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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