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July 16, 2016: The Future of Democracy in the Islamic World

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Title: The Future of Democracy in the Islamic World

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7/16/2016—I don't trust Recep Tayyip Erdogan as far as I can throw him. He has restricted free speech in Turkey and is planning a strongman Constitution that does not bode well for the future of Democracy. Plus he provoked the conflict with the Kurds. Nevertheless, Erdogan is the elected President in a genuinely free election. So, of course, President Obama, and other NATO allies, condemned the coup attempt. And it apparently failed. The more basic issue is whether there can be an Islamic Democracy. In 1992, the Islamic Front in Algeria appeared to be winning national elections and was forestalled in a coup. In 2006, the US refused to recognize Hamas as the winner in legislative elections in Gaza. In 2013, Morsi was overthrown in a coup in Egypt. The West cannot preach democracy but support or promote coups whenever we don't approve the winners. Remember Tom Lehrer—For might makes right/until they see the light/ they've got to be protected/all their rights respected/till someone we like can be elected—Send the Marines. Eventually, there will be Islamic Democracy. Eventually, a tamed Islam will emerge—just as a tamed Christianity emerged in Europe after the wars of religion in the 16th century. Westerners have to stop saying things like, they don't understand democracy or they are not like us. All people want freedom and democracy. The West has lost confidence. I am not sure why. It may have something to do with the crisis of meaning. Of course democracy in the short run makes everything worse. It flames popular hatreds. But those hatreds are there anyway. Only democracy can defuse them eventually. Only free speech can lead the way to solutions. It is still true that democracies don't go to war with each other. The West solved the problem of religious democracy. We just have to have faith in our own system.