

A NEW WAVE OF DEMOCRATISATION AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

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ABSTRACT

The paper addressed the contention on whether or not democratisation enhances economic development with emphasis on the on-going move for democratisation in the Arab World as a result of the spiraling cases of violent demonstrations. The qualitative method of research was used. This encompasses data from official documents basically from the United Nations Development Programme. The library and other internet sources were used. The study was conducted with the aid of the theory of the developmental state. The theory faults the regime type hypothesis insisting that development is not regime specific. It holds that leadership's resolve to develop the country and the capacity of the institutions and a disciplined population; are more critical factors. The data were analysed using the qualitative method aided by graphs, tables, and simple percentages. The results revealed that development is not regime-specific and that revolution may not necessarily lead to the entrenchment of democratic ideals, rather it could be autocratic to autocratic transition. The paper also reveals that no matter the degree of economic development, the tendency for citizen's revolt against authoritarian regimes is high. Finally, the paper uses this conclusion to make some inferences on the fate of democratisation and development in sub-Saharan Africa.

Introduction

After Huntington's third wave democratisation which dominates political discourse shortly after the collapse of the Soviet Union, there has not been any move to topple repressive regimes that assumed international dimension like the current spate of political movements in the Arab world. Orthodox political philosophers have extolled the ideological supremacy of capitalism over

communism. The idea is that capitalism is more growth enhancing than communism hitherto practiced by leftist Eastern Europe.

Besides, regime type theorists have been arguing on the relevance of regimes for economic development. The debate on whether or not democratisation enhances economic development has attracted the attention of social and political scientists, policy makers, among others. While some have upheld the growth enhancing virtue of democracy, others have argued otherwise.

But such long debate sometimes may be wasting too much time on what is seemingly irrelevant. To Ogban-Iyam (1983:10), “the alternative (to democracy) is not anti-democracy or no-democracy but to deal specifically with features of governments and political systems that we consider most appropriate.” The desire of the people is paramount. The system of government being practiced ought to depend on the wishes and desires of the people. But it is noteworthy that most of the countries of the world have not really allowed the wishes of the people to prevail in deciding the system of government to adopt and who governs them. Even in electoral democracies the world over, peoples’ votes in most cases hardly count.

However, there is a theoretical debate on the issue of the priority of development and democratisation, does development lead to democracy? Or does democracy generate development? Should development go prior to democracy? Or should democracy go first? Could development and democracy go hand-in-hand? Conventionally, the major stance of the modernization theorists is that ‘economic development makes democracy happen.’

The treatment of the variables varies by different schools of thoughts. Several scholars treat development as an independent variable, amongst others, referring to it as the necessary condition for the emergence and survival of democracy (Acemoglu and Robinson, 2006; Bollen and Jackman, 1985; Briscoe, 2009; Bunce, 2000; Chan, 2002; De Meur and Berg-Schlusser, 1996; Goldstone and Kocornik-Mina, 2005; Helliwell, 1994; Huntington, 1991; Kim, 1998;

Kopstein and Wittenberg, 2010; Lipset, 1981; Luebbert, 1991; Moore, 1966; Przeworski, Alvarez, Cheibub, and Limongi, 2000; Przeworski, 2002) among others.

Leftwich (1994) doubts the development enhancing capacity of democracy. What this implies is that a country probably emerging and intends to develop should not start with political liberalisation. It will not be a worthwhile venture since in essence, it retards instead of accelerates development. Pre-mature democracy is worse for development.

To achieve the degree of development necessary for democracy, some sort of dictatorship reflected in an authoritarian regime will suffice. This is prominent in the social science literature and is given as the development strategy of the Asian Tigers of Singapore, Taiwan, Hong Kong, and South Korea and that of China. The idea is some kinds of peoples' liberties need to be constrained as sacrifices for development. Notable among the scholars in this school of thought are: Acemoglu and Robinson (2006), Bollen and Jackman (1985), De Meur and Berg-Schlusser (1996), Goldstone and Kocornik-Mina (2005), Huntington (1991), Kim (1998), Kopstein and Wittenberg (2010), Krugman (1994), Lipset (1981), Luebbert (1991), Moore (1966), among others.

The market force was also emphasized as a necessary pre-requisite for achieving development. An economy open to market forces is likelier to experience greater degree of development than otherwise (Bhagwati, 2002; Fang, 2006).

Some scholars emphasized the expediency of democratisation as the necessary condition for economic development. Alence (2004), de Macedo (2003), Knutsen (2010), and Rodrik (2000) uphold that democracy provides necessary institutions for development. In the long run, democracy and development go hand-in-hand (Todaro and Smith, 2009) and stable democracy provides avenue for economic development (Oslon, 1993). The duration of democracy could be a basis for development (Gering, Thacker and Alfaro, 2005). That is to say democracies that

have endured for quite a long time possess the capacity for generating sustainable national development more that democracies at rudimentary levels.

Authoritarian regimes possess the highest capacity for engineering economic development (Chang, 2007; Gerring, et al, 2005). This position is affirmed owing to the necessity for withholding some sort of peoples' liberties as a sacrifice for ensuring development.

Three schools of thought can be established on the discourse of the relationship between democratisation and economic development. There are: (1) the complementary school of thought, which upholds the self-reinforcing character of democratisation and development. It asserts that the development of democracy is essential for promoting economic development and vice versa. (2) The incompatibility school of thought, which upholds that democracy and development cannot go together. Instead, it maintained that some elements of autocratic rule are necessary for the achievement of development after which democratisation can be contemplated. (3) The simultaneity school of thought, which justifies the need to pursue democracy and development at the same time.

Consensus can hardly be built with respect to the movement between democratisation and economic development. This paper assesses the performance of the Arab countries under undemocratic regimes, the prospects of economic development with respect to the current push for democratisation, and the implications for sub-Saharan African democracies.

Democratisation in the Arab World

Major debates have been on the status of democratisation in the Arab world. It relates to the factors that have hitherto hampered the realization of the ideals of democratisation. For instance, Perkins (2004) reports the assertion of the anti-democratic characteristics of the Islamic religion. Reporting the computation of some fundamental index for measuring the various aspects of the political process, (Perkins, 2004) asserts that the Arab region scored lowest of the seven regions of the world for which the index encompassing civil liberties, political rights, and independence

of the media was computed. The region was deficit in freedom, women's empowerment, and knowledge. Fawcett (2005:123) argues that embracing constitutional democracy is “an instrumental necessity if the region is to stop stagnating and begin to catch up with the rest of the world.”

The Western countries through their support for Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) have believed that the task of democratisation in the Arab world can be achieved through potent and functional CSOs that can mobilize popular support to engage the state. Yom (2005) reports that since the early 1990s, and particularly since September 11, 2001, Western observers have embraced civil society as the precondition for democratic transition in the Arab states.

Mahdavi (2008:143) asserts that “there is ... a correlation between democratisation and the socio-economic structure; the success or the failure of democratisation depends largely on the extent to which social groups/classes have equal and sufficient access to the state resources.” The character of the state equally contributes to the possibility of democratisation to start and endure. The unique structure of the state both enables and limits democratisation (Mahdavi, 2008:147).

Essentially, “substantive democracy is about societal empowerment, strengthening civil society and establishing democratic procedures based on engagement, dialogue and deliberation of civil society” (Mahdavi, 2008:157). In the final analysis democratisation and democracy are about people, and how they come together in shaping their destiny... human agency remains the critical instrument in rearranging social structures to meet human needs in the realm of politics and economy (Mahdavi, 2008). The essence is that the people can decide to either embrace democracy or jettison it. Based on this assertion, the religious practice of the people does not really count in deciding the regime type to adopt.

Muñoz (2006:72) reports that “since 2004, promotion of democracy in the countries of North Africa and the Middle East has been acquiring growing relevance in international diplomacy.”

Muñoz (2006:72) asserts that those Arab countries are

Faced with important social opposition movements and a large deficit of legitimacy due to its authoritarianism and failure in the social-economic

management of its States, they also observed how in the international framework a period of great uncertainty was opening up, as a consequence of the collapse of bipolar order.

Challenging the assertion of some of the advocates of repressive regimes as pre-requisite for economic development, it was reported that “under the Shah, Iran’s economy, military and diplomatic strength were at their highest levels – it was freedom Iranians wanted” (http://www.parstimes.com/history/us_iran.html /29/05/2011). This is particularly significant following the assertion in some quarters that economic development supersedes democratisation and that what people need most is economic development and not political liberalisation. High level economic development without requisite freedom will certainly make a caricature of the entire system.

The experience of Indonesia provides a proof that both authoritarian and democratic regimes are not necessary pre-condition for economic development. Koesoemawiria (2011) reports the disappointment of Indonesians over the expectation of the democratic regime instituted after the revolution that ousted the autocratic regime in 1988. As a proof that democratisation is not absolutely the only criterion for economic development, Koesoemawiria (2011:207) asserts that;

Many people are frustrated with day-to-day politics. Reasons for disappointment include in-fighting within parties and unfulfilled campaign promises. Moreover, people’s hope that Indonesia’s economic and social conditions would improve immediately did not come true. So, people keep looking for alternatives by starting new parties, often drawing people from influential families or the military into their fold.

The spiraling crises in the Arab world have demonstrated that “the entrenched Arab rulers can no longer say democratic values are of purely Western origin. Arab people are now constructing their own democratic ideals and values” (The Nation, February 23, 2011). Arab’s leaders have argued that the postulation of the international donor agencies to pursue democratisation is alien to their countries. The same paper referred to above reports that for decades, they have

Used the West as a whipping boy when it came to discussion of liberalisation and democratisation. Now, this will not happen again. The lessons from Egypt have given confidence to other Arab nations that they

can work out their own democratic transformation based on local conditions and needs. Islamic countries can be democratic if ordinary people and grassroots stakeholders are allowed to be part of the nation building process.

Recent developments in the region are indications of peoples' discontentment with the status quo and the need for their political liberation. The paper further reports that;

The democratic wind is now blowing ferociously in the Arab world. No country in the Middle East is immune to its contagious effect. Improvement of governance of Arab countries will certainly bring more prosperity and a new outlook. Conservative Arab countries have to adapt and change to meet the demands of the mass uprisings.

The protests in the Arab world beginning in 18 December 2010 brought about the overthrow of the Tunisian and Egyptian governments. Libya is enthralled in a civil war with the pro-democracy opposition in control of the East and Pro-Gaddafi forces in control of the West. Syria is experiencing an uprising, while Yemen's regime has accepted a deal created by the Gulf Cooperation Council. Many other countries in the region are also calling for democracy and freedom (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Democracy_in_the_Middle_East/ 29/05/2011). In Libya for instance, the National Transitional Council has taken over the central government.

A critical conjecture is the possibility of a revolution to translate into the institutionalisation of democratic ideals. The aftermath of the Egyptian revolution that ousted Hosni Mubarak and some of his cronies is a point in question. Some Egyptians are asking whether what has happened was “a revolution or a military coup” (Danner, 2011:217).

Egyptians are really clamouring for the institutionalisation of the fundamental principles of democracy. Kafi (2011:191) reports that “most young people want a secular state, though a lot of them continue to be Muslims. They believe they can live their faith in a state governed through institutions typical of western modernity and capitalism.” He restates the views of a Human Right Watch based in Cairo that “the shared experience of authoritarianism is the main cause of activism” (Kafi, 2011:190). Though, there appears to be a sense of division among the youths on

whether or not democratic laws or Shari'a law should govern the post Mubarak Egypt, the March, 2011 referendum reveals that “the overwhelming majority of Egyptians voted for the constitutional amendments which the military had proposed and which was supported by the former National Democratic Party as well as the Muslim Brotherhood” (D+C Journal, 2011:193). There is a very broad consensus in Egypt that democracy with free elections is the goal. This paper interrogates the relevance of the uprising in the Arab world for democratisation and economic development with the view to drawing some lessons for sub-Saharan African countries.

Theoretical Foundations

The paper adopts the theory of the developmental state. “Developmental state, or *hard state*, is a term used by international political economy scholars to refer to the phenomenon of state-led macroeconomic planning in East Asia in the late twentieth century” (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/developmental_state: 16/09/2010). This is against the minimal state postulation of the mainstream liberals which emphasizes limited state and absolute role of the market in national economic management.

The theory evolved out of the developmental experience of the East Asian tigers. It is a particular model of capitalism practiced in East Asia under the leadership of development oriented people and often referred to by the political economy community as “state development capitalism” (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/developmental_state:16/09/2010). The state in this regards has more independence, or autonomous political power, as well as more control over the economy. In further conceptualizing the notion of the developmental state, Antic (2004:19) asserts that “almost all the countries that were the most successful in promoting development had very strong role of the state in the economy.” It is somewhat similar to the principle of state-centrism predominant in international relations literature before the emergence of international organizations and other non-state actors (Igwe, 2005).

The roots of the developmental state “are drawn from the theory of mercantilism advocating intervention of the state in the economy” (Bolesta, 2007:105). To Johnson cited in Bolesta (2007:105), the developmental state theory “is a short-hand for the seamless web of political, bureaucratic, and moneyed influences that structures economic life in capitalist Northeast Asia.” A developmental state is characterized by having strong state intervention, as well as extensive regulation and planning (Leftwich, 1994). In states that were late to industrialize, the state itself led the industrialization drive, that is, it took on developmental functions. Leftwich (1994:365) adds that “as empirical evidence shows, it has been the existence of effective ‘developmental states’ (whether democratic or not) which accounted for the most successful records of economic development in the third world over the last thirty years.” In as much as these developmental states are unattractive at least from the perspective of the believers of liberal and socialist points of view, “they have been highly effective in raising the material welfare of the majority of their citizens within a generation” (Leftwich, 1994:365).

The first person to seriously conceptualize the developmental state was Chalmers Johnson in 1982 (Leftwich, 1995). Chalmers Johnson in his book ‘MITI and the Japanese Miracle’ used the theory of the developmental state in analyzing the process of the industrialization of Japan (Bolesta, 2007). MITI is an acronym for ‘Ministry of International Trade and Industry.’ The revolution of the MITI in Japan orchestrated the assertion by Johnson that active role of the state in economic management could yield excellent result. Making a further detailed description of the fundamental characteristics underlying the existence of the developmental state, Leftwich (1994:381) asserts that,

their growth has been masterminded by developmental states, (both democratic and non-democratic); that is, states whose politics have concentrated sufficient power, probity, autonomy and competence at the centre to shape, pursue and exchange the achievement of explicit and nationally – determined developmental objectives, whether by establishing and promoting the conditions of economic growth, by organizing it directly, or by a varying combination of both.

He notes that “at almost every point, then, the models of good governance and the developmental state are in conflict” (Leftwich, 1994:381).

A developmental state intervenes more directly in the economy through a variety of means to promote the growth of new industries and to reduce the dislocations caused by shifts in investment and profits from old to new industries. In other words, developmental states can pursue industrial policies (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/developmental_state: 16/09/2010).

The assumption underlying the introduction of this theory is captured in the fact that the theory in real terms emphasizes the need for a departure from the neo-liberal economic ideology as the parameter for rapid economic development. The East Asian example proves eloquently that development is more feasible in a state interventionist ideology rather than depending on the orthodox formula recommended by the Bank and the Fund.

In a discussion on whether or not China is a developmental state, Bolesta (2007:109) submits that “although it is indeed an interventionist state, the economic environment is capitalist, where the private sector plays a crucial role in the development of the economy.” The theory of the developmental state “can also be applied in market economy condition” (Bolesta, 2007:110). It does not necessarily mean that such a state must be “an authoritarian one, as it may as well be democratic. It must however be an interventionist state” (Bolesta, 2007:111).

The utility of this theory to the current study is premised on the fact that hitherto, there has not been consciousness on the part of the people and government of the less developed countries of the possibility of autonomous development. The success of the Asian Tigers before the 80s is a justification of the capacity of the state to guarantee development. It also alludes to the privileged and seemingly supreme position of the state to lead the process of national development.

The foregoing discussions make the application of the theory expedient in the study of the new wave of democratisation and the challenges of development especially as it concerns the Arab world and its implication(s) for African countries.

Economic Development of the Arab World

The significance of economic development in any political system cannot be over-emphasised. Some of the indicators of economic development according to <http://www.bized.co.uk/31/01/2011> are: “growth, development, and human development index (HDI).” Development in its sense goes beyond growth. It involves the general improvement in the welfare of the human population. That was the reason for the use of HDI as a development indicator by the UNDP HDR since 1990.

To Seers in Todaro and Smith (2009:15),

The questions to ask about a country’s development are therefore: what has been happening to poverty? What has been happening to unemployment? What has been happening to inequality? If all three of these have declined from high levels, then beyond doubt this has been a period of development for the country concerned. If one or two of these central problems have been growing worse, especially if all three have, it would be strange to call the result ‘development’ even if per capita doubled.

The critical point to note about Seers’ definition is the fact that the three major issues raised are mutually reinforcing. Unemployment generates poverty and increases the gap between the rich and the poor in the society. As quality employments are being generated, the possibility of gradually alleviating poverty and inequality will rise.

Todaro and Smith (2009:16) conceive of development as “a multidimensional process involving major changes in social structures, popular attitudes, and national institutions, as well as the acceleration of economic growth, the reduction of inequality and the eradication of poverty.” It entails a general improvement in the quality of life and the ability of the people to enjoy unhindered freedom.

With regards to this current study, the empirical indicators of economic development shall be: Gross Domestic Product (GDP) per capita; HDI; Life expectancy; and literacy rates.

GDP Per Capita of some Arab Countries

A country’s GDP per capita refers to the GDP per number of population. It is calculated as $\frac{GDP}{Adult\ Population}$. It is usually lower than the per capita income of a country (Black, 2003). It is

used to measure the degree of wealth distribution in a country. Table 1 contains the GDP per capita of some of the Arab countries. The values are made clearer by figure 1. It shows that Kuwait, UAE and Qatar performed very high on the GDP per capita.

The values for Iraq and Somalia are unavailable. One of the explanations for the Somalis experience is the prevalence of crisis in the country. The assumption is that an autocratic system with relative stability will perform better on growth continuum. Bulk of the Arab world particularly those with abundant natural resources are caught in the web of the resource curse analogy. Resource dependent countries perform badly in the management of the economy (Acosta & de Renzio, 2008), hence putting the economy at crawling level.

There is no doubt that the spiralling cases of violence rocking some countries in the Arab world will definitely affect their GDP per capita. Development cannot be contemplated in an atmosphere of violence and uncertainty.

Table 1: GDP Per Capita of some Arab Countries

S/No	Country	GDP Per Capita of some Arab Countries								
		1980	1985	1990	1995	2000	2005	2006	2007	^2008
1	Algeria	6,733	7,250	6,582	5,963	6,446	7,599	7,620	7,740	8,320
2	Bahrain	23,091	18,044	18,962	22,469	24,664	29,723	29,723	29,723	26,664
3	Comoros	1,253	1,356	1,287	1,196	1,157	1,194	1,183	1,143	1,176
4	Djibouti	*	*	2,906	2,230	1,865	1,959	2,017	2,061	2,471
5	Egypt	2,620	3,222	3,534	3,797	4,459	4,844	5,083	5,349	5,889
6	Iran	7,505	7,552	6,623	7,222	8,119	9,863	10,294	10,955	11,764
7	Iraq	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
8	Jordan	4,211	4,478	3,527	3,757	3,846	4,598	4,776	4,901	5,956
9	Kuwait	40,000	26,589	*	35,355	35,583	40,000	40,000	40,000	55,719
10	Lebanon	*	*	5,577	8,449	8,819	10,124	10,013	10,109	13,475
11	Libya	*	*	*	*	12,569	13,300	13,712	14,364	17,068
12	Mauritania	1,849	1,693	1,683	1,719	1,691	1,784	1,940	1,927	2,118
13	Morocco	2,515	2,632	2,943	2,817	3,156	3,800	4,047	4,108	4,628
14	Oman	9,800	15,445	14,910	16,828	17,962	21,611	22,816	22,816	25,653
15	**P A	*	*	*	*	*	2,243	2,243	2,243	*
16	Qatar	*	*	*	*	40,000	40,000	40,000	40,000	79,426
17	**S A	36,637	21,638	20,142	20,529	20,878	22,470	22,631	22,935	24,726
18	Somalia	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
19	Sudan	1,114	982	1,079	1,217	1,469	1,778	1,936	2,086	2,051
20	Syria	3,562	3,411	3,119	3,981	3,945	4,238	4,336	4,511	4,760
21	Tunisia	3,830	4,135	4,255	4,683	5,765	6,825	7,140	7,520	7,979
22	***UA E	40,000	40,000	40,000	40,000	40,000	40,000	40,000	40,000	58,006
23	Yemen	*	*	1,883	1,959	2,186	2,318	2,321	2,335	2,387

Source: Data extracted from; (1) HDI trends (1980-2007) (2) HDR, 2010, (3) From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia (2010) List of countries by HDI

Keys

*Unavailable

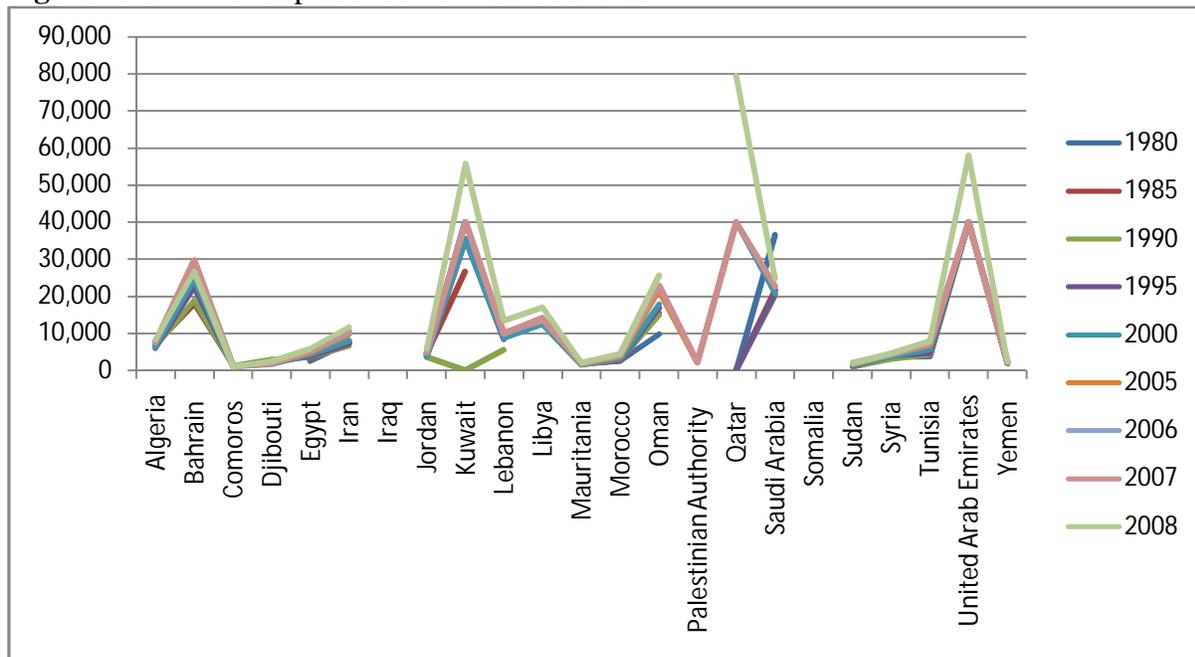
**Palestinian Authority

***Saudi Arabia

****United Arab Emirates

^GNI per capita

Figure 1: GDP Per Capita of some Arab Countries



Source: Data extracted from; (1) HDI trends (1980-2007) (2) HDR, 2010, (3) From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia (2010) List of countries by HDI, but the graph was constructed by the author using the MS Excel package.

The Arab Human Development Report (AHDR, 2003) conveys some alarming statistics.

The report as cited by Perkins (2004) states that:

In Arab countries, the quality of higher education is declining and enrollment is down. Public spending on education has declined since 1985. Expenditure on research and development is a tiny 0.2 percent of GNP, and there is a "political and social context inimical to the development of science." The number of scientists and engineers per capita is a third of the world average. The number of computers per capita is a quarter of the global average. The number of newspapers published per capita is a fifth of that of developed countries, and the little news that is disseminated is controlled and restricted. The few books that are published are censored, and the proportion of religious books produced is three times the world average. The number of books translated into Spanish each year is one thousand times the number translated into Arabic.

Table 2 contains the trend of the HDI of some of the Arab countries. The report is not different from the information contained on table 1 and the report of the AHDR. Most of the countries contained on table 2 performed above average on the HDI, but essentially, high performance on the HDI may not be equated to high development particularly vis-à-vis the volume of resources at the disposal of these countries.

Table 2: HDI of some of the Arab Countries, 1980 to 2008

S/No	Country	HDI Trends								
		1980	1985	1990	1995	2000	2005	2006	2007	2008
1	Algeria	*	0.628	0.647	0.653	0.713	0.746	0.749	0.754	0.677
2	Bahrain	0.761	0.784	0.829	0.850	0.864	0.888	0.894	0.895	0.801
3	Comoros	0.447	0.461	0.489	0.513	0.540	0.570	0.573	0.576	0.428
4	Djibouti	*	*	*	*	*	0.513	0.517	0.520	0.402
5	Egypt	0.496	0.552	0.580	0.631	0.665	0.696	0.700	0.703	0.620
6	Iran	0.561	0.620	0.672	0.712	0.738	0.773	0.777	0.782	0.702
7	Iraq	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
8	Jordan	0.631	0.638	0.666	0.656	0.691	0.764	0.767	0.770	0.681
9	Kuwait	0.812	0.826	*	0.851	0.874	0.915	0.912	0.916	0.771
10	Lebanon	*	*	*	*	*	0.800	0.800	0.803	*
11	Libya	*	*	*	*	0.821	0.837	0.842	0.847	0.755
12	Mauritania	*	*	*	*	0.495	0.511	0.519	0.520	0.433
13	Morocco	0.473	0.499	0.518	0.562	0.583	0.640	0.648	0.654	0.567
14	Oman	*	*	*	*	*	0.836	0.843	0.846	*
15	**P A	*	*	*	*	*	0.736	0.737	0.737	*
16	Qatar	*	*	*	*	0.870	0.903	0.905	0.910	0.803
17	***S A	*	*	0.744	0.765	*	0.837	0.840	0.843	0.752
18	Somalia	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
19	Sudan	*	*	*	*	0.491	0.515	0.526	0.531	0.379
20	Syria	0.603	0.625	0.626	0.649	0.715	0.733	0.738	0.742	0.589
21	Tunisia	*	0.605	0.627	0.654	0.678	0.758	0.763	0.769	0.683
22	****UA E	0.743	0.806	0.834	0.845	0.848	0.896	0.896	0.903	0.815
23	Yemen	*	*	*	0.486	0.522	0.562	0.568	0.575	0.439

Source: Data extracted from; (1) HDI trends (1980-2007) (2) HDR, 2010, (3) From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia (2010) List of countries by HDI

Keys

*Unavailable

**Palestinian Authority

***Saudi Arabia

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Israel's values on the life expectancy trends are 0.813, 0.834, 0.854, 0.877, 0.900, 0.921, 0.925, and 0.928 in 1980, 1985, 1990, 1995, 2000, 2005, 2006 and 2007 respectively. Kuwait, Qatar, and UAE also performed highly on the life expectancy trend. The three countries together with Israel were in the category of the developed countries, that is, with very high values on the life

expectancy index. Bahrain, Libya, Oman, Saudi Arabia, and Lebanon fell to the category of the countries with high values on the life expectancy index. On this scale, Lebanon has the least scale with 0.692 in 1980 and 0.781 in 2007. Whereas Iran, Jordan, Tunisia, Algeria, Syria, Occupied Palestinian Territory, Egypt, Morocco, Comoros, Yemen, Sudan, Mauritania, and Djibouti fell to the category of countries with medium values on the life expectancy index (values are from HDI trends, 1980-2007 from the UNDP HDR).

Conclusion

The Arab nations present a unique scenario with respect to democracy and development. The dominance of Islam has significantly shaped the management of the economy and the pattern of governance of the region in an interesting dimension. The antagonism against Western liberalism and the position of the West with respect to the Israel – Arab crises compounded the problem. But the events of recent times are justifications of the fact that the people are clamouring for more open political system. The demonstration that started from December 2010 till the current upheaval in Libya is testimony of these facts. But, the revolution that has ousted long time autocratic leaders like the one in Tunisia and Egypt do not necessarily lead to the entrenchment of democratic ideals. For instance, in Egypt, the military has taken over the government and the promise of organising a democratic election soon is dicey. The possibility of autocratic to autocratic transition is visible even as the same is possible of autocratic to democratic transition and vice versa.

Essentially, the Arab world has not been able to maximize the opportunity available at the disposal of autocratic regimes to ensure the development of their countries as the Asian Tigers have done. Using the analogy of the theory of the developmental state, any regime type can achieve development if the leaders and the followers so wish.

We will continue to monitor developments as they unfold in the Arab world and the globe in general. If one is to tag the current happening in the Arab world, this paper could have probably be titled ‘the fourth wave democratisation and the challenges of economic development.’ At the

collapse of the Soviet Union in 1990s following the seeming triumph of capitalism culminate into an era of the third wave democratisation put forward by Huntington.

Finally, it could be noted that the rising hostilities in the Arab world portend the tendency for resistance against tight leaders in sub-Saharan African countries and those that have consistently manipulated the constitution to perpetrate their hold on power in the midst of poverty and acute underdevelopment. The sub-Saharan African countries have consistently ranked least in the UNDP HDI. Will the revolution lead to the sustenance of democracy and the possibility for economic development? Only time will tell.

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