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DEMOCRACY AND DEMOCRATIZATION are central research subjects for many scholars, especially since Samuel Huntington coined the term Third Wave Democracy in his article published in *Journal of Democracy*, and later in his 1991 book, *The Third Wave: Democratization in the late Twentieth Century*. Much more, in contemporary political science trends, it is easy to identify impressive work on this phenomenon, especially because increasingly more areas, after different instances of conflictuality, can be or are suitable for democratization. Thereby we must consider and appreciate the work of the authors as Georg Sorensen, Renke Doorenspleet, Larry Diamond and others who have argued that democratization is a trend of exceptional seasonableness, fact proved by Freedom House which rated as free just 29% twenty-nine percent of 151 countries in 1973, comparing with 45% forty five percent of 195 countries, by the end of 2011.

In recent years, the Arab Spring has given rise to a new area on which researchers on democratization have stopped and focused their work. In the given context many challenges arise for those countries where revolutions have upended longstanding authoritarian regimes. The swath of unexpected events created new uncertainties in an already troubled region. This being given, aside the trend mentioned above, based on the two aspects, a high quality work was conducted by RAND Corporation through its continuing program of self-initiated independent research, completed by the monograph *Democratization in the Arab World: Prospects and Lessons from Around the Globe* published in 2012.

The authors started their work by addressing three questions: What are the main challenges to democratization that Egypt, Tunisia, and other Arab countries experiencing political change are likely to face in the coming years? How have other countries around the world that emerged from authoritarianism overcome or failed to overcome similar challenges? What can the United Nations and the broader international communities do to help transitioning countries overcome these challenges and strengthen their fledgling democracies? (2012: xvi) For finding relevant answers, the authors structured the volume in four parts and eleven chapters, using throughout the entire process comparative analysis methods. Much more, they were aware that by answering questions would not be able to provide a solid road map for a potential democratization process, mainly because of manifoldness and complexity of circumstances. However, they succeeded to analyze transition experiences in all the world regions where relevant political changes have occurred since the mid-1970s and more.

So what about democratizing the Arab World? The authors focused on seven structural conditions and policy choices: the mode of regime change, the country's past experience with political pluralism, critical policy choices, state and social cohesion, economic characteristics, the external environment and the external policy choices and assistance. By considering these aspects, through the analysis named *From the Arab Winter to Arab Spring*, it is concluded and emphasized that turbulence alone does not derail democratization (2012: 299) and real democracy will not take hold in the Arab World without systemic change (2012: 301). Otherwise stated, the involvement of the international community in a direct or indirect manner is needed, this because revolutionary regime changes do not necessarily lead to transformational changes (2012: 303).

The analysis on past transition experiences reveals that particular factors that tend to contribute to or to undermine democratization rarely if ever determine outcomes (2012: xiv), while the commitment of elites always emerged as a crucial factor in any democratization demarche. For this, a good example and a reason for external implication in the Arab World stands the European experience, where the international integration offered unmatched incentives and support for successful democratization of Southern and Eastern Europe. Much more, the adoption of democracy in the Arab states is possible, the past demonstrating that democratization can occur even with low levels of institutional developments (2012: 330). Also, the potential for a stable evolution of Arab democracies increases in the same way and time with the integration of new political groups in the democratic process. From a social perspective, the development of civil society accountability and a new and improved social cohesion, will facilitate every step towards democracy. As shown by other experiences, the threat to democratization and social cohesion comes less from the problems themselves than from how governments

respond to them (2012: 321). In this regard, international expertise and counseling will stand as a catalyst, especially when it comes to find consensus on the nature of the state or other sensitive aspects.

From the response to external environment perspective, the research leads to two major conclusions. First, it claims that a democratic neighborhood may help countries move toward democracy and being in a nondemocratic neighborhood does not necessarily imperil political change. And second, it asserts that the success of democratization in any single Arab state does not depend on the success of the Arab Spring more broadly. Furthermore, as far as the democratization process in the Arab Spring Area is concerned, any policies should take into account the long-term nature of democratization (2012: 337) asides with assuming that outside influence on transition process has its limits (2012: 337). Much more, the authors conclude that the international community should encourage creation of mutually reinforcing and supporting structures (2012: 340), including here any form of association between states or social actors to facilitate institution building assistance and moral suasion for democratization.

Overall the work was conducted on three ways. First, the exploration of conditions and decisions that are more likely to influence the success of democratization in countries undergoing political transitions. Second, the identification of the main challenges for democratization in the Arab World, aside an exhaustive analysis on how other countries transitioned from autocracies with or without failing to overcome similar challenges. And third, throughout it is suggested what the United States and the wider international community should do to help Arab countries strengthen their so called democracies. By fulfilling the research objectives the authors provided a work of real utility for policymakers in order to understand the challenges ahead, form well-founded expectations and shape diplomatic approaches along with practical steps in fostering positive changes.

Moreover the analysis on how countries in Europe, Latin America, Asia and Africa have dealt with democratization challenges in the past provides a good working basis for further scholars and their work on democratization and post-conflict reconstruction.

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