cases, such as Iran and the Palestinian Authorities, this repeats ground covered in prior topics. In other cases the concern is more focused about shifting the center of many of the debates. Each of these countries is incredibly important to international conflict dynamics. Including any of these countries in the topic is going to create very popular affirmatives that may be interesting, but also may decrease the amount of discussion about the

‘core’ countries. Iran and Iraq offer interesting, if opposite, examples where one country has a very close working relationship with the US and the other has a near state of war. The divergence of how democracy assistance would be understood to a US ally with a massive US troop presence and a state hostile to the US should be considered alongside the central ground of working with states in transition.

Iran and Saudi Arabia will also inevitably be core aspects of negative ground on the topic, as their governments fear both the spreading revolutions and the US refusal to side with traditional allies. There is extensive discussion of Iran carefully watching these revolutions as threats to their foreign policy and domestic stability.

Mehdi Khalaji, senior fellow at The Washington Institute, focusing on the politics of Iran and Shiite groups in the Middle East, April 12, 2011, “Influence Curtailed: Democracy in the Arab World Stands to Strip Iran of Its Power” <http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/templateC06.php?CID=1609>

Because Iran's influence in the region stems mainly from its soft power and propaganda, the possibility that its propaganda might be weakened by the emergence of new democratic regimes in the Middle East has placed it in a very difficult situation. If democratic forces prevail in Arab nations, Islamism will lose its main forum for advocating state rule by Islamic ideology. Anti-American and anti-Israel discourse would be replaced by more practical demands and expectations, as we have already witnessed in the course of demonstrations in Tunisia, Egypt and elsewhere. **Iran would find little fertile ground for its old-fashioned propaganda that portrays itself as the leader of the anti-American world and the main patron of anti-Israel forces. Democratic systems would allow people to focus more on their personal lives,** participate more fully in the shaping of their political future, **and hold their ruling class more accountable for its actions, meaning that Iranian propaganda would no longer be needed in the struggle against rulers or their western allies.**

If the recent political movements in the Arab world lead to more free and liberal societies, this will promise the decline of Iranian influence in the region. For the current Iranian regime, democracy is no longer threatening only at home, but also abroad.

It would seem likely than an ‘Iran as spoiler’ argument would be a common argument against any affirmative that allows the US to reinforce its role as a significant global player.

Michael Scott Doran, Visiting Professor at the Robert F. Wagner Graduate School of Public Service at New York University. He is a former Senior Director for the Middle East at the National Security Council and a former U.S. Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense, Foreign Affairs, May/June 2011, "The Heirs of Nasser Who Will Benefit From the Second Arab Revolution?" p. 19

In navigating the Arab world's ongoing turmoil, the United States must determine the central principles that will guide the building of a stable, new order. One perspective sees the enlargement of political participation as the key step, arguing, therefore, that democracy promotion should become the touchstone of the United States' regional strategy. Another eschews overarching principles entirely, instead pointing to the complexity of the region and advocating a pragmatic, country-by-country approach. Yet a third view sees Arab-Israeli peace as the essential first step to revitalizing the U.S.-led order in the region. As it considers these competing paradigms, the Obama administration should remember that it is not the only actor attempting to shape the turmoil. Although there is no one personality like Nasser towering above the revolutionary events, **there is one state seeking to reprise Egypt's historic role: Iran.** Under Nasser, Egypt opposed British and French imperialism, which it associated with Israel. **Iran is taking a similar stand**

today against the United Kingdom’s “imperial successor”: the United States. And like Nasser, Iran has created an anti-status-quo coalition— made up of itself, Syria, and their proxies, Hezbollah and Hamas. The dna of Nasserism is certainly recognizable in the “resistance bloc” of Iran and its allies; Nasserist genes may have commingled with pan-Islamism, but the resemblance is nevertheless unmistakable. Iran, of course, is neither Arab nor Sunni. **One might expect its Persian and Shiite identity to prevent it from emulating Nasser, especially in a region where Sunni Arabs predominate and where identity politics remains significant. Tehran, however, has managed to surmount this disability, thanks in part to the fact that each member of the resistance bloc represents a different ethnoreligious identity, which allows it to present a distinctive and familiar face to radically different constituencies.**

In many ways, these revolutions are unsettling the regional balance of power and the topic should try to preserve the ability to engage these types of discussions. As the committee and community deliberate they should carefully decide if including any of these countries would improve the quality of the educational environment. It isn’t as though including Iran or Saudi Arabia would prevent the use of these arguments on the negative, but it would certainly influence the focus on these nations and the overall research experience.

Not in a category - Where is Israel?

When outlining US foreign policy toward the Middle East and North Africa it is an obvious omission to exclude discussion of Israel. Much like public discussions of US policy, Israel is often not mentioned as part of policy considerations, even when it is a central concern. It is my perspective although there is certainly academic merit to debate the status of Israel’s democratic system it does not offer a great fit as a nation to include into the topic proposition. Like Iraq, it is a strong US ally and it would be very different to provide to clarify negative ground for additional assistance. Even if not part of the recipient countries, however, Israel is unquestionably an important aspect of the topic. The Arab spring revolutions are increasingly displacing authoritarian governments who, often begrudgingly, worked with US foreign policy goals. The absence of these governments will create an entirely new dynamic. In an ironic twist, both Iran and Israel are anxious about the composition and nature of these new governments. Both are useful starting points for negative arguments about those regional powers who might be opposed to and seek to undermine US democracy assistance.

Adam Sorensen, Time, February 18, 2011, “Without Mubarak, U.S. Struggles to Shield Israel from Diplomatic Pressure,” <http://swampland.blogs.time.com/2011/02/18/without-mubarak-u-s-struggles-to-shield-israel-from-diplomatic-pressure/>

The democratic wave that has broken across the Middle East in recent weeks will inevitably challenge the basic assumptions of U.S. diplomacy in the region, nowhere more so than on the Israeli-Palestinian front. For the past decade the moderate Arab autocrats have glumly gone along with the U.S. process, which they see as hopelessly tilted in Israel’s favor, for lack of alternatives. They have privately and occasionally

publicly made clear that they believe the process was going nowhere and prospects for a two-state solution were fading. And backing the U.S. in its perceived coddling of Israel did not do Arab leaders any favors with their own citizens. Now, **as those citizens are demanding greater accountability, there's simply no incentive for them to continue playing the Emperor's Clothes game to a peace process none believes is going to produce a result. And being seen to stand up to the U.S. is a cost-free symbolic crowd-pleaser to their domestic constituencies. Cost-free, that is, except to the Palestinian Authority if the U.S. threatens to cut aid. Either way, the Israeli-Palestinian issue is one that will cloud the Obama Administration's efforts to get on "the right side of history" with the Arab appetite for freedom that it has been celebrating.**

Research Resources

One of the great features of debating this topic will be helping everyone involved to develop new media habits to gain information about the Middle East and North Africa. I have seen how much is being published every day on the topic and there is no longer the concern that we need to wait until the scholarly presses catch up to a topic. There is both scholarly and more popular materials being written on a regular basis and debating this topic would place a premium on the ability to follow these developments. As global media is decentralizing the means of production, anyone researching these topics can find a broad array of materials to draw upon. I will be creating a public RSS bundle to share, but in the interim here is a public collection of bookmarks about the topic.

https://www.google.com/bookmarks/l#!threadID=GiMgKMewRGk4%2FBDQE3ggoQlra25_UI

FAQ: Common Questions

I tried to outline the broad justifications for considering this topic as the 2011-12 controversy. I recognize that the format may be somewhat different from the expectations of some readers, so here is a brief series of questions to common questions that I have encountered when developing the paper.

Q: Isn't this just another Middle East Topic?

A: Beyond the immediate response that the nations of North Africa have to be included in this topic, there are a lot of differences between how the college community has traditionally examined these nations. The selection of individual countries will influence the degree of overlap, but I would encourage the community to emphasize those nations experiencing substantial public protest. The basic political dynamics of each of these nations is dramatically changing and it makes the educational rationale to spend the year researching it much greater.

Q: Why not just include the 'biggest' or 'most important' countries as the core?

A: The core controversy in this topic is what role should the US play in the transformation of nations across the Middle East and North Africa as they reject authoritarian forms of government? This is not a topic where the emphasis should be on making sure that all of the most geopolitically significant countries should be included as topical nations. The major theological, ethnic, economic and political tensions will be discussed. The focus of our efforts should be to access these questions from exploring the US role in supporting democratic institutions. Too much of an emphasis on nations who are not presently undergoing these kinds of transformations may be more satisfying to someone who wanted to examine the 'old Middle East' but that undermines the rationale for this topic at this time.

Q: What is the core negative ground on this topic?

A: Any foreign policy topic offers several primary lines of argument to develop specific arguments: concerns about economic, political and international relations dimensions. The complexity of this literature should ensure all three are significant. US assistance will commit to a degree of political support for a specific regime and that will have consequences in the US and the region. The prospect of negative reactions from Saudi Arabia, Iran and Israel are just some of the concerns. We should not also lose sight of the tremendous concern within the Chinese government about these reforms. All of these political dynamics add to the very real debate about how the assistance will actually influence the political transitions within each country. Democracy assistance is far from uncontroversial, both politically and substantively. Beyond these arguments, there is also the large ethical debate about the appropriate role for US foreign policy. Negative teams will have a wide array of ways to argue the resolution is not a good idea even before they employ some of traditional debate tactics.

Recommendation of the author

I strongly recommend that the CEDA/NDT community consider debating this controversial topic. The opportunity to focus our collective research enterprise toward such an important and rapidly changing topic is a rare occurrence. The richness of competing perspectives with the literature offers a great support for our competitive goals. The opportunity to learn and teach about these revolutions is a more than worthy educational goal.