

1. Record Nr.	UNINA9910785352303321
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Titolo	Civil society and democratization in the Arab world : the dynamics of activism // Francesco Cavatorta and Vincent Durac
Pubbl/distr/stampa	Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon [England] ; ; New York : , : Routledge, , 2011
ISBN	1-136-96338-3 1-282-91331-X 9786612913310 0-203-85058-0
Descrizione fisica	1 online resource (187 p.)
Collana	Routledge studies in Middle Eastern politics ; ; 22
Altri autori (Persone)	DuracVincent
Disciplina	320.917/4927
Soggetti	Civil society - Arab countries Democratization - Arab countries Arab countries Politics and government 21st century
Lingua di pubblicazione	Inglese
Formato	Materiale a stampa
Livello bibliografico	Monografia
Note generali	Description based upon print version of record.
Nota di bibliografia	Includes bibliographical references and index.
Nota di contenuto	Book Cover; Title; Copyright; Contents; Acknowledgements; List of organizations - interviews; Introduction; 1 Civil society in the Arab world; 2 Associational life under authoritarian constraints; 3 Algeria; 4 Morocco; 5 Jordan; 6 Yemen; 7 Lebanon; 8 The dynamics of civic activism in the Arab world; Notes; Bibliography; Index
Sommario/riassunto	The transition paradigm has traditionally viewed civil society activism as an essential condition for the establishment of democracy. The democracy promotion strategies of Western policy-makers have, therefore, been based on strengthening civil society in authoritarian settings in order to support the development of social capital -to challenge undemocratic regimes.This book questions the validity of the link between an active associational life and democratization. It examines civil society in the Arab world in order to illustrate how authoritarian constraints structure civil