The challenges of democracy and democratisation in Africa and Middle East

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Abstract

In discussions on the spread and prospects of democracy in the global south, Africa and Middle East are often depicted as less democratic, indeed undemocratic, regions. Both are seen as ridden with dictators, monarchies and dynastic rulers. Of course, such generalisations have their own flaws, but there is some truth regarding democratic deficits in the two regions. This piece explores the challenges of democracy in Africa and the Middle East. It asks the following questions: what are the factors militating against democracy? Is democracy a necessary precondition for development in the two regions? How are countries coming to terms with the challenges of democracy and nation-building?

Keywords

Democracy, democratisation, political corruption, dictatorship, hegemony, subordination, elite politics, Africa, Middle East

Introduction

For some time, "democracy" has been in vogue in the global South. This is to be understood within the context of the so-called "democracy revolution" or "third wave" of democratisation (Huntington, 1991, Shin 1994). Following the collapse of the defunct Soviet Union in the late 1980s and the triumphant emergence of US and its allies as unipolar global powers, there has been tremendous pressure on countries of the global South. Hitherto littered with military and one-party dictatorships and personal rulers, these countries were forced to abandon their "old ways" and embrace liberal democracy – the kind of democracy practiced in the West but now foisted on weaker states as a precondition for aid and productive cooperation. Foreign pressure coincided with, or reinforced, domestic clamours to push regimes to concede to democratic reforms (Schmitz, 2004: 403).

While most African countries have fallen to the tide of "democratic revolution" one after the other, their Middle Eastern counterparts have largely resisted such tides and/or

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customised their political processes to meet developmental needs, even if doing so will compromise democracy. What are the challenges of democracy in the two regions? To what extent is democracy-building different and/or similar in the two settings? We shall return to these questions later.

In spite of negative impressions about African and Middle Eastern countries as the homeland of dictators and despots, there are glimmers of hope and optimism in both regions. The past two decades have no doubt seen steady expansion of the frontiers of liberal democracy in the two regions, but certainly in Africa. In Africa, for instance, by 1990s profound democratic reforms had swept across the entire continent, including South Africa where the white-settler apartheid system collapsed in favour of multi-party democracy. From Algeria to DRC (Democratic Republic of Congo) and from Benin to Kenya, democratic reforms led to the collapse of decades of single-party dictatorships and military rule. Africa's democratic wave of the 1990s and 2000s has been termed "second independence" reminiscent of anti-colonial struggles of the 1950 and 60s which led to the end of European colonial projects in Africa (Eke, 1995: 25). In the Middle East, however, democratic reform was not as widespread as developmental strides. Nevertheless, the region witnessed internal democratic reforms leading to the construction of local democratic structures undergirded by cultural dynamics of the region – for instance, the tribal systems in most states meant that democracy appears to favour tribal lords and their loyalists. That is, liberal democracy has not been able to dislodge aristocratic and tribal anatomy of the region. Rather, the region appears to customise liberal democracy. The efficacy and genuineness of liberal democracy to fit indigenous needs is still unfolding and subject of debate.

This paper explores the challenges of democracy in Africa and the Middle East by charting the contours of debate/commentaries, and then presenting some interesting articles submitted to the present volume of *Information, Society and Justice*, each dealing with specific issues such as elite politics, political corruption, elections, and oil resource in relations to democracy-building in Africa and Middle East.

The challenges of liberal democracy in Africa and Middle East

Post-colonial states of Africa and Middle East[2] share some commonalities and differences. They share more or less common features such as colonial experiences, entrenchment of dictatorship, neo-patrimonial cultures, fragile economies[3] and foreign influence. Both regions are often classified as conflict-prone societies characterised by interstate skirmishes, civil wars and contests over power and resources. However, there are nuanced differences: for instance, Africa countries are more heterogeneous, underdeveloped and at the mercy of western imperialism. On the contrary, Middle East

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[2] It is imperative to make some clarifications on Africa and Middle East. In this paper Africa refers to as sub-Saharan Africa and North Africa while the Middle East includes Arabian and Gulf countries, including Iran and Turkey.

[3] This factor is relative. First, African countries are seen as more fragile than their Middle Eastern counterparts. Second, the period of economic fragility varies: for instance, in Africa 1970s and 1980s was a period of tumultuous economic and structural crises, while 1990s and 2000s have been characterised by some recoveries and giant leaps as experienced in Ghana, South Africa and Angola.

countries are relatively more developed, less dependent on Western donations, and have a relatively more patriotic political class that invests in tangible economic development, as demonstrated by the so-called "economic miracles" of Gulf countries such as United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, Qatar and Kuwait. This is not to absolve Middle Eastern elites from poor governance or corrupt tendencies; rather, by virtue of their developmental credentials they have earned the cliché of "benevolent elites" who, while being self-aggrandising, spends a percentage of the commonwealth on national development. The same cannot be said of Africa elites some of who have been associated with high-level corruption and financial impropriety – for instance, in Nigeria, Gabon, and Senegal the so-called democratic elites are facing allegations of corruptions, and there are concerns about the embedded nature of corruption is state and society.[4]

In terms of political culture, most African countries, being products of colonialism, have stronger ties with their former colonial masters (Britain, France, Spain, Italy) and are coming to terms with post-colonial challenges ranging from contested boundaries, ethnicity, corruption, nepotism to client-patron relations. The so-called "colonial hangover" is deeply embedded. France, for instance, has always maintained strong ties with its former colonies in sub-Saharan Africa, aimed at sustaining its neo-colonial grip in these countries[5] On the other hand, Middle East countries developed somewhat different political cultures. Many shed the so-called colonial ties: they refused to sign defence pacts with those powers, while some even abandoned the colonial *Lingua Franca* in favour of local official languages. However, the structures in those states were defined by strong ties to religion (especially Islam in countries such as Saudi Arabia, Iraq, Iran and Syria), and tribal and clan systems with hierarchical social stratification. Both religion and tribalism influenced Middle Eastern political cultures by giving greater clouts to cultural establishment (e.g. in Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Iraq): theocratic elites and tribal lords double as community leaders and state officials. In monarchical states such as United Arab Emirate, Bahrain and Saudi Arabia, there have emerged family rulers who established elaborate political state systems capable of asserting hegemony over a bevy of nomadic and sedentary tribes. Middle Eastern countries also developed fairly bourgeoning economic systems and attracted Foreign Direct Investments from Western countries. The reality of development seem to have dwarfed the imperatives of democracy: by 1990s while Western donors were applying the "stick" in democratising Africa, they applied mild "carrot" measures on Middle East countries[6]. They overlooked the excesses of political regimes simply because these regimes were doing well developmentally.

As stated earlier, western donors were at the forefront of advocating liberal democracy to

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[4] BBC (2004) "How deep is corruption in Africa" available:
http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/3819027.stm, accessed 29th May 2010.

[5] France's politics in Africa is highly dramatic: it was known to support friendly dictatorial regimes and master-mind or even carry out military coups to install puppet governments. By mid-1990s France was in alliance with its Western counterparts in influencing its former colonies to democratise. But it maintained a double standard so that friendly regimes were immune from pressures for democratisation.

[6] This is because African countries emerged from the Cold War with weak economies and fragile political systems. They rushed to Western donors for support. In return for aid, these countries were asked to accept "political conditionalities" which involved taking measures to institutionalise economic liberalisation and adoption of multiparty democratic structures.

less developed countries, including those of Africa and Middle East. This new political model is defined as

> Political change moving in a democratic direction from less accountable to more accountable government, from less competitive (or non-existent) elections to fuller and fairer competitive elections, from severely restricted to better protected civil and political rights, from weak (or non-existent) autonomous associations to more autonomous and more numerous associations in civil society (Potter, 2004: 368)

In practice, a liberal democracy is "a type of regime in which binding rules and policy decisions are made not by entire community but by representatives accountable to the community. This accountability is secured primarily through free, fair and competitive elections in which virtually all adult men and women have the right to vote and stand for elective office" (*ibid:* 366-7). Furthermore, citizens within a liberal democracy have the *inalienable* right to "express themselves without danger of severe punishment on political matters broadly defined, including criticisms of officials, the government, the regime, the socio-economic order, the prevailing ideology and to form relatively independent associations or organisations including independent political parties and interest groups (Dahl, 1989 in Potter, ibid, 367). The foregoing platitudes about liberal democracy are problematic in Africa and Middle East where the political culture and the nature of social and economic process are quite different compared to the Western democracies, from where the concepts of liberal democracy originated.

There are profound problems with applying liberal democracy *in toto* in less developed countries. The prevailing notion, especially in 1990s and 2000s, is that "Western concept of democracy is more or less accepted throughout the world" or that "western programs to support democratization are welcomed by all save those who would be dislodged by the process" (Barkan, 1994: 3). But Less Developed Countries possess weak structures that need fixing and some of their norms are at odd with those of liberal culture. Ake (1993: 241), writing on Africa, notes that "in order for African democracy to be relevant and sustainable it will have to be radically different from liberal democracy. For one thing, it will have to de-emphasize abstract political rights and stress concrete economic rights, because the demand for democracy in Africa draws much of its impetus from the prevailing economic conditions within". Joseph (1997: 367-8) offers the following critique of what he calls the glorification of *liberal democracy* as *virtual democracy* as applied to African countries:

1. *Hollow symbolism:* While liberal democracy is symbolically based on citizen rule, "the making of key decisions, especially in the area of economic reform policies, is insulated from popular involvement".

2. *Hegemonic class rule*: Liberal democracy does not necessary dislodge the dominant ruling class; in fact, it empowers the wealthy: "hegemonic economic forces in society, as well as those in control of the state apparatus, must be secure in the protection of their interests and able to minimize threats to them by formerly excluded or dominant groups for a smooth transition from authoritarian rule to occur".

Table 1: Global Patterns of Democratisation

	1975			1995		
	Authorit-arian	Partial democracy	Liberal democracy	Authorit-arian	Partial democracy	Liberal democracy
Western Europe, North America & Australia	2	0	22	0	0	24
Latin America	15	2	5	2	5	15
Sub-Saharan Africa	43	2	3	12	16	20
Eastern Europe and USSR/former USSR	9	0	0	5	14	8
Asia	18	4	3	11	4	10
Middle East and North Africa	14	3	2	13	3	2
Totals	101	11	35	43	42	79
1975 (N=147)	68.7%	7.5%	23.8%			
1995 (N=164)				26.2%	25.6%	48.2%

Source: Potter, 2004: 369

3. *Entrenchment of capitalism:* liberal democracy does not allow for the adoption of alternative political and economic models: "central to this variant of democracy is the creation of opportunities for the further development of a capitalist or market economy. While capitalism can exist without democracy, there are no contemporary democracies that are not capitalist or that do not create the institutional framework for the expansion of capitalism".

4. *External pressure and domination:* the current efflorescence of liberal democracy is made possible by western pressures in the post-Cold War period. "External forces are critical to the establishment of democracy in areas formerly under authoritarian rule. But such pressures are not pitched on any rational motif other than the entrenchment of western interest".

5. *Entrenchment of status quo:* "Most decisive in democratic transitions are the choices made by those enjoying governmental and social power when faced with challenges to their dominance. Such individuals and groups often realize that democratization can be manipulated to legitimize their continuation in power".

6. *Policy and institutional encumbrance*: "While the core institutions and practices of contemporary democracy rest on the premise of a free play of ideas and interests, certain substantive policy outcomes are ruled out, and others are assured. Participation may be broad, but policy choices are narrow".

Paradoxically, due to Western "double standards" (see e.g. footnote #5), majority of African countries have undergone some form of donor-foisted liberal democratisation, while their Middle Eastern counterparts are largely exempt from external pressure to democratise (see Table 1). The differential treatment by donors of African and Middle Eastern countries owes it logic partly to the failure of the former to develop truly independent and viable political and economic systems capable of defying foreign influence and, in contrast, the capacity of the later to make some developmental advancement capable of defying foreign pressures. Middle Eastern countries have largely taken pride on their development profile to resist any external impetus to democratise. Based on the modest economic achievements of Middle East states, some have even questioned whether liberal democracy is a necessary precondition for development?

Table 1 shows the movement toward democracy in the two regions. The Table gives a clue during the 1990s, perhaps the most crucial moment of democratisation in the two regions. It shows that in the period between 1975 and 1995, the number of authoritarian regimes in sub-Saharan Africa dropped dramatically from 43 to 12, while liberal democratic systems rose from just 3 to 20! In the same period, authoritarian regimes in Middle East countries remained almost static; it hinged between 14 and 13, while the adoption of liberal democracy remained the same (n=2). Why have many Africa countries adopted liberal democracy while their Middle Eastern counterparts have not made much progress? The reasons can be found partly in the internal political culture of the two regions, and partly in the interests and role of western donors (for more details see Chabal, 1998).

Africa: elite politics, electoral irregularity and corruption

> Democratization was not supposed to happen in Africa. It had too little of what seemed necessary for constitutional democratic polities. African countries were too poor, too culturally fragmented, and insufficiently capitalist; they ... lacked the requisite civic culture. Middle classes were usually weak and more bureaucratic than entrepreneurial, and they were often co-opted into authoritarian political structures. Working classes, except in a few cases such as Zambia and South Africa, were embryonic (Joseph, 1997: 363)

Joseph indeed paints a gloomy picture of democracy in Africa. Extreme as it sounds, there is some truth in this assertion. The political and economic cultures of many African countries are still underdeveloped and unstable. They lack the necessary conditions of instituting liberal democracy such as a strong and independent middle class, a competitive party system; constitutionalism and rule of law; a neutral bureaucracy and strong market economies.[7] In such a setting, it is difficult to build liberal democracy. In

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[7] We should, however, not loose sight of the fact that a few African countries have achieved significant mileage in liberal democratic consolidation, both in qualitative and quantitative terms: Ghana, South Africa and Botswana are arguably some of the most democratic states on the Continent. But they are out-shadowed by those engulfed in treacherous transition, and/or

the early 1990s when African countries are transiting *en masse* towards the so-called liberal democracy, Ake (1993: 239) wrote "it is difficult to discern what kind of democracy is emerging in Africa and what unique features will give it depth and sustainability in African conditions". Chabal reinforces Ake's concern on why Africa countries were facing difficulties in building liberal democracy:

> In the first place, there is the persistent claim that multi-party elections are controlled and distorted, when not actually rigged, by incumbent regimes. Secondly, there is the nagging doubt that democratically elected regimes have every intention of subverting the momentum for political liberalization by ruling much as the previous one-party regimes did. Thirdly, there are very obvious limits to the actual democratic nature of functioning multi-party systems, chief of which seems to be that such systems have no place for political opposition. Finally, and most ominously, there is the unavoidable fact that where multi-party elections have failed to bring about genuine improvements, Africans have begun to lose faith in "democracy" (Chabal, 1998: 290)

Contributions to the present Volume of *Information, Society and Justice* reinforce Chabal's concerns, and raise further issues regarding the problems of building liberal democracy in Africa. Three key themes are explored: hegemony and subordination in elite politics (Tar and Shettima), political corruption (Mustapha) and elections (Osiki) – all in the context of Nigeria.[8]

Tar and Shettima (2010) recall empirical evidence from the Nigerian 2007 and 2011 general elections to examine the behaviour and performance of Africa's political class in constructing legitimation, subordination and hegemony. They note that the elections remain relevant because it provides fresh empirical evidence on the nature elite contest for power which, though characterised by injustices and imperfections, nonetheless remained relatively unchallenged either by local or international forces. They thus note: "As African countries continue in their march towards neo-liberal democracy, elite power politics has assumed new but macabre heights. The continent's governing class is demonstrating dramatic behaviour in achieving and sustaining power by all means possible." They further argue that rival elements of the governing class are engaged in a vicious circle of subordinating one another, albeit with no threat to their hegemony but with huge implication for the prospects of a stable liberal democratic culture. They make reference to Michael Foucault's concepts of 'new economy of power relations' and 'legitimation' as well as Antonio Gramsci's terminology of 'subordination and hegemony' to demonstrate that, by both design and default, dominant form and structures of power are reproduced and sustained by the governing class. The paper shows that dominant elites (incumbents and their allies) use state structures and an emerging single-party machinery to get an upper hand over opposition elites.

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relapse of veiled dictatorships (multiparty democratic state only in name!).

[8] To use analyses on Nigeria as evidence to generalize Africa appears to be a skewed approach. However, Nigeria represents a clear example of a country undergoing some difficulties in building liberal democracy on the continent. Since our aim in this volume is with the challenges of democracy on the continent, Nigeria may well stand as a good candidate for generalization.

Table 2: Challenges of democracy & democratisation in Africa

Challenge	Remarks
Lack of credible opposition	Absence of a strong opposition parties that can challenge the policies and programmes of the ruling party; absence of alternative policy programme choices required by electorate; zero-sum struggle for power.
Weak civil society	Lack of strong, dense and vibrant civic groups who will act as a counterbalance to state hegemony; such groups are expected to resist cooptation by state but, instead, provide a permanent independent check on state power; the weakness of civil society is often as a result of a lack of strong middle class with its own class interest and stake in society.
Weak economies	Productive economy needed to allow state to supply goods and service to electorate; scarce resources could persuade, even force, electorates to abandon democratic processes. At worse, citizens can be "bought" to vote for wrong choices.
No separation between state and ruling party	Ruling party dominate and manipulate the political process; constitutions are regularly amended to retain power; state resources are ostensibly used to advance the interest of the ruling party; state security forces are used to coerce citizens and opposition groups
Ethnicity, religion & nepotism	Politics and governance are mitigated by divisive sectarian tendencies; democratic process (voting etc) is held hostage by the sectarian sentiments and loyalties of political actors and voters; state policies are influenced by sectarian fragmentation and sentiments.
Potentials of military intervention	There is high chance of military intervention as a result of any confusion created by political deadlock between parties.
Weak democratic political culture	Ruling elites do not respect democratic values such as rule of law and human rights; opposition parties and pressure groups are forced or induced into abandoning their role checking the excesses of state officials; weak democratic structures and values such as participation, civil liberties, voting etc.
Lack of regime change (incumbency continuum)	A sustained tradition of limited political change; regime continuity; oppression of dissent.

Source: adapted from Thomson (2004: 245)

Nigeria's zero-sum nature of power politics and electoral democracy appear to have huge implications for the sustenance of liberal democracy. The key questions are: if democracy is about participation, rule of law and legitimate negotiation for power, how could it be built in a country where elites have appropriated ethnicity, wealth and religion to outwit one another and remain in power? How could democracy thrive in a state where stakes on state power are so high, while official corruption and abuse of state resources are elevated to near state policy? How could democracy thrive in a system where elections are abused through commercialisation of votes, ballot-box stuffing, and manipulation of election results?

Osiki (2010) explores the vexed problem of electoral irregularities in Nigeria and its hindrance to democratic consolidation. Osiki examines the historical and political contexts of election regularities, and the impact of the illegal use of money, weapons and thugs as aspects of electoral irregularities in the conduct of elections in Nigeria between 1999 and 2007. Osiki argues that Nigeria demonstrates an ugly specimen: "although, Nigeria's case of electoral irregularities may not be unique, their magnitude makes it a good subject of historical investigations." Osiki's conclusion is quite instructive:

> Bribery, use of thugs and physical weapons continued to be part of the political development of Nigeria and the country's electoral politics between 1999 and 2007. Elements of money politics, use of thugs and dangerous weapons were effectively used by the political class to alienate the electorate and have a firm grip on the machinery of government. The trend helped to sustain the phenomenon of "godfatherism", which assumed a potent force in Nigeria during the period. The fact that the Nigerian electoral system thrived on patronages made the illegal use of money, weapons and goons the surest option available to the political elite.

Mustapha (2010) explores the conceptual and empirical dimensions of corruption in Nigeria. His article identifies new ramifications of corruption and prebendalism in Nigerian political culture. This article questions state-centric analyses of Nigerian politics and democracy by recalling the *formal* and *informal* dimensions of corruption. The formal dimension – or official corruption – is seen to be existing side by side with informal one such as financial fraud tagged '419', 'oil bunkering' etc operating at the micro and indeed unofficial level of the state. He argues that both kinds of corruption impact negatively on democracy and state-society relations. Mustapha's conclusion is striking:

> The argument is that there is an intrinsic link between mis-use of official resources for personal aggrandizement with the current pervasive nature of spoil system. Failure of governance and the 'cunning to milk' the state approach by the few have deepened the phenomenon of poverty. Compelled by the negative impact of "graft politics" that excluded the majority of the populace, most Nigerians resorted into series of societal illegalities that becomes the norms of the society. The lingering wave of financial fraud code named as "419", 'oil bunkering' "kidnappings" has strains the ethical disposition of the state and come to tenaciously spoiled the entire socio-political and economic fabric of the state [with implications for democracy] – emphasis added

The foregoing analysis underscore the multiple problem of democracy in Africa, based on data from Nigeria. The next section returns to the Middle East.

Middle East: resource curse, state ideology and fragile democratisation

> People in the Middle East want political freedom, and their governments acknowledge the need for reform. Yet the region appears to repel democracy. Arab regimes only concede women's rights and elections to appease their critics at home and abroad (Ottaway and Carothers, 2004: 22).

Since 1980s, democracy has made steady inroad to the Middle East even though reversals were apparent by 1990s: "During the 1980s, several Arab countries, including Egypt, Tunisia, and Jordan, initiated political reforms to permit multiparty competition. These reforms lost momentum or were undone in the 1990s, however, as Arab leaders proved unwilling to risk their own power through genuine processes of democratisation. Tunisia, for example, moved back to rigid authoritarian rule" (Ottaway and Carothers, 2004: 22-23). Nevertheless, there has been steady rise of domestic and external pressure for democratisation, especially in the aftermaths of September 11 2001, *Al-Qaeda* attack on the US. 9/11 reinforced prevailing stereotype of Middle East as an Islamist fundamentalist stronghold posing danger to the rest of the "free world". Western countries therefore called for political reforms with a view to building transparent democratic cultures capable of building peace and dealing with terrorist threats. In some countries such as Iraq, Western countries even sought direct military intervention to depose despotic regime and institutionalise democracy.[9] Reinforcing foreign pressure, Middle Eastern regimes have always faced tremendous pressure from domestic democratic movements calling for constitutional reforms and multiparty democracy that will put an end to family and tribal rule that has characterised the region. But on the main they have almost always resisted such pressures.

Thus, the region has not made much progress in liberal democratic reforms. There are scathing scepticism and grim diagnoses. Example: "Although the Arab world is not impervious to political change, it has yet to truly begin the process of democratization...Arab governments curb political participation, manipulate elections, and limit freedom of expression because they do not want their power challenged" (Ottaway and Carothers, 2004: 23). But it is worthy of note the problems of the Middle East are common not only in Middle East but other parts of the World – such as the former Soviet Republics. So, what puts Middle East and similar settings in a different pedestal when it comes to the construction and consolidation of liberal democracy?

In this Volume, four contributions (Ahmed, Bapir, Abdulla and Sagnic) assess the problems of democracy in the Middle East. Ahmed (2010) examine why oil wealth has not facilitated democracy in the region. Ahmed questions the conventional wisdom that oil wealth offers a vehicle for democracy and development. He argues that that in the context of the Middle East, oil wealth appears to hamper transition to democracy, much less democratic consolidation. This is because oil revenues are used by the states both to quell internal clamours for democratisation and resist external pressures. Ahmed notes that Western countries' demands for hydrocarbon energy from the Middle East have placed them in a difficult position of transacting strategic commodity from a volatile region perceived to be undemocratic and undemocratising. This dilemma has

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[9] There are arguments on western military intervention in Iraq and other countries, as well as the implication for democracy (see Von Hippel, 2000).

implications for both Western democratising credentials, and the prospects of democracy in the region. Ahmed notes that "substantial oil or natural resource revenues could constitute a real problem and a hindrance to democratization. They provide the governments with more than enough cash to be self-supporting and capable of lowering or abolishing taxes, thus they escape from their accountability towards their citizens and use the large revenues to suppress and co-opt opposition." He further argues that the democratic deficits in oil-rich Middle East countries stand contrary to the trend elsewhere: "there are other oil-rich states elsewhere such as Norway and Indonesia that have relatively large amounts of oil and also successful at maintaining their democracies and a healthy economic development that is immune from the resource-curse."

In their respective articles, Abdullah (2010) and Bapir (2010) examine the challenges of democracy in Iraq. Both papers excavate the difficult tasks of re-building in a country scarred by decades of dictatorship, wars and international sanctions. Abdullah (2010) argues that the 2003 US-led invasion of the country led to a swift demise of Saddam Hussein and his Baathist state apparatus. But the easy removal of Saddam was followed by a rather difficult challenge of rebuilding a war-ravaged country and institutionalising Western-type liberal democracy. Abdullah argues that

> lack of deep-understanding of the Iraq's culture had led to the former US administration to equate the demise of Saddam with the demise of totalitarianism. The presence of Saddam was a great obstacle of democracy, but his removal changed little. Saddam and his former like-minded people created a culture capable of producing as many dictators as it wants." He further notes that "Iraq's political culture is highly undemocratic; and thus the future of democracy in the country is bleak [as manifested by] important incompatible elements of Iraq's culture with democracy. (Emphasis added).

Abdullah's findings illuminates the powerful argument of Galbraith (2007) that in the course of US and allied invasion of Iraq, so many things went wrong: manufactured intelligence used to justify the war; poor execution of the war especially violations of military rules of engagement; haphazard management of situation following the capture of Saddam; careless dismantling of state apparatus and assets; poorly-managed negotiations amongst Iraqi elites leading to highly contested democratic pacts and processes etc (for a review of Galbraith, see Nuradeen [2010] in this Volume).

Bapir (2010), also writing on Iraq, considers the challenges of building democracy in a divided, conflict-riven society. He notes that "the major constraint to Iraq's state-building project is the misfit between identity and sovereignty of the state in a multi-ethnic and multi-religious country where the construction of a new national identity (i.e. Iraqi) is sought at the expense of eradicating other existing identities (i.e. Kurd, Assyrian)." He further notes that the Iraqi state is seemingly foisting the identity of the ruling majority Shiite-Arabs (composing 65% of the population), thus marginalizing the identity of minorities such as the Kurds who constitute 20% of the population. Further, he argues that "Iraq's religious diversity and, precisely, the sectarian cleavage between Shiite and Sunni Muslims, impose serious challenges to the notion of democracy and democratic transition." Thus, democracy and nation-building are held hostage by "majority rule in a way that marginalizes minorities and dissenting voices".

Finally, Sagnic considers state ideology and minority rights in contemporary Turkey, and implications for democracy-building in the country. He argues that Turkey has always

stood by the visions of its founding father, Mustapha Kamal Ataturk, in building an ethnic state that diminishes and deprives the identity rights of its minority population, not least the Kurds living in the Southern part of the country. Over the years, argues Sangic, Turkish state ideology has been elaborately perfected as a tool for persuading and assimilating the Kurds and other ethnic and linguistic groups. Reinforcing existing studies which emphasize that the Kurds were subjected to a systematic forced assimilation campaign by the new Kemalist state, Sagnic stresses that "the formation of Turkey after the collapse of the Ottoman Empire is the root to understanding the ideological foundation of the Turkish state's denial of the Kurds, their history, language and even their existence. This has huge implications for Turkey's claims to *secular democracy*, its regional stature and aspirations to join the European Union" (emphasis added).

Conclusion

This paper explores the problems of democracy in Africa and Middle East. The paper takes stock of two things. First it explores broadly the discourses on the problems of adopting liberal democracy in the two regions. It is argued that liberal democracy has inherent requirements that make it difficult to be adopted, without some customisation, in less developed countries. Both Africa and Middle East comprise "new states" or "post-colonial states" engulfed in certain structural challenges and unique historical and cultural anatomies. The paper demonstrates the contradictions of donor double standards in advocating democracy in the two regions (foisting it in Africa; tolerating non-compliance in the Middle East), as well as how relative development in the Middle East has enable some countries to resist foreign pressure for democratisation. An interesting question emerges from all this: must countries adopt liberal democracy to develop? Middle East countries have no doubt proved that democracy is not a necessary condition for development. Secondly, the paper reviews existing work and contributions to the present volume of *Information, Society and Justice*, to identify some problems of implementing liberal democracy in the Africa and the Middle East. Regarding Africa, the key problems hindering democracy, as discussed in this volume, are elite hegemony, contested elections and corruptions (these are by no means exhaustive). As for the Middle East, the key problems are state ideology (Turkey), resource, and sectarian fragmentation (Iraq). It is worthy to note that the factors are not specific to these regions; the factors identified in either region can be found in the other.

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