

## **Trends and Development of Elections, Civil Liberties and Democracy in the Muslim World (1998 – 2008)**

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### **ABSTRACT**

This study examines the trends, development and practices of democracy (DV), civil liberties and elections (IVs) in 47 Muslim countries between the years 1998 to 2008. Based on secondary quantitative data primarily collected from Freedom House and analysed using SPSS, this study demonstrates the aggregate findings as follows - the 'not free not fair' elections, the 'limited' civil liberties and the 'Illiberal Partial Democracy' were the most dominant nature of elections, civil liberties and democracy practised in the Muslim world; and with 66.67% occurrences, elections proved to be the better predictor of democracy compared to civil liberties with only 31.58%. While this study concentrates on political variables as determinants of democracy, future research may consider other socio-economic variables such as economic development, citizens' level of education, social mobilisation activities, etc.

**Keywords:** Civil liberties, democracy, election, Muslim world politics

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### **1. INTRODUCTION**

The period between the late 1980s and early 1990s embraced democratisation and liberalisation waves throughout the developing world, including the Muslim world. This period witnessed widespread return to elected civilian governments and expansion of people's civil liberties. To trace it, democratisation is not actually a new phenomenon. The first wave began as early as 1828 to 1926 which witnessed about 29 democracies. However, Mussolini's era, starting from 1922 to 1942, marked the first 'reverse wave' of democracy, resulting in a decreased number of democratic states to only 12. This was followed by the second democratisation wave from 1943 to 1962 initiated by the triumph of the Allies in World War II where 36 countries were seen to be practising democracy. Similarly, this second wave also experienced a 'reverse wave' for 15 years (1960-1975), which reduced the democratic countries to 30. However, the democratic breakthrough process was later extended to the third wave which began in 1974 and lasted till 1990. Here, the role was played by the European Community (EC) through the establishment of 'democracy' as a pre-requisite for economic privileges of EC members and also American power and influence in spreading their ideas and model of democracy worldwide (Huntington, 1991).

In measuring the performance of democracy, two variables have long been used – election and civil liberties. The Freedom House, for example, defines democracy as “a

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political system in which people choose their authoritative leaders freely from among competing groups and individuals who are not chosen by the government [election], as well as the chance to act spontaneously in variety of fields outside the control of government and other centres of political domination [civil liberties]" (2007: pp. 876-877).

Generally, this study is about elections, civil liberties and democracy in the Muslim world from 1998 - 2008. It attempts to identify and ascertain the practices, variations and pattern of election, civil liberties and democracy practised in Muslim societies. Specifically, this study attempts to seek answers for the following research questions;

1. How far are civil liberties practised in the Muslim world?
2. How far are elections in the Muslim world free and fair?
3. What variations of democracy are mostly practised in the Muslim world?
4. What is the best predictor of democracy in the Muslim world – elections or civil liberties?

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

There are many scholars involved in the study of elections and civil liberties. However, not many of them specifically study both subjects simultaneously. This might be the result of the 'established' assumption that when we talk about democracy, both civil liberties and elections are inseparable - thus, liberal democracy. In general, the scholars' views can be divided into three categories – the pro-civil liberties, the pro-election and the middle roaders.

The proponents of civil liberties claim that in order to democratise a country, liberties must grow and be strengthened first (Fareed Zakaria, 1997; Krastev, 2006; Anwar Ibrahim, 2006; Sharansky, 2004). If elections are held before constitutional liberalism takes place, they will destroy civil liberties. This group is headed by Fareed Zakaria, who popularised the term 'illiberal democracy'. Fareed Zakaria claims 'constitutional liberalism has led to democracy, but democracy does not seem to bring constitutional liberalism' (1997: p. 28). Instead, it has resulted in the centralisation of authority - a force that could possibly undermine liberty - as unchecked centralisation has been the enemy of liberal democracy. He further proposes to the United States to encourage gradual development of constitutionalism outside the Western world as a better effort in consolidating democracy, rather than searching for a new land to democratise by holding elections. For him, "democracy without constitutional liberalism is not simply inadequate, but dangerous, bringing with it the erosion of liberty, the abuse of power, ethnic divisions, and even war" (1997: pp.42-43). Krastev affirms that "a more potent threat to freedom is posed by the rise of democracy's doubles" (2006: p. 52) – a term he coined to elucidate the regime which claims democracy, looks democratic, and is in fact democratic (elected), but rules like autocrats. Bell *et al.* (1995) argue that (non-Western) countries conduct democratic elections with the aim of promoting stability, but not actually to promote freedom, unlike their Western democrat counterparts. Furthermore, Anwar Ibrahim (2006) emphasises that democracy cannot prevail in a society without the commitment of its political leaders to protect liberties. According to him, these liberties must be safeguarded by an independent judiciary, which functions as a check and balance against the elected executive and legislature.

On the other hand, the proponents of elections reject the idea that liberty should be established first, instead of having an election, in an attempt towards liberal democracy

(Smith and Ziegler, 2008; Kupchan, 1998; Carothers, 2003; Holmes, 2003; Diamond, 2003; Mahmood Monshipouri, 2004). Smith and Ziegler (2008) accept the phenomenon of illiberal democracy (condemned by pro-civil liberty scholars), arguing that illiberal democracy would provide an identifiable gateway to liberal democracy, as proven by their study on democracy in Latin America. According to them, illiberal democracy provides a common pre-condition – neither necessary nor sufficient, but nonetheless recurrent – for the achievement of liberal democracy. Kupchan (1998) concurs with the position of the proponents of civil liberties when they say liberties precede democracy, but only in the case of the Anglo-Saxon West, not the entire world. He further explains that the current democratisation process is taking place in countries with little or no background of constitutional liberalism. The citizens' participation in democracy particularly through elections helps bring changes in the political culture necessary for liberal governance. In fact, many of today's liberal democracies passed a long illiberal period before finally becoming liberal, such as the case of Germany, Japan and Mexico. For him, if the United States stops promoting democracy, as Fareed Zakaria suggested, we would find the "world not just less democratic but also less liberal" (1997: 32). In a similar vein, Carothers (2003) agrees with this opinion claiming that the expansion of democracy around the world in the past 20 years has brought with it great achievements in liberty (though bedeviled by many problems). Holmes (2003) strengthens the idea and the fear that some elements in constitutional liberalism - divided government, freedom to preach and proselytize - might not lead a country towards liberal democracy, but would possibly go the opposite way, which may even be the worst way - the extremist violence. Diamond (2003) could not imagine that greater protection of individual freedom can be safeguarded in a political system that is less accountable for popular control – that has no competitive multi-party elections, no elections that are free and fair, or even no elections at all. Furthermore, according to Mahmood Monshipouri (2004), elections are so important; a phenomenon which is likely to deepen democratic habits as well as liberal habits over time.

Instead of taking the side of either civil liberties or elections, there are a few scholars who attempt to reconcile civil liberties and elections, and call for simultaneous implementation of both (Plattner, 1998; Dahl, 1971; Bassam Tibi, 2008; Shattuck and Atwood, 1998). Plattner (1998) highlights that overstating the disjunction or dichotomy between civil liberties and elections can finally lead to a new misunderstanding of democracy. In general, countries that hold free and fair elections are overwhelmingly more liberal than those that do not. Similarly, countries that protect civil liberties are more likely to hold free and fair elections than those that do not. This is because, logically speaking, free and fair elections require the guarantee of certain civil liberties such as freedom of speech, association, assembly, etc. The same applies to liberty. Civil liberties are always assumed to include some kind of right to electoral participation, to the point that 'universal and equal suffrage' was endorsed by the world community in 1948 as a human right. Dahl (1971) supports this stance while illustrating the integration of elections and liberties. He claims that citizens in a democratic country are supposed to enjoy the right to vote as well as to have free and fair elections. In addition, to guaranteeing these two rights, certain institutional mechanisms - freedom to form and join organisations, freedom of expressions, eligibility for public office, right of

leaders to compete for support, and alternative sources of information - have to be put in place. Bassam Tibi (2008) elucidates that democracy is not all about instituting elections; rather, it is about building a civil society with full respect for universal human rights. Shattuck and Atwood (1998) answer the criticism of pro-civil liberties scholars who claim that the United States democracy assistance programme aimed only to promote election and undermine liberalism. According to them, these programmes are promoting not only elections, but also some elements of liberties such as the creation of legislatures, judiciaries, executives, independent media, trade unions and non-governmental organisations. These programmes help institutionalise the rule of law and foster greater respect for human rights, besides establishing elections, as the United States understands that both are important and necessary.

Almost all the literature reviewed discuss the problem either by making a general survey of the Muslim world (Fareed Zakaria, 1997; 2003; Fatima Mernissi, 1992; Yahya Sadowski, 2006; Price, 1996), selecting certain countries as case studies to be discussed (Steele, 2006; Abdul Rashid Moten, 2009; Kienle, 1998; Ali Gheissari and Nasr, 2006; Osman Bakar, 2006; Hussin Mutalib, 2000; Philips, 2008; Akhbar Ganji, 2007), focusing on certain Muslim regions such as the Middle East and Southern Asia (Smith and Ziegler, 2008; Rizal Sukma, 2009; Lust-Okar and Zerhouni, 2008; Harris *et al.*, 1997; Lewis, 2005; Jawad, 1994; Plattner and Brumberg, 2003) or selecting a few countries to be discussed comparatively (Krastev, 2006; Amaney Jamal, 2006). No literature reviewed has given an examination of the entire Muslim world. In addition with the exception of Amaney Jamal's (2006) as well as Smith and Ziegler's (2008) works, all the researchers studied the cases qualitatively and relied heavily on secondary sources. Therefore, this study will do an aggregate evaluation of democracy covering all Muslim countries using quantitative data, and suggest ideas on ways to be adopted so that liberalism and democracy can be amalgamated in the Muslim countries.

### 3. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Briefly, this study will use elections and civil liberties as the variables to measure democratic level and performance in Muslim countries. The relationship between varying degrees of elections – 'free and fair', 'free not fair' and 'not free not fair' combined with varying provisions of civil liberties – 'expansive', 'limited' and 'repressive' are expected to produce seven types of democratic levels – liberal democracy, illiberal democracy, liberal partial democracy, illiberal partial democracy, repressive partial democracy, illiberal non-democracy and repressive non-democracy as illustrated in the Table 1.

#### 3.1 Definition of Terminologies

This paper groups civil liberties into three – expansive, limited and repressive. 'Expansive' is full recognition and protection of all citizens' rights (liberal), 'limited' refers to ensuring certain civil liberties but intervening in others (illiberal), whereas 'repressive' means repression of people's civil liberties (repressive).

Similarly, elections are also categorised into three – 'free and fair', 'free not fair', and 'not free not fair'. Elections which are 'free and fair' (democratic) include regular elections,

universal suffrage and party's competition with equal opportunity and prospects for campaigning, mobilising support and winning as well as overseen by a non-partisan body. In contrast, 'free not fair' elections (partial democracy) are meaningless elections, which reflect the presence of regular elections, universal suffrage and party's competition, but with the absence of equal treatment and equal chances to certain candidates and supervision by a partisan electoral body. Meanwhile, elections that are 'not free not fair' (non-democracy) apply to governments without elections, headed by un-elected rulers, or held under military occupation, or invasion of foreign power.

**Table 1.** Relationships between elections, civil liberties and democracy

Civil Liberties \ Liberties	Free and Fair	Free not Fair	Not Free Not Fair
Expansive	Liberal Democracy	Liberal Partial Democracy	
Limited	Illiberal Democracy	Illiberal Partial democracy	Illiberal Non-Democracy
Repressive		Repressive Partial Democracy	Repressive Non-Democracy

*Source:* Adapted from Smith and Ziegler (2008:33).

The mixture of different variants of civil liberties and elections are expected to produce seven types of democracy with varying degrees. The first one is 'liberal democracy', which refers to a democratic government that practices regular elections, universal suffrage and party's competition, with equal opportunities and prospects for campaigning, mobilising support and winning as well as overseen by a non-partisan electoral commission. This type of regime recognises and protects freedom of arbitrary arrest, freedom of (lawful) assembly, organisation and movement, freedom of expression, freedom of speech, and freedom of press. 'Illiberal democracy', on the other hand, also conducts regular elections, universal suffrage and party's competition, with equal opportunity and prospects for campaigning, mobilising support and winning as well as overseen by a non-partisan electoral body, but ensures only certain civil liberties are guaranteed by a liberal democratic regime, and intervenes in others. The third type of democracy is 'liberal partial democracy'; this regime type differs from liberal democracy as it recognises and protects all types of civil liberties mentioned earlier, and the government is elected through regular elections, universal suffrage and party's competition, but fair-play competition among electoral candidates is not guaranteed and the elections are conducted by a biased non-neutral organisation. In contrast, 'illiberal partial democracy' not only ensures selected civil liberties and abandons others, but lacks fair-play competition among electoral candidates with a biased electoral supervision body, though the government is elected. Meanwhile, 'repressive partial democracy' is the

result of an elected government which wins an election without providing an equal chance for all candidates to campaign and win, and eventually denies the rights of people to enjoy civil liberties. ‘Illiberal non-democracy’ and ‘repressive non-democracy’ are, among others, the worst types of democracies. Both governments are either non-elected (monarchy or military) or taken over by a foreign power through invasion. However, the former, to some extent, recognises certain, though not all, people’s civil liberties, while the latter rules dictatorially, with people not having the opportunity to enjoy their civil liberties at all.

### 3.2 Hypotheses

The framework shows that the type of democracy is contingent upon the type of elections held and the extent of prevalence of civil liberties in the country. The framework yields the following hypotheses:

#### **H1: The nature of elections is related to the type of democracy**

Hence, if a country practices ‘free and fair’ elections, the country is expected to fall under the type ‘Democracy’. However, if ‘free not fair’ election prevails in the country, then that country might belong to ‘Partial Democracy’ category. On the other hand, a country which practices ‘not free not fair’ election will be categorised as ‘Non-Democracy’.

#### **H2: The extent of civil liberties is related to type of democracy**

Similarly, the extent of the prevalent civil liberties determines the level of democracy of a country. If ‘expansive’ civil liberties exist, then the country is considered either a ‘Liberal Democracy’ or a ‘Liberal Partial Democracy.’ Meanwhile, if a country only guarantees ‘limited’ civil liberties, then the country falls under the ‘Illiberal Democracy’, ‘Illiberal Partial Democracy’ or ‘Illiberal Non-Democracy’ type. On the other hand, if absence of civil liberties prevails in a country, then the country belongs to either ‘Repressive Partial Democracy’ or ‘Repressive Non-Democracy’.

## 4. METHODOLOGY

This study is a survey and document based study, using both primary and secondary sources, and relying mainly on quantitative analysis. The primary source from which the data are mainly derived are the Freedom House Annual Report. In addition, secondary sources include data from various books, theses and articles published in various journals. Among the important ones are *Journal of Democracy*, *Democratization*, *Middle East Review* and *International Affairs* and *Foreign Affairs*, of various volumes and numbers.

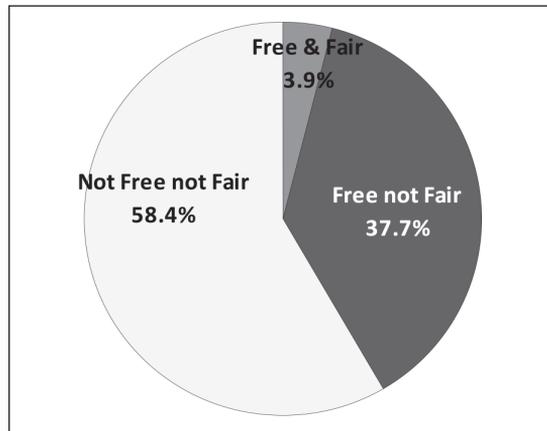
The unit of analysis of this study is the Muslim world in the year 1998 to 2008. This study includes all of the Organisation of Islamic Conference (OIC) Muslim majority states (with the exception of Palestine as the data for this country is not available), plus non-OIC members with a majority Muslim population such as Eritrea. Thus, this study defines the Muslim world with reference to these 47 countries from four different regions – 19 countries from Africa: Algeria, Burkina Faso, Chad, Comoros, Djibouti, Eritrea, Gambia, Guinea, Libya, Mali, Mauritania, Morocco, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Somalia, Sudan, Tunisia: 11 from Asia: Bangladesh, Brunei, Indonesia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Malaysia, Maldives,

Pakistan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan: only one from the European continent: Albania, and 16 countries from the Middle East: Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, Bahrain, Egypt, Iran, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Turkey, the United Arab Emirates, and Yemen.

## 5. FINDINGS & DISCUSSION

### 5.1 Development of Elections: Domination of the Worst

Figure 1 reveals the practices of elections in the Muslim world, 1998–2008. The first finding highlights the performance and development of the ‘free and fair’ elections. As Figure 1 reveals, this type of election achieved the lowest with only 3.9% out of the overall total performance, which equals to 20 cases from 517 altogether. Browsing through the countries’ performance, this type of election was practised nine times in Mali (2000-2008), six times in Senegal (2002-2007), four times in Indonesia (2005-2008) and once in Bangladesh (1998). However, none of these Muslim countries had ‘free and fair elections’ consistently throughout these 11 years.



**Figure 1.** Practices of elections in the Muslim world, 1998 – 2008

Source: Adapted from the Freedom House, ‘Freedom in the World Survey’. Retrieved May 11, 2010 from <<http://freedomhouse.org>>

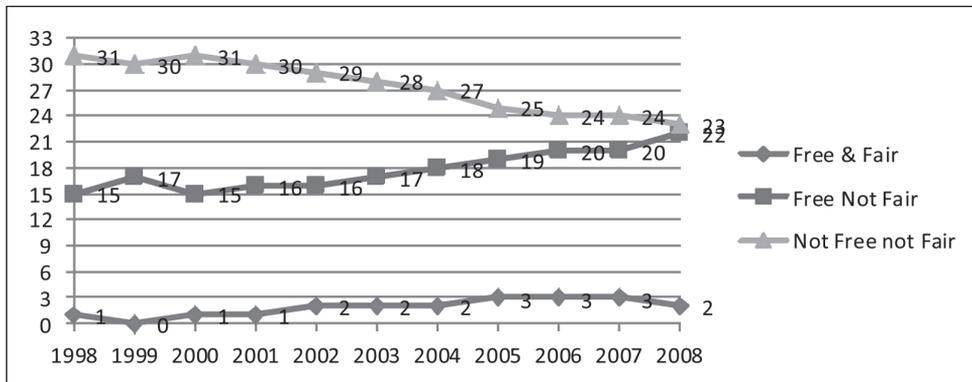
Meanwhile, the Muslim countries scored 37.7% for ‘free not fair’ elections, which equals to 195 cases. There were a total of seven countries that continuously practised this type of elections between the years 1998–2008. These countries were Albania, Burkina Faso, Kuwait, Malaysia, Morocco, Sierra Leone and Turkey.

In addition, during these 11 years, 58.4% or 302 out of 517 cases reflected ‘not free not fair’ elections. There were 19 countries that experienced ‘not free not fair’ elections consistently from 1998-2008 such as Algeria, Azerbaijan, Brunei, Guinea, Iran, Iraq, Kazakhstan, Libya, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Somalia, Sudan, Syria, Tajikistan, Tunisia, Turkmenistan, the United Arab Emirates, and Uzbekistan. These governments cannot be

changed democratically. They were either governments without election, led by un-elected rulers/monarchs, unfair competition for political power, or/and held under/backed up by the military.

**5.2 Trends of Elections: A Gradual Improvement**

Figure 2 illustrates the trend of elections in the Muslim world from 1998 – 2008. It witnesses an almost straight linear line of ‘free and fair’ electoral trend without major fluctuations. Besides, the figure shows a stable and consistent upward sloping of the performance of ‘free not fair’ elections except in 2000 (decreased by two cases). In addition, though ‘not free not fair’ election dominated the Muslim world, it consistently decreased over these 11 years, except in 2000 (increased by one case) and in 2007 (remained constant). However, its decrease was somehow slow and gradual - by one or two cases only per year - but still consistent and continuous.



**Figure 2.** Trend of elections in the Muslim world, 1998 – 2008

Source: Adapted from the Freedom House, ‘Freedom in the World Survey’. Retrieved May 11, 2010 from <<http://freedomhouse.org>>

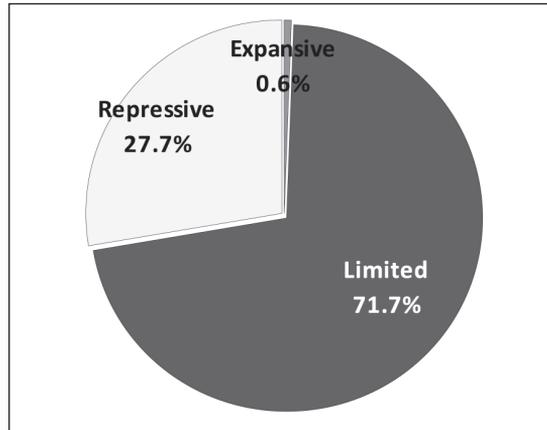
At a glance, it might be easy to conclude that the Muslim countries’ performance in free and fair elections has been declining as the number of ‘free not fair’ elections increased over the 11 years. Nonetheless, it actually shows remarkable improvement in the freeness of elections as the number of ‘free not fair’ elections increased due to the transition of the ‘not free not fair’ elections to the ‘free not fair’ elections.

In a nutshell, though Muslim world performance of ‘free and fair’ elections is low, it is predicted that Muslim countries would perform better as time passes by. Despite this hopeful trend, it appears that the transitional process from ‘not free not fair’ and ‘free not fair’ elections to ‘free and fair’ elections in the Muslim world would be very slow and gradual.

**5.3 Development of Civil Liberties: Expansion of the ‘Limited’**

From elections, we move on to development of civil liberties in the Muslim world from the year 1998 to 2008. Here, the overall findings witness better results compared to the

development of elections, as shown in the Figure 3. Despite much achievement, the development of 'expansive' civil liberties amongst Muslim countries was still low, amounting to 0.6% or three out of 517 cases throughout the 11 years. These cases were contributed by Mali in the years 2003, 2004 and 2005. In other years, 'expansive' civil liberties were totally absent.



**Figure 3.** Practice of civil liberties in the Muslim world, 1998 - 2008

Source: Adapted from the Freedom House, 'Freedom in the World Survey.' Retrieved May 11, 2010 from <<http://freedomhouse.org>>

In Mali, freedom of speech, press and association were basically granted and respected. The media were allowed to broadcast different worldviews and perspectives. In addition, many interest groups such as human rights groups and women's groups were established and operated without government intervention. While the judiciary was not totally independent from the executive's interference, it did acquire legitimate authority especially with regard to rendering anti-bureaucratic decisions that had long been practised by the government (Piano *et al.*, 2006).

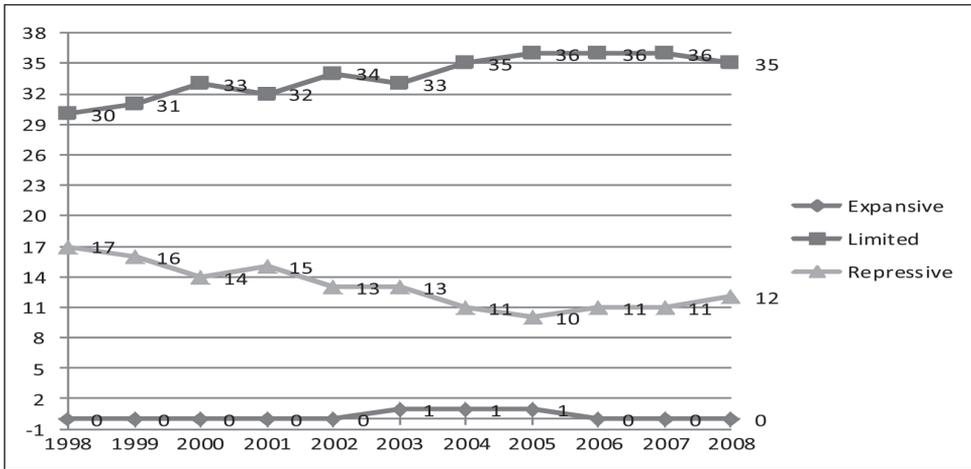
Unexpectedly, the majority of the Muslim countries practised 'limited' civil liberties (71.8%) instead of the 'repressive' one. Figure 3 illustrates 71.7% cases of 'limited' civil liberties between 1998 - 2008. There were 26 countries that consistently adopted 'limited' civil liberties, but with varying degrees of elections. These countries were Albania, Algeria, Azerbaijan, Bangladesh, Brunei, Burkina Faso, Comoros, Gambia, Guinea, Indonesia, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kuwait, Kyrgyzstan, Lebanon, Malaysia, Maldives, Mauritania, Morocco, Niger, Nigeria, Pakistan, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Niger, Nigeria, Pakistan, and Turkey.

In contrast, the 'repressive' civil liberties was not the major political culture in the Muslim world, as claimed by many. In fact, only 27.7% (143 cases) belonged to this group. Looking at the performance by country, only eight out of 47 countries (17%) continued with 'repressive' civil liberty practices from the year 1998 to 2008. These countries were Iran, Saudi Arabia, Libya, Sudan, Somalia, Syria, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan.

**5.4 Trends of Civil Liberties: The Downfall of the ‘Repressive’**

In Figure 4, we can see almost a straight linear line for trend of ‘expansive’ civil liberties without major sloops, across the years 1998 – 2008. ‘Expansive’ civil liberties prevailed only in Mali in the years 2003, 2004 and 2005. Other than that, it was totally absent. In spite of the improved performance of ‘free and fair’ elections in the Muslim world throughout 1998 to 2008, the Muslim countries scored lower with regard to the performance of ‘expansive’ civil liberties. In addition, we can see that the performance of ‘repressive’ civil liberties generally declined inconsistently, whereas the performance of the ‘limited’ civil liberties generally rose, also inconsistently, over these 11 years.

In a nutshell, the Muslim world performed better in civil liberties practices compared to elections. About 72.4% of the Muslim world practised ‘expansive’ and ‘limited’ civil liberties, while only 41.6% adopted ‘free and fair’ elections as well as ‘free not fair’ elections.



**Figure 4.** Trend of civil liberties in the Muslim world, 1998 – 2008

Source: Adapted from the Freedom House, ‘Freedom in the World Survey.’ Retrieved May 11, 2010 from <<http://freedomhouse.org>>

**5.5 Development of Democracies: ‘Middle-Range’ Achievement**

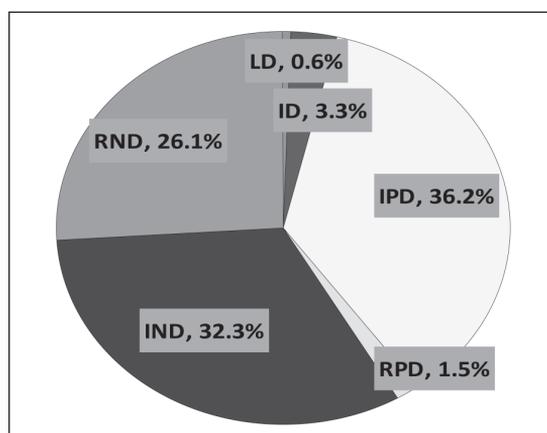
To clearly demonstrate the relationship between elections and civil liberties and relate it to the practice of democracy in Muslim countries, Table 2 presents a cross-tabulation of all elections and civil liberties performance in the 47 countries from 1998 to 2008. This is followed by Figure 5 which offers a summary of democratic practices in the Muslim world.

Figure 5 shows a clear domination of ‘Illiberal Partial Democracy’, ‘Illiberal Non-Democracy’ as well as ‘Repressive Non-Democracy’ in the Muslim world in 1998-2008. Out of these three, the most number belonged to the middle range democracy - the ‘Illiberal Partial Democracy’, with 36.2% or 187 cases out of 517, followed by the ‘Illiberal Non-Democracy’ with 167 cases, which constitutes 32.3%, while the ‘Repressive Non-Democracy’ gained a total of 26.1%, which equals 135 cases altogether. The other three types of

**Table 2.** Cross-tabulation of elections and civil liberties in the Muslim world, 1998-2008

Civil Liberties	Election			Total / %
	Free and Fair (Democracy)	Free not Fair (Partial Democracy)	Not Free Not Fair (Non-Nemocracy)	
Expansive (Liberal)	3	0		3(0.6%)
Limited (Illiberal)	17	187	167	371(71.8%)
Repressive		8	135	143(27.7%)
Total	20(3.9%)	195(37.7%)	302(58.4%)	517(100%)

Source: Adapted from the Freedom House, 'Freedom in the World Survey.' Retrieved May 11, 2010 from <<http://freedomhouse.org>>

**Figure 5.** Democratic practices in the Muslim world, 1998 - 2008

Key: LD=Liberal Democracy; ID=Illiberal Democracy; IPD=Illiberal Partial Democracy; RPD=Repressive Partial Democracy; IND=Illiberal Non-Democracy; RND=Repressive Non-Democracy.

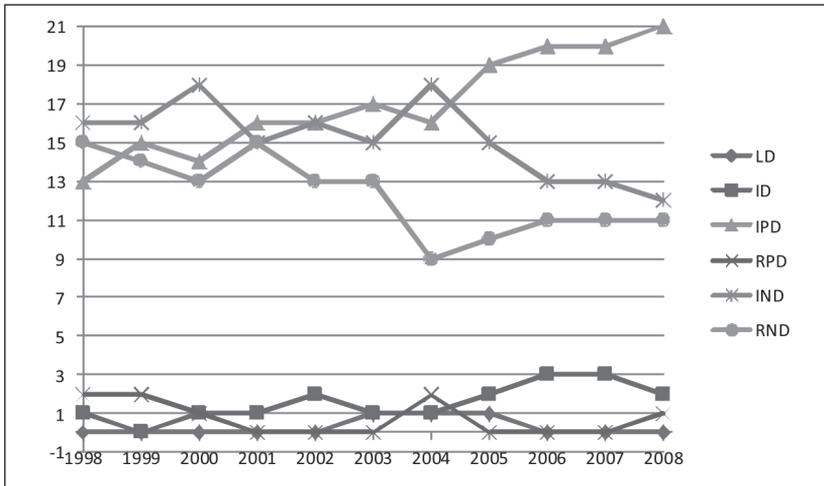
Source: Adapted from the Freedom House, 'Freedom in the World Survey'. Retrieved May 11, 2010 from <<http://freedomhouse.org>>

democracies – 'Illiberal Democracy', 'Repressive Partial Democracy' and 'Liberal Democracy' contributed less than 4% each, while the 'Liberal Partial Democracy' did not contribute at all to the overall democratic performance in the Muslim countries.

## 5.6 Trends of Democracies: The Absence of 'Liberal Partial Democracy'

### 5.6.1 Liberal Democracy

Looking at Figure 6, there were only three cases of 'Liberal Democracy' in the Muslim countries, each in 2003, 2004 and 2005 in Mali, as Mali practised a combination of 'free and fair' elections with 'expansive' civil liberties. Other than Mali, the practice of 'Liberal Democracy' was totally absent in any Muslim country in the world. In addition, it is quite a



**Figure 6.** Trends of democracies in the Muslim World, 1998 – 2008

Key: LD=Liberal Democracy, ID=Illiberal Democracy, IPD=Illiberal Partial Democracy, RPD=Repressive Partial Democracy, IND=Illiberal Non-Democracy, and RND=Repressive Non-Democracy.

Source: Adapted from the Freedom House, 'Freedom in the World Survey'. Retrieved May 11, 2010 from <<http://freedomhouse.org>>

a hard task to predict the performance of 'Liberal Democracy' in the future; whether it will improve with an additional numbers of countries involved, or become extinct and remain totally absent in the Muslim political regimes.

In earlier times, Mali did implement 'free not fair' elections (1998 and 1999). Its democratic success story started in 1999, when the Secretary of the United States of America, Madeline Albright, assembled the core group of the Community of Democracies and included Mali which was the first African country invited to join. This constituted a democratic benediction of Mali. Consequently, Mali adopted 'free and fair' elections for eight consecutive years (2000-2008). Though international observers did note some irregularities, they agreed that most of its presidential and legislative elections were generally credible and reliable (Piano, *et al.*, 2006). Besides, since 1991, Mali adopted a highly progressive constitution with extensive guarantees of freedom of speech, press and association. For instance, the constitution encourages the existence of political parties through public funding. It also remarkably stipulates freedom of media and allows applicants to operate one if they do not get any response from the state after three weeks' submission of an application (Traub, 2008).

Ironically, though considerably democratic, Mali is an extremely poor country. Mali represented a relatively new type of state – the 'feeble democracy' (Traub, 2008). This was something different from what Diamond (2003) calls the 'electoral democracy', or what Fareed Zakaria refers to as 'illiberal democracy'. In Mali, a functional democracy presided over crushing poverty. Perhaps, in a strange inversion of modernisation theory, Mali was

democratic not despite its poverty but because of it. Neither Aristotle nor Lipset would have predicted that a country consisting almost wholly of poor people would form a democratic republic.

Another issue in Mali is problem of representation. Mali had more than 100 political parties, but they were not membership bodies, rather, simply vehicles for individuals to achieve their political ambitions. Parties were differentiated less by ideology or programmatic concerns than by the narrow interests of clientelist networks. Besides, there was no party that represented workers, teachers or farmers (Traub, 2008).

Despite the severe impoverishment, even the humble citizens seemed proud of Mali's democracy, and felt that it had brought them lots of benefits. When asked about what he thought about democracy, a Malian peasant answered, "...we were afraid. A peasant would not have the opportunity to speak to a functionary...Democracy has erased the fear and given free expression to everyone. So I think democracy is a good thing" (Traub, 2008: p.194). Mali, thus, had a culture that made democracy possible plus political leaders who were committed to the principles of democratic rule.

### *5.6.2 Illiberal Democracy*

As for 'Illiberal Democracy' in the Muslim world, it had improved slightly throughout these 11 years, but interrupted by a few fluctuations. A total of 17 cases of 'Illiberal Democracy' can be reported from the graph – one case in 1998 (Bangladesh), one case each in 2000 and 2001 (Mali), and 2003 and 2004 (Senegal), two cases in 2002 (Mali and Senegal), two cases in 2005 (Indonesia and Senegal) two cases in 2008 (Indonesia and Mali), and three cases in 2006 and 2007 (Indonesia, Mali and Senegal). However, none of the Muslim countries practiced 'Illiberal Democracy' in the year 1999. Fareed Zakaria claims that 'Illiberal Democracy' has arisen all over the world and describes it as "a disturbing phenomenon in international life" (1997: p. 22). However, the finding records only 3.3% of overall performance and proves that his claim is not necessarily correct, at least not in the Muslim world.

Four out of the 17 cases of 'Illiberal Democracy' were contributed by Indonesia. This occurred from the end of Suharto's long authoritarian regime in 1998. Indonesia had implemented a vast number of political reforms that placed it among the healthy electoral democracy and boosted its democratic performance from 'Illiberal Non-Democracy' in 1998 to 'Illiberal Partial Democracy' in 1999 – 2004. Furthermore, the 2004 election noted the first ever direct presidential election in the country. The process was fair, smooth and without violence and further boosted Indonesian democracy from 'Illiberal Partial Democracy' to 'Illiberal Democracy'.

There were some basic procedures implemented in Indonesia that were broadly associated with greater democratic freedom; loose restrictions on freedom of association; the freedom of political parties to raise funds and run in elections; the freedom of the press to report and voice political differences; and a possibility that a ruling party can be overturned through the ballot box (Bertrand, 2010). All of these characteristics of procedural democracies were improved vastly in the process of determining the Indonesian government, in comparison to Suharto's period. Indeed, Indonesian democracy had flourished since 1998 and further strengthened since 2004.

Despite the improvements, Indonesia is not yet a consolidated democracy. First, Indonesia continues to rank among one of the most corrupt countries in the world. It continued to get a low score in the Transparency International's Corruption Perception Index. Since there is high expectation that democracy would reduce the level of corruption, this sustained high corruption has undermined the legitimacy of the Indonesian regime. Secondly, Indonesia's military continues to operate in a semi-autonomous fashion, and the military command structure has not been completely subsumed under civilian authority. Thirdly, Indonesia's judicial system is still subjected to interference from the political and business elites. According to its Attorney General, Abdul Rahman Saleh, the country's judicial system was so mired in corruption that "justice typically was awarded to the highest bidder" (Piano *et al.*, 2006: p.234). These are some of the features of Indonesia's democracy that can either threaten its stability or reduce its quality.

### 5.6.3 Liberal Partial Democracy

Unlike other types of democracy, there is no graphical representation for 'Liberal Partial Democracy'. This is because after analysing the performance of elections and civil liberties together to get their meeting point, it was noticed that none of the Muslim countries practised 'free not fair' elections and 'expansive' civil liberties, together, thus producing 'Liberal Partial Democracy'. This finding is somehow surprising. It is expected that 'free and fair' elections cannot go along with 'repressive' civil liberties, nor can 'expansive' civil liberties be practised together with 'not free not fair' elections, as the elections and civil liberties in these cases are both at extreme points. However, the fact that 'expansive' civil liberties cannot be exercised together with 'free not fair' elections is unpredictable, thus making 'Liberal Partial Democracy' totally absent in the Muslim countries from 1998 to 2008. Referring to a similar study conducted by Smith and Ziegler (2008) in the Latin American context, the same problem occurred. The 'Liberal Partial Democracy' stood as the least favoured among all types of democracy with six cases over 513, that is, about 1.17% only.

### 5.6.4 Illiberal Partial Democracy

Moving towards 'Illiberal Partial Democracy', this type of democracy experienced more drastic changes. Besides, it is exclusive because it is the type of democracy mostly practiced in the Muslim world from 1998 to 2008. Figure 6 illustrates that starting from only 13 cases in 1998, it increased up to 21 cases in the year 2008. The graph did dip twice in 2000 and 2004, though. Other than that, it continuously moved upwards with the exception of 2002 and 2007 where the graph remained constant. There were seven countries which completely adopted this type of democracy for 11 years and one of them was Albania. Since Albania is the only Muslim majority country in Europe, it is interesting to discuss its case and identify its uniqueness.

Starting from the year 1998 onwards, elections in Albania were recognised as 'free not fair' because they only complied partially with the international standards. Though local politicians made a positive evaluation of their elections, international observers often concluded that the pools were marked by some improvements but they still did not meet international standards yet as external observers noted flawed procedures such as

irregularities, multiple voting, violation of secrecy, etc. (Freedom House, 2006). Albania also ranked as the worst performer in the region by a wide margin as the electoral administration failed to satisfy even the minimum requirements of international standards. Some of the electoral issues needed to be addressed are the mishandling of voters' lists and registration, non-transparent party financing, flawed media coverage, mismanagement of election by the Central Election Commission (CEC), and abuses of the electoral procedure and rules (FRIDE, 2010). Besides, there were serious allegations concerning inappropriate conduct over the course of the election campaign. For example, in the 2007 local election only, some 144 complaints against election results and invalidation requests had been filed and 36 election-related criminal charges were reported (OSCE, 2004).

Moving towards civil liberties, the Albanian constitution guarantees freedom of expression. Although freedom of the press had improved since the fall of communism, problems remained. The intermingling of powerful business, political and media interests inhabited the development of independent and objective media. The government controlled crucial subsidies that were doled out to those outlets providing sympathetic coverage. Freedom of association was generally respected, although the police had been known to use excessive force against protesters. Independent NGOs were active and their impact on the government was slowly growing, in contrast to the trade unions which were considered weaker in their influence (Piano *et al.*, 2006).

Moreover, Albanian political parties were also problematic. Despite serving as legal power competition entities, they suffered from many problems. First, they were deeply rooted in the concept of party-state inherited from the communist legacy and considered the state as the property of the party in power. The party that came to power would completely overthrow what the previous regime had done and make a new beginning, which actually cost and wasted millions of dollars of government money. Secondly, parties too often did not accept the legitimacy of the elections they lost and continuously contested the elections' results (Server, 2001). The opposition parties had boycotted the parliamentary institution, leaving it unable to perform as a forum for political debate and decision making (Kaisiu *et al.*, 2001). Finally, they also created new institutions that represented only parts of society where channels for citizens' engagement and participation remained under-developed resulting in one way communication only, that is, top down communication (FRIDE, 2010).

However, the situation has changed since the year 2005 with the involvement of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). Since then, the Albanian electoral process has been reformed. For instance, votes started to be counted by the local electoral commissions in limited and selected designated locations. Besides, administrative and judicial review procedures for the case of post-election disputes were improved and new laws for campaign finance were enforced. Though the Freedom House scores for Albanian elections in the year 2005 onwards remained unchanged (Piano *et al.*, 2006), it is believed that these reforms will mark a positive improvement in the future. Perhaps, we can conclude that Albania is moving from a transition phase into a phase of setting transition effects as standards, rather than towards a consolidated democracy.

### 5.6.5 Repressive Partial Democracy

The fifth type of democracy is the 'Repressive Partial Democracy' – the combination of the 'repressive' civil liberties with the 'free not fair' elections. As shown in Figure 6, out of 517 cases throughout the 11 years, this type of democracy contributed a total of eight cases, constituting 1.5%. Two cases happened in 1998, two more in 1999 (both years in Djibouti and Yemen), and another two in the year 2004 (Afghanistan and Eritrea). Other than that, one case occurred in 2000 (Yemen) and another one in 2008 (Afghanistan). By analysing the line, we can see that the graph is unstable and fluctuated over the 11 years without any significant or remarkable pattern. Thus, like 'Liberal Democracy', this study finds it difficult to predict the performance of 'Repressive Partial Democracy' in the future; whether the number of cases will increase, decrease, remain constant, or become totally absent in the Muslim world.

A total of three out of eight cases of 'Repressive Partial Democracy' were contributed by Yemen. The Republic of Yemen was created on May 22, 1990, unifying both Northern and Southern parts of the country. Since then, the Yemeni political system has been buzzing with optimism. It was the first in the Arabian Peninsula to declare a participatory parliamentary democracy. Voting and candidacy rights were granted to all citizens over the age of 18 (including women), along with far greater freedom in expression and in political organisation as well as judicial independence (Carapico, 1998). The political parties and the election laws paved the way for the establishment of an abundance of political parties. But again, with the aim of preventing people from 'misusing' their new rights, the government prevented political parties that 'threaten the unity of the country and people' (Yemeni Constitution, Law No. 66: Governing Parties and Political Organizations, Article 8, 1991) which indirectly means threatening the power of the ruling elite.

These moves, particularly the inclusion of women in the electoral process, earned Yemen the curse of neighbouring Saudi Arabia for being 'un-Islamic' (Carapico, 2004). However, the dramatic political reforms enacted by the new government moved Yemen towards a vibrant transitional democracy. It is because neither the Northern nor the Southern parts of the country had an established history of electoral or democratic politics before their unification. Similarly, the new press law in 1990 made considerable promises regarding the right to freedom of expression, press and access to information, which led to an almost overnight explosion in the number of publications in Yemen and in the public's potential to scrutinise the government. However, the new law also stipulated strict requirements that journalists had to meet and other restrictive conditions under which an organisation could publish material. Furthermore, the Yemeni constitution grants the right to form associations which resulted in an abundant emergence of NGOs in Yemen (Piano *et al.*, 2006), although they were not fully viable and independent.

In sum, reforms had largely evaporated in Yemen after its unification that portrayed what Carothers (2002) refers to as political 'gray zone', - being neither fully autocratic nor genuinely democratic. The Yemeni regime had promoted a limited political opening, but that reform had not consolidated democratic practices in the regime, opposition or society. However, the country had not reverted to the level of oppressed opposition.

### 5.6.6 *Illiberal Non-Democracy*

As reported earlier, the dominant types of elections and civil liberties practised in the Muslim world in 1998-2002 were the 'not free not fair' elections and the 'limited' civil liberties. Both types of elections and civil liberties, if performed together at the same time, will ultimately produce 'Illiberal Non-Democracy'. Hence, it is expected that 'Illiberal Non-Democracy' will be the dominant type of democracy over the remaining six types. Nevertheless, it did not happen this way. As explained before, the type of democracy mostly practised in the Muslim world was the 'Illiberal Partial Democracy' and the 'Illiberal Non-Democracy' appeared to be the second highest with 32.3% (167 cases). Figure 6 also illustrates the downward sloping nature of the 'Illiberal Non-Democracy' performance over the 11 years, with a few fluctuations. From the graphical pattern, it is predicted that the practices of 'Illiberal Non-Democracy' will decrease continuously due to its consistent downward slope since 2005. Out of 167 total cases, some 66 cases were contributed by six countries through their 11 years of continuous performance. The countries involved were Algeria, Azerbaijan, Brunei, Guinea, Kazakhstan and Tunisia. Representing Muslim countries in Central Asia, Kazakhstan is chosen as a case study in discussing the practices of 'Illiberal Non-Democracy'.

With the breakup of the former Soviet Union in 1989, Kazakhstan was thrust into statehood and self-governance. It was the last of the former Soviet republics to declare independence on December 16, 1991. However, Kazakh's elections - both presidential and parliamentary - had been considered neither free nor fair since independence. Piano *et al.*, (2006) state that though establishment and operation of political parties were allowed, certain types of parties especially ethnic, religion or gender-based were strictly prohibited. The opposition parties were not given equal treatment; they faced harassment, surveillance, denial of access to the state-run media and arbitrary bans of registering candidates. Additionally, Kazakh's constitution provides freedom of press, but the government had repeatedly harassed, confiscated, and shut down many independent media outlets. Widespread self-censorship was practised especially in reporting on the President, as the country's criminal code prohibits insulting his honour and dignity. Similarly, despite constitutional guarantees, the government imposed restrictions on freedom of association and assembly. Through measures such as investigations and surveillance by security agencies, the government harassed NGOs that addressed 'sensitive issues'. Political parties were weak, including the presidential party. The weakness of the political parties subsequently reinforced the weakness of legislature, which remained a largely consultative body. In practice, legislations were typically drafted by the executive, and discussed and modified by the legislature (Olcott, 2010).

However, the 2004 national election drew some positive signs. The voting was considered significantly improved over past Kazakh experience. Besides, a few opposition parties were able to win seats in the parliament, which was seen as an important sign in Kazakh's democratic development. Looking back at other countries that had completed a successful democratic transition, opposition seating was normally a key point to reflect. In fact, one election observer, Frederick Starr, as cited in Fossedal (2004: p. 1) – commented that, "Overall...the election was a step forward, notwithstanding the imperfections."

After almost two decades of post-Soviet independence that witnessed the development of democratic-like institutions, and the growth of civil society in the form of grassroots organisation, Kazakhstan has not fully democratised. Apart from the adoption of a Western style constitution and the institutionalisation of legislative and judicial branches, the political situation does not appear to have changed much. According to Olcott (2010), it would be difficult to see a democratic Kazakhstan until it has had a democratic transfer of power. In contrast, Fossedal (2004) believes that Kazakhstan is moving in the democratic direction; a little slow, but steady and not going the inverse way as the citizens enjoy more freedom, not less, since the country achieved independence in 1991.

#### *5.6.7 Repressive Non-Democracy*

The lowest degree of democracy belongs to the ‘Repressive Non-Democracy’ – the combination of ‘repressive’ civil liberties and ‘not free not fair’ elections. Figure 6 signifies the performance of this type of democracy in the Muslim world in 1998-2008. A few observations can be made from the graph. Firstly, it shows a downward trend over these 11 years. Secondly, though moving downward, its movement is somehow inconsistent, interrupted by a few fluctuations – both upward and constant movements. For example, the graph increased twice in 2001 and 2006, but also remained constant in 2003, 2007 and 2008. The ‘Repressive Non-Democracy’ constitutes 32.3% of the overall democratic performance. It stands as the third highest democratic type mostly practised in the Muslim world, after the ‘Illiberal Partial Democracy’ and the ‘Illiberal Non-Democracy’. It is predicted that this type of democracy will move downward also in the future with few inconsistent fluctuations. There were eight countries – Iran, Libya, Saudi Arabia, Somalia, Sudan, Syria, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan – which continuously adopted this type of democracy for 11 years. This study has selected Iran as the case study for the discussion on the practices of the ‘Repressive Non-Democracy’.

After the 1979 Iranian Revolution, the new post-revolutionary constitution was drafted by a popularly elected assembly and was further approved by a referendum. Ever since, regular and relatively competitive elections for presidential, parliamentary and municipalities have been taking place in the Islamic Republic of Iran. Currently, all citizens with a minimum age of 18 years are eligible to vote in both the parliamentary and presidential elections. According to France-Presse, as cited by Tezcur (2008), the regime did not only grant the people the right to vote, but also waged an energetic propaganda mission to encourage citizens to vote by Khamenei’s declaration that voting was a ‘religious duty’. Even with such encouragement, voters’ turnouts faced large fluctuations, and it never went beyond a total of 75%.

Freedom of expression and press in Iran was severely restricted. The government directly controlled the electronic media and strongly prohibited the Western broadcasting media. However, President Khatami who ruled Iran from 1997 – 2005 did give a new direction towards Iranian printed press. He relaxed the control over newspapers, arts and cinema. Some newspapers started to raise the standards of journalism both in form and content, by covering previously avoided subjects such as mismanagement, corruption and political repression (Ali Gheissari and Nasr, 2006). Compared to freedom of expression, freedom of

association and assembly in Iran were slightly freer. The Iranian constitution allowed for the formations of political parties and interest groups as well as public demonstrations. In contrast, its judicial system was highly subservient to the executive interference as the Supreme Leader appointed the head of judiciary, and this power is specified by the constitution.

Notwithstanding, elections in Iran were still considered as ‘not free not fair’ and its civil liberties as ‘repressive’ mainly due to the unelected Guardian Council which served as the ultimate gatekeeper in Iranian politics. The Council not only decided on who is eligible to run in the election, but also had the authority to invalidate electoral results (Tezcur, 2008). These powers not only restricted the scope of political competition and pluralism, but also put the credibility of the results in question. In fact, the elected officials were subjected and subordinated to them.

In brief, Iran’s case stands unique where guardianship is explicitly justified in the constitution along with the coexistent of popular sovereignty. In fact, these two elements sometimes fundamentally contradict each other. While the Guardians strictly supervised elections, this political process nonetheless introduced a degree of uncertainty, pluralism and public participation into Iranian politics unprecedented in its authoritarian regime. Ultimately, elections and civil liberties provide for formal channels of sustainable political participation that regulate limited competition and pluralism within the boundaries set by the Guardians. However, they cannot be considered as agents of democratisation or de-democratisation in Iranian’s unique case.

### ***5.7 The Best Predictor of Democracy***

In the hypotheses, this study explains that level of democracy (dependent variable) is dependent on the nature of elections and civil liberties (independent variables) of that particular country. As such, the intertwined elections and civil liberties are expected to produce seven types of democracies – the ‘Liberal Democracy’, ‘Illiberal Democracy’, ‘Liberal Partial Democracy’, ‘Illiberal Partial Democracy’, ‘Repressive Partial Democracy’, ‘Illiberal Non-Democracy’, and ‘Repressive Partial Democracy’.

This study attempts to further analyse the relationship between democracy, elections and civil liberties. Though agreed that civil liberties and elections are the main political determinants of democracy, it aims to identify which variable, either elections or civil liberties, is the best predictor of democracy.

Table 3 demonstrates the transitional trends from predictors (civil liberties and elections) to democracy. Since we are interested in finding the best predictor to democracy, only two transitional trends will be considered here which are the upward and the downward trends, while the stagnant trend of civil liberties and elections will be abandoned because it does not affect the level of democracy, either towards the better or the worse level.

Several observations can be deduced from the table. Firstly, changes towards better levels of democracies due to improvements in civil liberties equaled to 11 cases, while changes towards worse levels of democracies due to suppression of civil liberties amounted to 7 cases altogether. Moving towards elections as a predictor, we note that there were 23 cases of improvement in the nature of elections that brought to better standards of

**Table 3.** The transitional trends: from predictors to democracy

IVs (Predictor)	Transitional Trends	Democracy		Total	Net Total	Percentage (%)
		Origin	Endpoint			
<b>Civil Liberties</b>	Upward (Improvement)	ID	LD	1	11	31.58%
		RPD	IPD	2		
		RND	IND	8		
	Downward (Suppression)	LD	ID	1	7	
		IPD	RPD	1		
		IND	RND	5		
<b>Elections</b>	Upward (Improvement)	IPD	ID	3	23	66.67%
		IND	IPD	18		
		RND	RPD	2		
	Downward (Suppression)	ID	IPD	2	15	
		IPD	IND	11		
		RPD	RND	2		
<b>Civil Liberties &amp; Elections</b>	Upward (Improvement)	RND	IPD	1	1	1.75%
<b>Grand Total</b>				<b>57</b>	<b>100%</b>	

*Key:* LD=Liberal Democracy, ID=Illiberal Democracy, IPD=Illiberal Partial Democracy, RPD=Repressive Partial Democracy, IND=Illiberal Non-Democracy, and RND=Repressive Non-Democracy.

*Source:* Adapted from the Freedom House, 'Freedom in the World Survey'. Retrieved May 11, 2010 from <<http://freedomhouse.org>>

democracies. On the other hand, 15 cases of suppression of elections occurred and drove the levels of democracies downward. Meanwhile, there was also one unique case that happened in Egypt in 2004 which witnessed improvement of both civil liberties and elections simultaneously, resulting in the improvement of the level of democracy too. Counting the directions of transition, 35 cases out of 57 moved towards better levels of democracies, either contributed by elections or/and civil liberties, and only 22 cases reverted towards worse democratic levels.

Overall, we can see that elections contributed more towards a shift of democratic levels, both for the better and for the worse, compared to civil liberties. Out of 57 transitions to democracy, elections scored 38 cases (66.67%) altogether (23 upward transitions and 13 downward transitions) while the remaining 18 (31.58%) were gained by civil liberties (11 upward transitions and seven downward transitions), and another case (1.75%) contributed by upward movement of both predictors concurrently.

## 6. CONCLUSION

The first finding reported that the most dominant nature of election practised in the 47 Muslim countries throughout 1998-2008 was 'not free not fair' elections with a total score of 302 out of 517 cases (58.4%). Though winning over the 'free and fair' and 'free not fair' elections in total score, its overall performance decreased slowly and gradually by one or two cases per year, but almost consistently over these 11 years, except in 2000 and 2007.

The second finding specifically talked about the civil liberties performance in the Muslim countries. Here, the middle type of freedom – the ‘limited’ civil liberties – championed over the other two levels of civil liberties with a total of 371 out of 517 (71.8%) occurrences. Its development was somehow unstable and fluctuated, but on average, it improved over time.

The third finding of this study tackled research question number three with regard to the type of democracy mostly practised in the Muslim countries. This study found that it belonged to the middle-range of democracy – the ‘Illiberal Partial Democracy’ – resulting from a combination of ‘limited’ civil liberties and the ‘free not fair’ elections. It constituted a total of 187 (36.2%) out of 517 overall cases.

This study also aimed to identify which proved to be the better predictor of democracy-elections or civil liberties. The findings conclude that transitions to democracy in the 47 Muslim majority countries between 1998–2008 were contributed mainly by elections as a better predictor by 66.67%. In contrast, civil liberties served as the weaker predictor with a total of 31.58% only.

This study measures the aggregate democratic performance of Muslim majority countries throughout 1998–2008 using the main political variables which are elections and civil liberties. However, we have to admit that there are many important socio-economic predictors that contribute towards the democratic performance of a country, such as economic development, inflation, citizens’ level and system of education, social mobilisation activities, globalisation, etc. Thus, it is suggested that future research on this subject should include some of the important socio-economic predictors in addition to the political predictors in measuring democratic performance.

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