



GLOBAL SWING STATES WORKING PAPER 2012

# GLOBAL SWING STATES AND THE HUMAN RIGHTS AND DEMOCRACY ORDER

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### **Global Swing States Project**

This working paper is part of an ongoing project undertaken by the German Marshall Fund of the United States (GMF) and the Center for a New American Security (CNAS). The project, co-led by Daniel M. Kliman and Richard Fontaine, examines how the United States and its European allies can partner more closely with Brazil, India, Indonesia, and Turkey to strengthen international order. The views expressed here are those of the author and do not necessarily represent the views of the project leaders or their respective institutions.

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Cover photo: Egyptians gather in Cairo's Tahrir Square on February 9, 2011 to call for the resignation of President Hosni Mubarak and the beginning of political change in Egypt. © Joel Carillet

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The convergence of values and divergence of methods between the global swing states and the established democracies are on particular display in the arena of democracy and human rights. To varying degrees, Brazil, India, Indonesia, and Turkey are prepared to play a role in supporting international mechanisms to strengthen human rights and democracy, but this is to be done on their own terms: through quiet diplomacy and mediation, using coercive methods only as a last resort.

### Human Rights and Democracy in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century

In the decades following the atrocities of World War II, the international community constructed a human rights and democracy order resting strongly on a foundation of universal norms emphasizing an individual's right to human dignity. To give meaning to this concept, states adopted treaties that defined the scope and content of a wide variety of political, civil, economic, social, and group rights. Working through the United Nations and a growing number of regional organizations, they forged a variety of tools to monitor how states implement their obligations and to encourage protection of such rights in real time. Building this order was one of the great accomplishments of the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Implementing these norms, however, remains one of the greatest challenges of this century.

Alongside the emergence of a global human rights architecture, states began to articulate a growing emphasis on democracy as the form of government most capable of protecting basic human rights, fostering economic development, and advancing international peace and security. At first, this interpretation of Immanuel Kant's democratic peace theory was heard mainly from established democracies in the West that saw hope in building a world, in Woodrow Wilson's famous words, "safe for democracy." Over time, as the number of

democracies in the world tripled from 39 in 1974 to a high of 123 in 2005,<sup>1</sup> the interest in fostering international cooperation to defend and protect democracies ballooned.

The main global forum for encouraging greater international cooperation among democracies began to take shape in 2000, when Poland and the United States hosted the first meeting of the Community of Democracies. The Community's mandate is to cooperate to strengthen democratic institutions, support adherence to common democratic values and standards, oppose threats to democracy, and coordinate support for new and emerging democratic societies. More recently, it has established a Permanent Secretariat, hosted by Poland, and reformed its governing structure to draw in states that are committed to putting its goals into practice. In terms of activities, the Community of Democracies provided critical early backing for a voluntary U.N. Democracy Fund to support democracy-building initiatives mainly implemented by civil society groups around the world. Since its establishment in 2005, this fund has received donations and pledges totaling over \$120 million from a wide range of countries, including India (\$29 million), the United States (\$43 million), and Japan (\$10 million). It has also organized international missions and technical assistance to developing democracies like Timor Leste, Georgia, Tunisia, and Moldova.

The human rights and democracy order was reinforced at the U.N. World Summit of 2005 when heads of state from every country endorsed a plan of action that, among other things, held up democracy, human rights, and the rule of law as

<sup>1</sup> "Freedom in the World 2006: The Annual Survey of Political and Civil Liberties" (Freedom House, 2006), <http://www.freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world/freedom-world-2006>.

*Building a democracy and human rights order was one of the great accomplishments of the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.*

*The Arab Spring appears to have been the spark to get states to move away from traditional non-interventionist posturing.*

cardinal principles of the United Nations.<sup>2</sup> The road to such a proclamation, however, was long and rocky.

The U.N. Commission on Human Rights — established in 1946 to serve as both a forum and negotiating space for governments dealing with human rights issues — was, for much of its existence, a victim of Cold War rivalries and manipulations by authoritarian states seeking to block international scrutiny. As part of his comprehensive U.N. reform agenda, in 2004 Secretary General Kofi Annan sought to replace it with something more credible. The result — the U.N. Human Rights Council, created in 2006 — is in some ways an improvement over its predecessor, with greater buy-in from both developed and developing countries. The council retains the commission's authority to address country-specific situations, for example, and lowers the bar to convene special sessions to examine urgent cases.

After some deserved criticism for its actions — and inaction — in its first two years, the Human Rights Council appears to be turning an important corner. Its focus is moving away from pointless debates about whether it has the authority to criticize countries (it clearly does) and toward very specific actions in a range of cases — from the historical change sweeping the Arab world, to entrenched conflicts in North Korea, Burma, and Côte d'Ivoire. These include the rapid suspension of Libya as a member of the council when violence erupted there in February 2011; the dispatch of special fact-finding teams to investigate human rights abuses in Libya, Syria, and Côte d'Ivoire; and the creation of new special rapporteurs to address denial of rights in Iran, Belarus, and Eritrea. The Arab

<sup>2</sup> "We recommit ourselves to actively protecting and promoting all human rights, the rule of law and democracy ... The universal nature of these rights and freedoms is beyond question." U.N. General Assembly Resolution A/RES/60/1, "2005 World Summit Outcome," October 24, 2005, para. 119, 120, <http://daccess-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N05/487/60/PDF/N0548760.pdf?OpenElement>.

Spring appears to have been the spark to get states to move away from traditional non-interventionist posturing and toward serious action to deal with real problems in real time. Other forces — an increasingly networked and organized international human rights movement, greater public exposure of human rights crises, and more democratic governments concerned with public opinion in their countries — may portend a new era in which governments feel more compelled than ever to take steps to deal at least with the most urgent situations.

Unfortunately, when the international community does feel compelled to reach for the tools that would make a difference, it quickly runs into a tangle of legal difficulties, bureaucratic obstacles, and poorly-resourced mechanisms. The human rights treaty bodies, for example, are slow and cumbersome, and too many states ignore their decisions. Political resolutions from the U.N. Security Council or General Assembly that condemn violations may be massaged for months and ultimately watered down to have little effect or be blocked entirely. The "Responsibility to Protect" doctrine was applied through armed force in Libya, prompting blowback from key states that vetoed U.N. action to stop the Bashar al-Assad regime's brutal attacks in Syria. The International Criminal Court may issue indictments but has no power to arrest. Unfortunately, there is no shortage of emergencies that test, and even threaten, the underpinnings of the human rights and democracy order.

At the regional level, the leading example of the post-World War II trend toward a human rights and democracy order was Europe's drive to create a union built around a common commitment to democratic norms and the rule of law. As the Berlin Wall collapsed, the attraction of a Europe "whole and free" drove at least eight former communist states into the democratic fold. The

European Union (EU) — along with the Council of Europe, its European Court on Human Rights, and, to a lesser degree, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe — rapidly increased attention to the nuts and bolts of deeper democratization, greater transparency and accountability, legal protection of rights, and support of civil society.

In a similar (although much less integrationist) trend, Latin American countries emerging from military rule found solace in the idea of a hemisphere of democratic states that would protect each other from the political instability and repression of the recent past. Through the Organization of American States and the inter-American human rights system, governments adopted mechanisms to intervene in cases where democracy was interrupted. Other regional human rights norms and institutions also gradually strengthened during this period. The Commonwealth states, affiliated historically with the United Kingdom, adopted their own declarations and diplomatic initiatives to support democratic transitions and condemned backsliding states like Pakistan, Nigeria, and Zimbabwe. The African Union also picked up the baton with measures to protect democratically elected incumbents, incentivize political and economic reforms through the New Economic Partnership for African Development, and establish an African human rights system.

Lagging far behind in the development of regional norms and institutions in the human rights and democracy space are the Arab world, nearly all sub-regions of Asia, and the Organization of Islamic Cooperation. In these regions, only the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) have developed a modicum of concern for the principles of democracy and human rights as defining criteria of their common identity.

The Arab Spring, however, has provoked some interesting precedents, including the suspension of Syria from both the Arab League and the Organization of Islamic Cooperation on human rights grounds.

### **How Global Swing States View the Human Rights and Democracy Order<sup>3</sup>**

#### ***Brazil***

Since Brazil's transition to democracy, its attitude toward the current human rights and democracy order has fluctuated between a willingness to build up international mechanisms to support political reform and serious skepticism toward initiatives led by traditional Western powers.

In general, the evolution of Brazil's foreign policy from a relatively quiet, inward-looking, and defensive approach to a more assertive regional, and increasingly global, strategy has coincided with its considerable domestic progress on democracy, human rights, and economic growth. When it comes to using its influence to strengthen the existing global order, however, Brazil has played an ambiguous and somewhat unpredictable role. When support for democracy or human rights abroad occasionally coincides with higher-priority goals like consolidating regional leadership, protecting business interests or winning a seat on the U.N. Security Council, Brazil tends to favor multilateral strategies that lean toward reform. Its close cooperation with Washington on a global anticorruption initiative known as the Open Government Partnership was noteworthy. More often, as in the cases of Iran, Cuba, and Honduras, Brazil (under President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva and his hand-picked successor, Dilma Rousseff)

<sup>3</sup> The following section draws from a Brookings Institution Foreign Policy paper. Ted Piccone and Emily Alinikoff, "Rising Democracies and the Arab Awakening: Implications for Global Democracy and Human Rights" (Brookings Institution, January 2012), <http://www.brookings.edu/research/papers/2012/01/09-rising-democracies-piccone>.

To the extent that it becomes involved with human rights internationally, the Brazilian government's preferred approach is to emphasize economic, social, and cultural rights.

has taken a more skeptical approach marked by a traditional defense of national sovereignty, suspicion of initiatives led by the United States, and growing demand for global governance reform. Brazil's policy response to the Arab Spring has demonstrated this latter tendency more than the former.

Although Brazil quickly joined regional condemnation of the 2009 military coup in Honduras, its decision to rally the Union of South American Nations against recognizing a new Honduran government — even though that government had been chosen through free and fair elections — had the effect, and perhaps the intent, of weakening the Organization of American States (and the United States) and its leadership role in resolving democratic crises. Brazil's decision to play a leading role in supporting Haiti's democratic transition not only provides currency for its campaign for a permanent seat on the U.N. Security Council but also may reflect domestic pressures to find viable missions for its military in a region of relative peace.<sup>4</sup> To the extent that it becomes involved with human rights internationally, the Brazilian government's preferred approach is to emphasize economic, social, and cultural rights, like the right to food (one of Lula's signature causes).

In the context of the Arab Spring, Brazil has taken a largely hands-off, non-interventionist approach. Any action Brazil has taken or endorsed has been multilateral in nature, with a strong preference for South-South cooperation and against hard-line interventions. It initially supported U.N. actions in Libya but then abstained on the use of force, a position that has hardened despite rising levels of violence in Syria. In between these two episodes, however, it did join the unanimous consent by the Security Council for U.N. forces in Côte d'Ivoire to

<sup>4</sup> "Policy, not Altruism: How Global Ambitions Are Helping to Modernise the Army," *The Economist*, September 23, 2010.

use "all necessary means" to protect civilians caught up in postelection violence. In the same vein, Brazil introduced proposals at the U.N. under the theme of "Responsibility while Protecting" that sought to regulate use of force and prioritize the exhaustion of diplomatic measures.<sup>5</sup> Such measures reflect not only Brazil's desire to constrain U.S. leadership but also its preferences for South-South solidarity, multilateral diplomacy, and deference to regional bodies in resolving conflicts, a stance that neatly serves its own purposes as a leader of the Union of South American Nations.

#### **India**

India, the world's most populous democracy, was a leader in the Non-Aligned Movement during the Cold War, and the anti-imperialist and non-interventionist roots of its foreign policy run deep. Yet as it emerges as a global economic power and a rival to China, its status as a secular, pluralist, and democratically governed state is slowly beginning to influence its behavior toward the international human rights and democracy order.

At the United Nations, India has scrupulously avoided criticizing the human rights records of other states, viewing such criticism as an inappropriate intervention in internal affairs. Its robust support of the U.N. Democracy Fund and its membership in the steering committee of the Community of Democracies reflect its preferred approach of cooperative engagement through the U.N. and its passive promotion of democracy and human rights values. A key factor in India's decision to participate in these two initiatives was its desire to forge closer ties with the United States, which worked hard under the George W. Bush administration to secure New Delhi's support.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid. For more information on Brazil's stance on protection of civilians, see "Responsibility while Protecting: Elements for the Development and Promotion of a Concept," annex to a letter from the Permanent Representative of Brazil to the U.N. Secretary-General, November 9, 2011, U.N. Doc. A/66/551-S/2011/701.



Like Brazil, India seeks to win a permanent seat on the U.N. Security Council. India is willing to associate itself with multilateral initiatives that support democratization in countries already on the democratic path and those that actively request assistance from India or the larger international community.<sup>6</sup> It also has been quick to use democracy-related forums on the international stage to distinguish itself from autocratic and corrupt regimes in neighboring Pakistan and the authoritarian capitalist model presented by China.

Apart from the U.N. and Community of Democracies initiatives, examples of India's multilateral activism to support democracy and human rights in other countries are few. Until recently, its regional organization, SAARC, had virtually no mandate or activities related to democracy and human rights. Although there is little to suggest that India played any special role in promoting the SAARC Charter on Democracy, there is some evidence that India has used its leverage at SAARC to protest non-democratic behavior. In 2005, for example, India refused to attend the Dhaka SAARC Summit, forcing its postponement; India justified this by citing the seizure of power by the King of Nepal and concern over worsening security conditions in Bangladesh. India has also played an active role in rallying the Commonwealth, an association of countries affiliated with the British crown, to condemn coups and impose sanctions on military regimes in both Fiji and Pakistan.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>6</sup> At the launch of the U.N. Democracy Fund, Prime Minister Manmohan Singh stated: "India has been sharing its rich experience, institutional capabilities, and training infrastructure with nations that share our values and beliefs and request our assistance. We are prepared to do much more ... ." Quoted in Jan Cartwright, "India's Regional and International Support for Democracy: Rhetoric or Reality?" *Asian Survey*, 49 no. 3 (May-June, 2009), 420.

<sup>7</sup> Theodore Piccone and Robert Herman, eds., "Defending Democracy: A Global Survey of Foreign Policy Trends," (Democracy Coalition Project, 2002), 97-98.

India's drive to best Pakistan for regional supremacy is a key factor explaining its active role in supporting the government in Kabul against the Taliban in Afghanistan. In keeping with India's cautious support for democracy and its desire for closer relations with Washington, it joined the international community's efforts to build Afghanistan's democratic institutions by supporting construction of the Afghan parliament building, parliamentary training, material support for elections, and over \$1 billion in other forms of assistance. India also worked closely with the United States and the European Union to pressure the monarchy in Nepal to accept far-reaching constitutional changes and an eventual fall from power in favor of representative democracy.<sup>8</sup>

India is starting to find its comfort zone in speaking on the global stage in favor of democracy as a preferred foundation for international peace and cooperation while insisting that its assistance be sought out rather than imposed. In responding to the wave of demands for democracy and human rights across the Arab world, however, India has largely hunkered down in the non-interventionist camp, adamant that it supports democracy in principle but should not interfere in the affairs of other states.<sup>9</sup> India's largely passive response to the Arab Spring reflects its general approach to global democracy and human rights, as well as its complicated economic and expatriate ties to the Middle East.

The Indian government categorized the uprisings in Egypt and Libya as an "internal affair" and

<sup>8</sup> C. Raja Mohan, "Balancing Interests and Values: India's Struggle with Democracy Promotion," *The Washington Quarterly*, 30 no. 2 (Summer 2007), 110.

<sup>9</sup> Simon Denyer, "As Middle East Erupts in Protest, India Finds Comfort on the Fence," *The Washington Post*, February 19, 2011, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2011/02/18/AR2011021802699.html>.

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prioritized the safety of its citizens living there.<sup>10</sup> As international forces mobilized to protect civilians in Libya, India's non-interventionist posture tangibly manifested itself at the U.N. Security Council, where it sat as a non-permanent member at the time. When the Security Council passed Resolution 1970, extending sanctions on certain Libyan officials and referring the situation to the International Criminal Court, India joined the unanimous endorsement. A month later, however, India abstained when the Security Council authorized force to protect civilians and implemented a no-fly zone. In an explanation of its abstention, India insisted that political measures ought to be the primary course of action for ending the violence.<sup>11</sup> India further bolstered its South-South solidarity credentials by endorsing the African Union's roadmap for Libya, saying that decisions related to Africa "should be left to the Africans."<sup>12</sup>

In Syria, India's natural non-interventionist tendency, coupled with its view that the NATO mission had exceeded the confines of its mandate, made it even less inclined to act in the event of violent crackdowns. Bilaterally, India continued its relationship with the Syrian regime, displaying its preference for mediation and political dialogue. A desire not to disturb relations with Iran, an important oil supplier, may have also influenced India's reticence to act against the Assad regime. Similar circumstances and priorities influenced India's reaction to uprisings in Bahrain, where India has the additional complication of ensuring the

<sup>10</sup> "Krishna Describes Egypt as Internal Affair," *Sify News*, February 1, 2011, <http://www.sify.com/news/krishna-describes-egypt-crisis-its-internal-affair-news-international-lcvt4dahajj.html>.

<sup>11</sup> Manjeev Singh Puri, "Explanation of Vote on the Resolution Adopted Concerning Libya," statement to the U.N. Security Council, March 17, 2011.

<sup>12</sup> P. R. Ramesh, "India Supports African Union Stand on Libya Crisis," *The Economic Times*, May 25, 2011, [http://articles.economictimes.indiatimes.com/2011-05-25/news/29581862\\_1\\_libya-crisis-african-union-africa-india-summit](http://articles.economictimes.indiatimes.com/2011-05-25/news/29581862_1_libya-crisis-african-union-africa-india-summit).

safety of its more than 350,000 nationals there — the largest of Bahrain's expatriate communities.

Overall, India's response to the Arab Spring is typical of its ongoing balancing act between supporting democratic values in principle on one hand, and non-interventionist pragmatism on the other. However, it is important to highlight India's actions that have deviated from the non-interventionist approach, including its endorsement of sanctions against Libya and referral to the International Criminal Court, its abstention (not opposition) to the Libya no-fly zone and intervention, and its vote in favor of the use of U.N. forces to protect civilians in Côte d'Ivoire. These efforts reveal that as India ascends to a leadership role, it is delicately attempting to maintain legitimacy in the West by supporting democracy while preserving its bona fides in the Non-Aligned Movement.

### **Indonesia**

Indonesia's transition from an authoritarian system to a relatively open, pluralist democracy in just 10 years has been accompanied by a similarly notable reorientation in its foreign policy from rejection of international norms of democracy and human rights as incompatible with "Asian values" to leadership in promoting such principles. This transformation — accompanied by consistently high levels of economic growth, a growing middle class, booming foreign direct investment, and internal and external peace (relatively speaking) — is precisely Indonesia's greatest asset when it comes to projecting its interests and values in the Asian region. Although it primarily focuses its attention on its neighborhood, Indonesia's democratic progress and Muslim identity have important implications for broadening the legitimacy of the global democracy and human rights order.

After decades of exercising a brand of self-protective isolationism and hostility toward

external intervention in internal affairs, Indonesia has embarked on a regional strategy of preaching the merits of democracy to its neighbors. As President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono explained in an address to the World Movement for Democracy in April 2010, democracy is entirely compatible with economic progress, Islam, modernity, and domestic peace.<sup>13</sup> Indonesian officials have not been shy about admitting the difficulties of their own transition but go on to underscore that the results were worth the messiness of democratic politics, a point that goes to the heart of Asian governments' reluctance to shake up the status quo.

Beyond holding itself out as a successful example of democratic transition, Indonesia has taken some concrete steps to build regional institutions and mechanisms to gently prod other governments in the region (particularly Burma) in a democratic direction. Through ASEAN,<sup>14</sup> Indonesia has fought to incorporate democracy and human rights as a commonly held value, even though most ASEAN members fall in the non-democratic camp.

Despite the uphill battle it faces in convincing its neighbors to recognize universal principles of democracy and human rights, Indonesia forged ahead with its own initiative to promote democracy in the wider Asian region. Launched in 2008, the Bali Democracy Forum was conceived as a way to talk about democratic principles and practices in an inclusive dialogue among equals and has drawn a significant number of heads of state and ministers from many nations, including China. One should also note Indonesia's decision to accept independence for a democratic Timor-Leste after

<sup>13</sup> Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono, "Keynote Address," (speech, Sixth Meeting of the World Movement for Democracy, Jakarta, Indonesia, April 12, 2010), <http://www.wmd.org/assemblies/sixth-assembly/remarks/keynote-speech-dr-susilo-bambang-yudhoyono>.

<sup>14</sup> ASEAN's members are Indonesia, Burma, Laos, Vietnam, Thailand, Cambodia, Brunei, Singapore, Malaysia, and the Philippines.

decades of repression and violence during the Suharto regime.

Outside of its neighborhood, Indonesia has been markedly less willing to take the rhetorical initiative on democracy and human rights. In the context of the Arab Spring, it has been ready to share lessons learned from its own transition only when prompted. When it came to U.N. action on Libya, Indonesia (which did not sit on the U.N. Security Council at the time) was cautious. Regarding Syria, Jakarta did not express criticism until violence escalated to a breaking point. Against its long tradition of abstaining or opposing name and shame resolutions at the U.N., Indonesia supported both the Human Rights Council's special session on Syria in August 2011 and its subsequent establishment of a special rapporteur in December 2011. Indonesia's silence on Bahrain can be largely understood as an attempt to avoid problems with Gulf states, which house millions of Indonesian migrant workers. Like other democracies with their own sets of pressing security and economic interests, Indonesia will navigate its relations in the Gulf (and the Middle East more broadly) with utmost concern for the well-being of its own citizens and the economic implications of overseas labor.

Underlying Indonesia's support of the international human rights and democracy regime is pride in its democratic identity. President Yudhoyono explicitly acknowledged in a recent interview that "Indonesia can be a model where Islam and democracy exist hand in hand, with no contradiction between the two."<sup>15</sup> Its preferred approach so far is to build up regional norms and mechanisms, share its own experience when asked and avoid lecturing.

<sup>15</sup> "Indonesia's President: 'We Can Be Model for Islam and Democracy,'" *CNN World*, June 15, 2011, [http://articles.cnn.com/2011-06-15/world/indonesia.president.yudhoyono\\_1\\_indonesia-president-suharto-islam-and-democracy?\\_s=PM:WORLD](http://articles.cnn.com/2011-06-15/world/indonesia.president.yudhoyono_1_indonesia-president-suharto-islam-and-democracy?_s=PM:WORLD).

*Turkey's own gradual evolution endows it with credibility as an emerging leader of the democracy and human rights order.*

### **Turkey**

Turkey stands apart from the other swing states reviewed here because of the way its experience as a candidate to the European Union elevated the importance of its own transition to democracy and to the larger geopolitical order. The attraction of EU accession no doubt has played a major role in bringing Turkey's own domestic standards and practice of democracy closer to liberal international norms, although there is some important ground still to be covered. Even so, the story of Turkey's role in the international democracy and human rights order is a testament to the positive impact of EU enlargement. Turkey's own gradual evolution — from a secular, military-dominated state with weak checks and balances to a competitive, multiparty and multi-ethnic system in which Muslim democrats now win elections — endows it with credibility as an emerging leader of the democracy and human rights order.

Even before the past decade of political reforms, Turkey was a relatively constructive, albeit quiet, supporter of democratic transformations, mainly due to its alignment with the United States, NATO, and the EU. Turkey's primary motives in foreign policy, however, remain the protection of its economic, energy, and other strategic interests in Central Asia, Russia, the Middle East, and North Africa. In seeking to maintain maximum flexibility as the country's economic interests and leverage expand, the pragmatists in Ankara walk a careful line between rhetorical support for democratic pluralism and case-by-case neutrality when it comes to international action to protect democracy and human rights.

As a member of the United Nations, Turkey's involvement in human rights issues has been consistent with its orientation toward Western alliances, albeit in a low-key way. It played a pivotal role in supporting the international campaign to remove the Taliban in Afghanistan. Although

it blocked use of its airspace during the Iraq war, Turkey has engaged both bilaterally and multilaterally to support a variety of reconstruction and training efforts in Iraq. Parallel to these efforts, however, Turkey has pursued closer ties to the clerical regime in Tehran, not only by steadfastly avoiding resolutions on Iran's human rights record but by leading efforts (along with Brazil) to avoid increasing international sanctions on its nuclear program.

Turkey's consistent rhetorical support for democratic transition and good governance in the Arab region and the Organization of Islamic Cooperation — and, more recently, its muscular posture on Syria — set it apart from the other swing states. As early as January 2003, for example, Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan made the case for the compatibility of Islam and democracy in the Middle East. "It is obvious that the Turkish example demonstrates the invalidity of the exceptionalism paradigm," he told audiences first at Harvard University and later in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia. He went on to outline the case for a consistent, gradual approach toward "deep democracy" based on widespread social consensus, establishment of stable institutions, gender equality, education, civil society, and transparency. He also emphasized the importance of peaceful external conditions, linking Israeli-Palestinian peace and the territorial integrity of Iraq to the prospects for successful democratization.<sup>16</sup>

Now, as the wave of demands for democracy sweeps across the Arab world, Turkey is continuing to play a rhetorical and demonstrative role as a positive and relevant example of democratization. In Egypt, Libya, and Syria, Turkey has been critical of regimes' hardline tactics to suppress dissent

<sup>16</sup> Recep Tayyip Erdoğan "Democracy in the Middle East, Pluralism in Europe: Turkish View" (speech, Harvard University, Jan. 30, 2003) in *Journal of Turkish Weekly*, <http://www.turkishweekly.net/article/8/Erdoğan-democracy-in-the-middle-east-pluralism-in-europe-turkish-view-.html>.

and — with varying vigor — has been supportive of those demanding their rights. Amid protests in Egypt, Prime Minister Erdoğan was among the first world leaders to call on President Hosni Mubarak to step down, despite Turkey's stakes in expanding trade and investment. Mubarak's exit represented an auspicious opportunity for Turkey to assert its regional leadership, as the ousted Egyptian strongman had represented prime competition for influence in the region.

When it comes to Libya and Syria, Turkey has similarly supported opposition forces but its own security and economic interests strongly influenced the timing and nature of the support. Turkey's initial silence and refusal to criticize the Muammar Gaddafi regime coincided with intensive efforts to rescue its expatriates and mediate the conflict. Accordingly, Turkey first opposed the U.N. Security Council's resolution to establish a no-fly zone and the subsequent NATO intervention.<sup>17</sup> Eventually, however, Turkey decided to support NATO's efforts to dislodge Gaddafi.

The uprisings in neighboring Syria represent the Arab Spring's most complicated quagmire for Turkey. Under Erdoğan, Turkey invested precious time and resources in its relationship with the Assad regime, and the normalization of diplomatic and trade relations with Syria was the crown jewel of Erdoğan's "zero problems" policy. The volume of trade between the two countries rose from \$752 million in 2004 to \$2.3 billion in 2010. In addition to these economic risks, chaos in Syria has very tangible implications for Turkish security, and tens of thousands of Syrians have sought refuge across the 822-kilometer border the two countries share.

With these interests in mind, Turkey initially tried to use its influence to convince the Assad regime to pursue democratic reforms. Yet after the July 2011

massacres in Hama, Ankara eventually grew tired of Assad's failure to deliver on promised reforms. As the situation in Syria further deteriorated and the Arab League agreed to isolate and sanction the Assad regime, Erdoğan translated his critical rhetoric into action, announcing economic sanctions and the suspension of the high-level bilateral strategic cooperation mechanism "until a democratic administration comes to power."<sup>18</sup> In addition to hosting refugees, Turkey is also more proactively facilitating aid to protestors in Syria, including money and equipment for opposition forces.

Like advanced democracies, Turkey will not stand up for an international rights-based response at every opportunity. It has, however, successfully conveyed a willingness to defend these values, share its experience and even impose sanctions to dislodge autocratic regimes.

### **Proposals for Engagement: Convergence or Parallelism?**

This overview of the foreign policies of these four global swing states leads to several overarching observations and conclusions that the United States and its European partners should consider as they look for the rising democracies to play a more engaged and predictable role in bolstering the international human rights and democracy order:

- All four countries have made unequivocal commitments to democratic and human rights standards, both as a goal of national development and as a principle of their foreign policies. This shared starting point offers a number of advantages in finding common ground with each other and with more established democracies on strategies

<sup>17</sup> Turkey was not sitting on the U.N. Security Council and thus did not have a vote on the resolution.

<sup>18</sup> "Erdoğan Warns Assad Against Division of Syria," *Today's Zaman*, May 2, 2011, <http://www.todayszaman.com/news-242543-Erdogan-warns-assad-against-division-of-syria.html>.

*Established powers will have to consider how to expand the voice of the swing states in global decision-making.*

for addressing a range of scenarios involving democracy and human rights.

- A wide gap exists, however, regarding the preferred means and methods of international action in this arena. The global swing states have a strong preference for what they describe as constructive engagement, mediation, and quiet diplomacy as tools of international intervention, whereas the established democracies are quicker to pursue condemnation, sanctions, and, in extreme cases, military action. Swing states stand ready, however, to provide help on democracy and human rights when requested by a transitioning state and increasingly have the resources and experience to contribute financial and technical assistance to projects focused on bolstering democratic institutions. Established democracies should welcome this trend and encourage greater dialogue and collaboration among donors and recipients working in this field. They should propose win-win initiatives that give developing democracies more of a leadership role in reinforcing democratic governance, like the Open Government Partnership led initially by Brazil and the United States.
- As these countries continue to globalize their own trade and investment relations around the world, they are facing many of the same difficult tradeoffs as established democracies regarding if and how to implement global human rights norms. Business interests, energy dependency, migration flows and remittances, and aspirations for regional and global leadership all weigh significantly toward careful, cautious, and ad hoc policies concerning these issues.
- Each country's history of overcoming authoritarian, military, or colonial legacies that

were directly supported or abetted by Western powers in favor of establishing constitutional democracy does not necessarily translate into unquestioned support for international interventions to protect democracy and human rights. The memory of external impositions or endorsement of odious regimes runs deep. This leads policymakers in these countries to prioritize principles of national sovereignty and non-intervention and to resist or oppose traditional means of "regime change" in favor of peaceful, mediated, or longer-term processes of change, even at the cost of short-term violence and instability. The democratic peace theory is not well understood or accepted in most of these countries, a problem that established democracies could address through financial support and academic exchanges with leading foreign policy thinkers and diplomats.

- All four nations, to varying degrees, strongly object to the current distribution of power in the global order, leading them to oppose more robust international actions on grounds of selectivity, double standards, and hypocrisy and to claim a greater voice in structures of global governance, such as the U.N. Security Council. To secure a permanent seat on that body, states like Brazil and India seek to win as many friends as possible, thereby mitigating overt criticism of non-democratic regimes and reinforcing the bonds of South-South solidarity. Established powers will have to consider how to expand the voice of the swing states in global decision-making while locking in commitments to the liberal democratic order from which these swing states have benefited.
- The India-Brazil-South Africa forum, which explicitly endorses democracy and human rights as a shared value proposition and thereby distinguishes itself from BRICS,

offers a potentially important platform for coordinated diplomacy on issues of democracy and human rights. It could become even more powerful with the addition of Turkey and Indonesia in a new grouping known as IBSATI. Coordinated action by these countries has begun to occur already. Paired with a more coercive approach by established democracies, such efforts could serve a salutary “good cop, bad cop” function in some cases.

- The Arab Spring presents a positive narrative that underscores the universal nature of democracy and human rights and the importance of popular will in the definition and legitimacy of national sovereignty. It offers a unique opportunity for swing states, individually and as a group, to share their own recent experiences of democratic transition with the Arab world within a context of multilateral cooperation and respect for human rights, which the United States and Europe should encourage.
- There is a growing tendency by swing states to insist on deference to regional organizations as gate-keepers to wider international intervention in political crises. This position has the dual benefit, in their view, of limiting

Western involvement and reinforcing their own roles as leaders in their respective regions. In this regard, to the surprise of many observers, the Arab League’s endorsement of NATO intervention in Libya and the support of the African Union and the Economic Community of West African States for U.N. use of force in Côte d’Ivoire have compelled swing states to go along with — or, at least, not block outright — interventions in these countries in the name of protecting civilians.

- Although democratic transitions in the Arab world and elsewhere will be rocky, the popular demand for universal rights, in concert with the rise of democratic powers in the global south, will reinforce longstanding trends toward democratic governance and respect for human rights around the world, including international efforts to support transitions to democracy. The challenge before Western democracies is to evaluate when to seek convergence with rising democracies on international interventions to uphold human rights and when to yield to parallel efforts that may entail less control but greater acceptance and therefore greater effectiveness on the ground.

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