

**Defending the Gains?
Transatlantic Responses When
Democracy is Under Threat**

Edited by
Esther Brimmer

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The book develops ideas presented at the conference. However, each author expresses his or her own ideas; they did not try to achieve a common viewpoint.

*Esther Brimmer
Washington, D.C.*

Part One

Chapter 1

Rethinking Transatlantic Responses When Democracy is Under Threat

Esther Brimmer

Introduction

This book will examine whether leading liberal democracies have a responsibility to respond when democracy is under threat. The United States, the European Union and its Member States pride themselves on their commitment to liberal democracy. They cherish it at home and claim to support it internationally. Americans tend to accept the Kantian notion that the internal conditions of a country help shape its foreign policy. Immanuel Kant presented the idea that democracies do not go to war against each other. Americans have embedded the democratic peace theory in their foreign policy outlook. The fact that the United States and the United Kingdom made a historic shift into strategic alignment across the twentieth century reinforced the notion of a commonality of interests among liberal democracies. A basic premise of American foreign policy in the twentieth century is the notion that as a liberal democracy based on values, the United States should advance certain values in its international affairs. Having always cared about freedom of the seas and freer access for American exports, the republic began to care about freedom itself. Even before the U.S. was committed to international human rights, it supported democracy, albeit imperfectly and inconsistently. America's emergence to the top table of international affairs after the First World War was complemented by President Woodrow Wilson's Fourteen Points. The United States cloaked its military might in the finery of democracy. Yet, this was not mere rhetoric: the U.S. did advance a conception of democracy in the form of self-determination as part of the peace settlement. President Wilson, and his successors in both political parties, understood that grand strategic engagement needed to be underpinned by a philosophical objective.

The Wilsonian school of American foreign policy derives from the tenets of a president who asserted that America's entry into the world war would "make the world safe for democracy." As Walter Russell Mead notes, there were "Wilsonians" before Wilson; the term describes a longer historical tradition.¹ Wilsonians are the vanguard of America's tradition of engagement in international democracy issues. They can be found in both political parties and on the Left and the Right.

Europeans, too, have a deep commitment to liberal democracy, which, after all, was developed in Europe. After the Second World War, liberal democracy was reconstructed in some parts of Western Europe that had been consumed by Nazism or Fascism. The historic process was complemented by the recreation of democracy in Central and Eastern Europe after the end of the Cold War and the demise of Communism. By the end of the twentieth century liberal democracy flourished across Western and Central Europe. Aspirations to join the EU helped solidify Central and Eastern European states' progress to democracy after the end of the Cold War. As part of the "Copenhagen Criteria" for accession, the EU requires that states be democracies. Indeed, European democracy has flourished as the EU blossomed from the original Six in 1957 to twenty-seven members in 2007. As states solidified democracy they joined the European institutions. The process was repeated from the accessions of Greece, Portugal and Spain in the 1980s through Bulgaria and Romania in 2007. Both the U.S. and the EU have benefited from the spread of democracy in the Euro-Atlantic region. Both the U.S. and EU would claim that their policies have helped that transition.

Yet democracy is not a steady state in which political stability is achieved for all time. Democracy is not a linear progression with one step on a path to progress following neatly behind the other.² Instead democracy is a constant process of balancing interests and objectives by allowing the populace to govern itself and to choose its leaders. It requires diligence, transparency, honesty and an informed, active citizenry. Even Americans, heirs to a written constitution of more than two centuries standing, describe their polity as the "American Experi-

¹ Mead, Walter Russell, *Special Providence: American Foreign Policy and How It Changed the World* (New York: Routledge, 2002), p. 134.

² See Carothers, Thomas, *Aiding Democracy Abroad: The Learning Curve* (Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 1999), pp. 255-280 and Carothers, Thomas, "The End of the Transition Paradigm," *Journal of Democracy*, January 2002.

ment.” Countries in all regions of the world have developed democratic processes in recent years. However, in some countries democratic gains have receded, actively undermined by leaders intent on regaining power. Having supported the deepening of democratic elements in countries ranging from aid recipients to accession countries, the U.S. and the EU have a stake in the health of democracy in countries with which they have a connection.

This paper considers how the U.S. and EU have responded when democracy falters, undermined by the intentional actions of local leaders. This is a somewhat different approach than usually taken by analysts. The international community is attuned to dramatic interruptions in democratic governance. Regional, international, and nongovernmental organizations and others monitor conditions. Many have mechanisms to call attention to *coups d'état*. For example, the Organization for American States was a pioneer creating the Resolution 1080 process to convene foreign ministers if the government of an OAS Member State was the victim of a coup. Yet, rather than seize power all at once, a canny potential autocrat may slowly undermine the democratic processes in his country. By slowly eroding democracy, he could gain enough control without triggering coherent domestic opposition or significant international resistance.

The idea of the erosion of democracy is an increasingly important policy concern for several reasons. First, happily, the number of democracies has increased dramatically in the past two decades. How to measure the level of democracy is a difficult and sensitive question. Many of the international evaluations are performed by organizations with headquarters in the “West” leading some critics to charge a western bias. However, leading organizations such as Freedom House base their evaluations on the Universal Declaration on Human Rights, an internationally acceptable benchmark. Freedom House posits that there were ninety “free” countries in 2006 covering 47 percent of the world’s political entities and 46 percent of its population.³ A further fifty-eight were judged “partly free” and fifty-five “not free.” These numbers are a significant increase from a generation ago. In 1986, Freedom House labeled fifty-seven countries “free,” another fifty-

³ Freedom House, *Freedom in the World 2007: Selected Data for Freedom House’s Annual Global Survey of Political Rights and Civil Liberties*. For the full data see the previous year’s 2006 report: Freedom House, *Freedom in the World 2006: The Annual Global Survey of Political Rights and Civil Liberties* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2006).

seven “partly free,” and fifty-three “not free.”⁴ The increase in “free” states reflects the spread of democracy in various forms. However, not all democracies are smoothly-functioning entities. Having more democracies, especially newer, less stable ones, provides scope for some countries to lose the democratic gains so recently won.

Although democratization does not follow a lock-step linear process in each country, there are several common contours that describe a democratic landscape, including universal suffrage, equality before the law, respect for basic human rights of life and liberty of person, independence of the judiciary, and freedom of the media. This paper accepts that each society will develop its own ways to manifest these features. Still, if an important element is removed from the mix, then the quality of democracy can fairly be said to have declined. The paper refers to this diminution of democracy as “erosion.” If the reduction in democracy returns that factor (media, judiciary, etc.) back to a previous poor condition, then the notion of “backsliding” may be employed. Such terms do not presume a single, linear democratic process, but they do highlight the deterioration of democracy within the local conditions the country *has already accepted for itself*.

This paper will argue that as leading democracies, the countries of North America and Europe need to respond to the deterioration of democracy in other countries. It is not adequate to provide aid to build democracy or object when it fails. Interested outsiders need to develop a more calibrated response, because the threat to democracy will often not be a dramatic coup, but a slow, often methodical, process of constraining democratic liberties until they disappear.

The paper will begin by discussing types of democracies and theories of democratization. It will then present U.S. and European approaches to supporting democracy and their reactions to encroachments on democratic practices in various countries. In this section, the paper will draw on themes developed by experts at the conference on “Defending the Gains” hosted in Washington, D.C. by the Johns Hopkins Center for Transatlantic Relations in partnership with the European Studies Centre at St. Antony’s College at Oxford University and University of Paris II’s Centre Thucydide. The event was held on September 25, 2006, with the support of the German Marshall Fund of the United States.

⁴ Freedom House, *Freedom in the World 2007: Selected Data*, p. 18.

The paper focuses on the United States and the European Union. These are not the only relevant international actors that could respond to the erosion of democracy. International organizations, non-governmental organizations, and national governments, including the EU's member states, all can play roles as well. Still the U.S. and the EU can wield diplomatic power and significant development aid making their input an important part of international action.

The paper builds on a framework I developed in a book chapter entitled "Vigilance: Recognizing the Erosion of Democracy," which was published in *Protecting Democracy: International Responses* edited by Morton Halperin and Mirna Galic.⁵ The September 2006 conference elaborated on ideas developed in that chapter. Speakers were invited to consider the idea of the erosion of democracy in the context of different regions. Speakers included experts on four countries: Côte d'Ivoire, Russia, Venezuela and Zimbabwe as well as specialists on democracy policy or the relevant regions. I selected the countries with a view towards considering cases in which the challenges to democracy have been serious and commanded significant international attention. In addition, either the U.S., the EU or both have important relationships with these countries. Therefore, the U.S. and the EU are aware and care about the internal conditions in these countries. These are not countries on the margins of international affairs; developments in each have at least a regional impact. If the U.S. or the EU were to act in difficult areas of democracy erosion, that action could carry a larger significance for international affairs. Conversely, these countries have their own political and economic resources, making them able to withstand pressure and, perhaps, making U.S. or EU leaders cautious. The conference and the chapters in this book explore these issues in the context of specific cases.

Types of Democracies

The analysis assumes that all democracies are in a constant state of change. There is always room for improvement even in well-established polities. Democracy itself provides a way to accommodate change. My analysis posits that there are at least three types of democ-

⁵ Brimmer, Esther, "Vigilance: Recognizing the Slow Erosion of Democracy" in Halperin, Morton H. and Mirna Galic, eds., *Protecting Democracy: International Responses*, A Council on Foreign Relations Book (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2005), pp. 233-258.

racies: established, incomplete, and transitional.⁶ The former already enjoy the rule of law and orderly changes of power among leaders elected through universal suffrage. Incomplete democracies may be stable, but their institutions are only partly democratic. Transitional democracies include those that are new, or in the process of becoming democracies. Categorizing countries is a difficult endeavor, but established democracies include the United States, Canada, the members of the European Union, Australia and Japan. Incomplete democracies include Turkey and Singapore. New or transitional democracies include countries in Eastern Europe (some inside, some outside the EU), Latin America and South Korea. Countries do change their status. Eastern European countries that might have been considered transitional a decade ago are now more stable “new” democracies and EU members.

All types of democracies can deteriorate. Supporters of liberal democracy should borrow the phrase of Cold War conservatives: the price of freedom is eternal vigilance, not just against communism, but against authoritarians who would undermine civil liberties even in established democracies. Fears about security threats or social tensions can make publics accept encroachments on their civil liberties. After the trauma of the September 11 terrorist attacks, Americans tolerated extreme infringements on civil liberties. The Patriot Act and other legislation eroded democracy in the republic with the oldest written Constitution. Respect for the law is important, but democracy also needs respect for the spirit of the law.⁷ Incomplete and transitional democracies, too, can experience setbacks. The examples addressed in this paper (and this volume) consider democracy under threat in both of these categories.

Theories of Democratic Development

Analysis of the erosion of democracy can be placed in the context of an overall view of the nature of the democratization process. The concept of erosion suggests that practice has deteriorated from a standard previously attained. Over millennia experts and observers have tried to analyze the

⁶ Ibid, p. 235.

⁷ Brimmer, Esther, “Safeguarding Civil Liberties in an Era of In-Security: A Transatlantic Challenge” in Dalgaard-Nielsen, Anja and Daniel Hamilton, eds., *Transatlantic Homeland Security? Protecting Society in the Age of Catastrophic Terrorism* (Routledge, 2006), pp. 147-171.

nature of democracy or representative government from Plato to John Locke, John Stuart Mill, Alexis de Toqueville and Amartya Sen.

In recent years, analysts and policy makers have become especially interested in how countries become democratic. The second half of the twentieth century witnessed waves of democratization including Germany and Japan in the 1940s and 1950s. The decolonization movement of the 1950s and 1960s also brought the promise of democracy to new states previously subjects of empires. The disillusionment after some of these states collapsed fed questions about the complexity of democracy and development as early as the 1970s. Still, the 1980s saw Greece, Portugal and Spain emerge from authoritarian rule and deepen their democracies enough to join the European Union. Latin America also experienced historic waves of democratization with Argentina and Chile and others making dramatic changes. The fall of the Berlin Wall released another wave of democratization across Central and Eastern Europe. The new era also enabled other countries to recalculate global conditions, which contributed to the end of apartheid in South Africa and the election of Nelson Mandela to the presidency.

We have lived through extraordinary times. Yet some regions, including most parts of the Middle East, have not yet benefited from these political changes. Can this process be extended to regions that have not yet been bathed in this great wave of change? Is it really a wave? Or is it a series of separate eddies and flows that follow different courses in different places? Local reformers and international democracy advocates alike have been grappling with these questions. They have been joined by security specialists as well. After the September 11 attacks, American officials and analysts attributed the support for al-Qaeda to a lack of democracy in the Middle Eastern countries with inadequate local channels for dissent-fueled radicalization. Under the Bush Administration, democracy promotion in potentially dangerous regions became a security issue. Problems in this policy would eventually lead to a backlash against many forms of official democracy advocacy.

Yet, the question remains, how do countries make the transition to democracy and what role should outsiders play when the process falters? This paper focuses on the erosion of democracy, a particular type of failure of democratization.

One way to address these questions is to examine the nature of democratic transitions. The rapid change in Central and Eastern Europe and elsewhere since 1989 contributed to an optimistic model of democratic development. Thomas Carothers identifies the “transition paradigm” which has dominated many advocates’ perceptions of democracy. He critiques five “core assumptions” of this paradigm, which are paraphrased below:⁸

1. If a country moves away from dictatorship it is necessarily moving towards democracy;
2. Democratization is a “set sequence of stages;”
3. Elections have “determinative importance;”
4. Underlying socio-economic or structural elements are not factors in the transition process;
5. The latest wave of democratization is based on “coherent, functioning states.”

He argues that the efforts to qualify a democracy as “weak democracy” or “partial democracy” assume that the given country is stalled between stages of a democratic process. He elaborates a “gray zone” of “feckless democracies,” which have the trappings including elections and a rotation of offices among a small elite, but are “shallow.”⁹ In contrast, other countries in the gray zone suffer from “dominant-power politics.”¹⁰ In the latter, the state and the dominant party are intertwined; power does not change hands.

This book will suggest that both feckless democracies and dominant-power democracies can experience an erosion of democracy. However, dominant-power models may be more prone. Strong leaders who are in office a long time can implement policies that erode the quality of democracy over time. They must compete in regular elections, but face little real opposition. Moreover, the perpetrator of such a program assumes that he will be in office to benefit from the recen-

⁸ Carothers, Thomas, “The End of the Transition Paradigm,” *Journal of Democracy*, Vol. 13, No. 1, (January 2002, pp. 5-21), pp. 6-8.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 10.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 11.

tralization of power. It may be harder to sustain a long, concerted process of undermining democracy if parties alternate office-holding as in a feckless democracy.

Yet similar elements may be perceived in successful as well as “feckless” and “dominant-power” democracies. These would each have a similar pattern: awakening by elite or public to the need for change, period of dissent, period of action, resolution and a new steady state. The awakening may be accepted by the people in charge, which may accommodate the demands. However, the demands for change probably require that leaders relinquish some element of power; and, therefore may be resisted. Thus, the period of action may be more tumultuous. How they arrive at the new steady state can differ dramatically. Looking at this process can show the complexity of political change. The process of peaceful change could follow several paths which may be grouped into categories for analysis:

1. Revolution—CEO model
2. Revolution—popular uprising
3. Evolution—gradually expanding franchise
4. Decolonization—sever connections with metropolitan power

While these are not the only categories, they have appeared in many countries. In the CEO model, the public or outsiders believe that by changing the very top leadership they can change the direction of the country. This model borrows from the structure of large American businesses where the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) is held responsible for the profits of the company. Boards of directors and shareholders in poorly performing companies often fire the CEO and hire a new one to change the fortunes of the given company. However, too often the underlying corporate culture and structure remain the same and the old problems reemerge. Similarly, just changing the president or prime minister does not necessarily release a tide of democracy across the shores of political practice. The Administration of George W. Bush pursued a version of the CEO model when it argued that removing Saddam Hussein would open the way for democracy in Iraq. The original plan for the 2003 invasion presumed that once Saddam was removed the rest of the government would continue to function while democratic structures were installed. Karen von Hippel, complement-

ing Carothers's work, labels this the "Evil Man" syndrome.¹¹ Opponents assume that once the evil dictator is removed, the democratic impulses of the oppressed people will emerge and support the emergence of a new functioning democracy. As Jeffrey Kopstein notes in this volume and elsewhere, the lesson many American policy makers took from 1989 was that removing oppressive forces freed publics to build democracy. In contrast, the conclusion that many European policy-makers drew from the experience of Central and Eastern Europe after 1989 was that the process of securing democracy takes years.¹² Indeed, fifteen years passed from 1989 to the accession of several states from this region to the EU in 2004.

In the popular uprising model, the public takes to the streets to demand change. This may be done peacefully. The 1989 revolutions in Central and Eastern Europe largely followed this model. Other examples include the "color" revolutions, the Orange in Ukraine and the Purple in Georgia. These approaches build on the idea of liberal democracy in which even the majority is constrained. The *demos* alone does not rule; and the rights of minorities are respected. The CEO and popular uprising models may be combined leading to profound social and political change. However, the CEO model can occur without the popular uprising leaving old power structures in place, which may lead to incomplete democratization of the feckless or dominant power variety.

The evolutionary model allows for gradual change. It can still be a period of action, but it might span several years or even decades. The expansion of the franchise in the United Kingdom in the 19th century would be an example. Although there was violence and controversy, there was gradual change over the course of nearly a century from the Reform Act of 1832 to the full enfranchisement of women in 1928.¹³

Decolonization offers another model. It addressed political empowerment in the context of independence from a colonial power. This branch of analysis tends to focus on the process of severing old ties and forming new governments. A comprehensive approach includes

¹¹ Von Hippel, Karin, *Democracy by Force: US Military Intervention in the Post-Cold War World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), p. 172.

¹² Kopstein, Jeffrey, "The Transatlantic Divide over Democracy Promotion," *The Washington Quarterly*, Spring 2006, vol. 29, no. 2, pp. 85-98, pp. 86-87.

¹³ Unmarried women over thirty years old gained the right to vote in 1918.

analyses of how well democratic institutions survive in the post-colonial era. One person, one vote, one time is not a sustained democracy. Simply throwing off the colonial mantle does not guarantee democracy. Indeed decolonization can lead to successful new democratic states; but it can also fall into the feckless or dominant power models.

Idea of Erosion of Democracy

The idea of the erosion of democracy suggests that there is a process of democratic deterioration distinctive from the either the dramatic coup and or the effects of disorganized poor governance. The erosion of democracy is a more concerted process. It may be carried out by a single anti-democratic leader or an influential group. The implication is that the erosion of democracy can eventually be as significant as a coup. It can undermine local efforts at political change and international programs of democratic support. The international community, and especially the leading liberal democracies, have stakes in the process of democratization in many countries. The United States, the European Union and its member states, and other countries are major aid donors. They need better ways to understand the phenomenon of the erosion of democracy.

If the erosion of democracy is systematic, there may be ways to identify it. In an earlier book chapter, I delineated indicators of democratic erosion. I argued that identifying the types of threats posed to democracy could help clarify which factors to track when examining the phenomenon of democratic erosion. I presented four areas of concern:¹⁴

1. Violent or nonviolent;
2. Occurring in the public or private sector;
3. Perpetuated by identified government agents or covert sympathizers;
4. Occurring in the political, economic, or social sector of society.

I argued that the “key factors to watch are whether the government is acting, whether the actions affect the basic tenets of democracy, whether there is violence involved, and finally, whether the actions

¹⁴Brimmer, “Vigilance: Recognizing the Slow Erosion of Democracy,” *op cit*, p. 237.

continue or worsen over time.”¹⁵ This analysis would lead the observer to ask four key questions:

1. Are the actions being conducted by a government entity?
2. Do the actions affect the core institutions of democracy?
3. Has the situation turned violent?
4. Are the actions sustained or augmented over time?

Actions perpetrated by government entities are a more serious threat to democracy than those conducted by a private entity. Actions that undermined core institutions of democracy are particularly egregious forms of democracy erosion. Core institutions of democracy include, “elections through universal suffrage, freedom of speech and media, the right to assembly and to form labor unions, equality before the law, security of person, and the protection of private property.”¹⁶

It is also important to distinguish between a brief period of bad government and the long-term deterioration of democracy. Judging how long is too long is difficult, but important for policy makers and analysts. Sustained or increased pressure on democratic institutions is more serious than a brief period of poor policies. The international community should focus its responses on the former. The serious erosion of democracy is more important. Also, there are many demands on international attention. Key democracies and democracy supporters should direct their limited amounts of political will towards the cases in which they can identify systematic democratic erosion.

Examining the Examples

The earlier book chapter discussed types of democracy erosion. The conference and this book endeavor to compare the notions of democracy erosion with real cases. The conference focused on four countries: Côte d’Ivoire, Russia, Venezuela, and Zimbabwe. Regional experts were also invited to provide context. Conference speakers were invited to convert their presentations into papers, which are included in this volume. Three of the speakers on specific countries

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Ibid, p. 243.

submitted papers. Each author presents his or her own argument; they do not necessarily agree with each other about the nature of democratization. This paper presents my conclusions about the theory of democracy erosion and about the roles of the U.S. and the EU based on the case studies presented at the conference and in these papers. Chart 1 summarizes the analysis.

Chart 1. Cases and Categories

Country	Carothers' Term	Brimmer's Change Processes
Russia	Dominant power	CEO model
Venezuela	Fleckless democracy	Erosion after shock
Zimbabwe	Dominant power	Decolonization, then CEO model

Russia

Celeste Wallander's chapter analyzes the vagaries in Western approaches to democratic change in Russia. A mix of security and ideological concerns has driven policies in the 1990s and after 9/11. She explains that both the will to construct democracy and its erosion were generated from within Russia. When the Soviet Union ended, democracy did not form. Yeltsin acted unconstitutionally by dissolving parliament; meanwhile oligarchs grew rich. To Russians, Yeltsin's show of political force, the decline in social well-being and the concentration of wealth were all part of the experiment with "democracy." Many Russians became dissatisfied with a system that they had not really tried. Yet Western countries, including the U.S., continued to support Yeltsin even during his actions in Chechnya and as corruption corroded initial reforms. Dr. Wallander's analysis stresses the need for the U.S. and the EU to support institutions not just specific individuals. Subsequently, President Putin has tightened controls. Moscow was still dominant and was able to reassert political control in the regions. Dr. Wallander explains Russian efforts describe their system as "sovereign democracy," thereby using the language of democracy for a distinctively different process.

Using Carothers' term, I would categorize Russia as a "dominant-power" democracy. Power does not really change hands. Yeltsin picked his successor; Putin is likely to do the same in 2008. Using my frame-

work, the Russian case most closely follows the CEO model. The head of state changed, but the underlying structures and sources of power remained. The U.S. and the EU clung closely to the CEO model, backing Yeltsin even as he made anti-democratic moves. In a reversal of the “evil man” theory having a “good man” in charge was supposed to overcome the mistakes made by his government.

We may also answer yes to the four democracy erosion questions. In the Russian case, the repressive actions were conducted by government agencies, state-owned companies or other institutions close to the government. The judicial system has been used. Oligarchs that the government sees as hostile have found themselves in court. The actions affect core institutions of democracy including the media. The situation has turned violent with leading journalists and others killed. The erosion has been sustained over time.

Venezuela

Jennifer McCoy details the tenure of President Hugo Chávez Frías. She discusses the public’s long-standing dissatisfaction with the two main parties. Lt. Col Hugo Chávez had gained national attention as early as 1992 after leading an attempted coup in which he expressed frustration with the system. As Dr. McCoy notes, middle class anger increased as many slipped into poverty when real per-capita oil revenues decreased. Hugo Chávez won the presidency in 1998. He enjoyed high popularity ratings after his inauguration in 1999. He soon altered the constitution and installed military officers in civilian posts. He was briefly deposed in an attempted coup in 2002. While most international observers criticized the coup attempt, the Bush Administration in the U.S. and the conservative Aznar Administration in Spain initially welcomed it. Afterwards, there was a two-year peace-building effort led by the Organization of American States, the United Nations Development Program and the Carter Center. Eventually Chávez was reelected for a third term. Dr. McCoy notes that for many Venezuelans overcoming social exclusion is an important feature of their interpretation of democracy; Chávez has responded to this need. Dr. McCoy suggests that the U.S. might have more impact if it engaged on economic and social issues that Venezuelans value. The Bush Administration and Chávez’s government have been entangled in a rhetorical clash in various international fora proposing alternative

candidates for posts at the OAS and UN and criticizing each other's initiatives. Dr. McCoy notes that the Chavez government restricted free speech, political dissent and NGO activity, which caused concern in the NGO community but less in official circles. Still, the EU and OAS monitored the 2005 National Assembly elections and the 2006 presidential elections.

Venezuela before Hugo Chávez's election may be described as a "feckless democracy," with two political parties, but both seemed unresponsive to public needs. The Chávez government took many of the steps identified as signals for the erosion of democracy including constraining the media. Venezuela had prided itself on its democracy, but frustration mounted after the collapse in living standards. This suggests another category, "erosion after shock." A dramatic change in circumstances can make people willing to accept changes in the quality of their democracy. In Venezuela enhancing social inclusion became important after the economic downturn impoverished many in the middle class. Even in the U.S. the shock of the 9/11 attacks made Americans acquiesce to infringements on civil liberties. We may answer yes to the four democracy erosion questions. The repression was conducted by government entities whose actions affected the core institutions of democracy including the freedom of the media. There has been violence and the repression has been sustained over time.

Zimbabwe

As David Monyae explains, the British-brokered 1979 Lancaster House agreement set the stage for the transition from Ian Smith's white minority government to a multiracial democracy. Yet, the political and economic guarantees for white Zimbabweans that enabled the transition to occur also instilled resentment in the black population. The continuation of apartheid in South Africa for another decade and the civil war in Mozambique enabled Zimbabwean president Robert Mugabe to strengthen his control at home in the face of perceived threats from abroad. He concentrated the powers of the President and Prime Minister. He gained international prestige as a vocal critic of apartheid in South Africa. With the end of the Cold War and the demise of apartheid, the priorities changed. Mugabe's Zimbabwe was no longer a front line state in the moral crusade against apartheid. It was a government that was tinged by corruption and unable to deliver

services. As the economy deteriorated; the ruling party tried to gain support of war veterans and land-starved peasants. The regime used violence to stay in power.

The United States did impose targeted sanctions and a travel ban on certain people, but to little avail. Given the historical links it is not surprising that Great Britain has been the most active outside power pressuring Zimbabwe's government, but the colonial past retards European engagement. Europeans are reluctant to be seen to pressure an African government. Some EU countries felt that the UK should deal with the issue. Yet the UK could be portrayed as defending the white privileges in the Lancaster House agreement. Mugabe skillfully played the race card and divided the Commonwealth; then he pulled his country out of the organization. He was able to use the U.S. and UK invasion of Iraq to imply that the two countries' criticisms were really calls for regime change.

Using Carothers' categories, Zimbabwe is a "dominant power" state. Using my framework, Zimbabwe began as a story of decolonization and devolved into the CEO/"evil man" model. We may answer yes to all four of the democracy erosion questions. The suppression of democracy has been conducted using the instruments of government (as well as mobs outside of government). The actions affect core institutions of democracy including the integrity of elections. Violence has occurred; and the repression has been sustained over time.

Analysis and Recommendations

In all three cases, the erosion of democracy was accelerated by a strong leader who believed that it was in his interest to concentrate power in his own hands. Enhancing the powers of the executive was a key feature of all three examples. In all three cases, the strongman was able to claim that he was protecting the nation. In each example, a dramatic change in circumstances made the public willing to look for a savior who would deliver them from the disorder and inequality of their current system. President Putin could claim he was restoring dignity after the Yeltsin years which witnessed a dramatic drop in Russian living standards and life expectancy and the rise of a small cadre of oligarchs. President Chávez could claim that he was expanding social inclusion in a country where many people had fallen out of

the middle class after the decline in oil prices in the 1980s and 1990s. President Mugabe could deflect attention from his government's failures by pouring the potent poison of race politics into a state where vast inequalities persisted and whites did enjoy privileges.

These examples reinforce the notion that the international community should be particularly alert for political deterioration after an economic shock. It expands upon the analysis in my earlier work to highlight the issue of concentration of power in the executive. This may be done using "legal" channels. Chávez, Mugabe and Putin all rewrote their constitutions. In the examples of Zimbabwe and Russia, Western states were reluctant to criticize the anti-democratic moves of leaders who otherwise commanded international respect for leading liberation struggles. Mugabe has gained credit for his anti-apartheid stance. Yeltsin was the hero who had stood on a tank to defend democracy.

In all three cases positive answers could be given to the key questions identified at the outset:

1. The actions were perpetrated by government entities.
2. The actions affected the core institutions of democracy.
3. The situation had turned violent in some ways (ranging from killings in Zimbabwe, to imprisonment or expulsion of opponents in Russia—and possibly poisonings—to suppression of opposition elements in Venezuela).
4. The actions have been sustained and augmented over time.

This analysis leads to the following recommendations:

- **Improve transatlantic tracking of democratic erosion.** The United States and the European Union need to be more attuned to the erosion of democracy in countries in which they have influence. Ignoring early signs could lead outsiders to do too little too late. The U.S. and the EU are more effective if they take complementary action against the deterioration in democratic practices. Therefore, U.S. and the EU should exchange and discuss indicators. In addition to tracking failed states, they could use their extensive diplomatic networks to watch for signs of democratic deterioration. The EU could play an important role in this regard as

its twenty-seven members have links in a wide variety of countries.

- **Watch for key signs.** Outside observers should be particularly attentive to effort to concentrate power in the executive. Such actions tend to weaken the indigenous mechanisms intended to forestall the collapse of democracy.
- **Criticize even respected leaders.** Western democracies need to criticize the anti-democratic maneuvers even of leaders whom they otherwise support.

Conclusion

The erosion of democracy is difficult to observe, but efforts to develop useful indicators can help policymakers improve their insight into this problem. As proponents of liberal democracy and major donors, the “West” has a responsibility to monitor the on-going health of democratic structures. We comment on the state of democracy and civil liberties in our countries in the transatlantic community (often in shrill tones). We should also follow the situation in new and transitioning democracies. Happily, there are more democracies in the world, but that does not mean that liberal democratic structures are secure everywhere. The international community has become somewhat more critical of military coups. Therefore, clever potential autocrats may use subtler measures instead. In the future, international supporters of peaceful democratic life need to be attentive to the steps taken to undermine democracy.

Chapter 2

Opening Remarks on

Defending the Gains?

Transatlantic Responses When

Democracy is Under Threat¹

Serge Sur

Let me first thank and congratulate Esther for having conceived the idea for this meeting, and for having organized and convened it. I am glad to have been associated with its preparation, and the Centre Thucydide welcomes this new opportunity to cooperate with SAIS, for the second time in two years. We are also proud to be associated for this conference with the prestigious European Studies Center of the University of Oxford, and with its Director, Professor Timothy Garton Ash.

We will now be dealing with a very difficult topic: the promotion and protection of democracy around the world, by those States which belong to the Transatlantic axis, that is to say to North America or the European Union. Such an identification is already a constraint, because we could have dealt with a broader area, namely the OSCE, which encompasses, in addition to the States just mentioned, Russia and Caucasian or Central Asian States. In a way, we are adhering to a Western approach, in the classical meaning of the term, and we consider that other States are not so much the topic as the actors of our endeavor to encourage democratization—they are the problem, we are the solution.

In this respect, I would like to quickly make two sets of—provocative—remarks. Firstly, what kind of democracy are we willing to promote or defend? Is it possible for us to be considered as a model, are we entitled to patronize other States? Secondly, is not democracy basi-

¹ Presented at the conference in Washington, D.C., on September 25, 2006.

cally a vernacular process which requires local social, cultural and ideological roots, which are not easily exportable, and how can we work towards such a promotion without practicing a kind of imperialism, benign imperialism if we like, but nevertheless imperialism? After all, colonization was undertaken in good faith, or at least with the nice feeling that we were expanding the universal values of civilization—“la mission sacrée de civilisation” was even a legal concept. And, before colonization, at the time of the French Revolution at the end of the XVIIIth century, France developed the policy of the “Républiques soeurs,” which paved the way for Napoleonic imperialism—which was neither peaceful, nor democratic.

My first point is *to put into question the value of our democratic practices*, which we apparently consider worth expanding. I am afraid that, in our various countries, in different respects, we have to face nowadays, maybe not a crisis, but at least a weakening of our standards—and I do not presume to put into accusation one State or another, because all of us have flaws and problems when it comes to evaluating the current state of our democracies.

Let me take a few examples, beginning with *France*. Whether we like it or not (and for my part I strongly dislike it), there is, in France, a political party, a legal one, able to compete in regular elections, the Front National. This party gets around 10-15 percent of the votes, whether in parliamentary or in the presidential elections. But this party is not able to obtain a single deputy at the National Assembly, when, at the same time, the Communist party, which gets between 3-5 percent, obtains around 20 seats... So, given this, what is the meaning of the representative institutions?

If we now look at *Germany*, there are two main parties, the Christian Democrats and the Social Democrats. They compete against each other in the elections. There should therefore be a majority and an opposition, and the electors should make their choice according to the government they seek to obtain—but we can see that, after the recent elections, both parties have decided to govern together, apparently ignoring the will of their electors.

Take now a glance at the *United Kingdom*, the mother of bipartism and a haven of democratic institutions. It remains a model, but we all know that it is quite impossible for voters to escape the collective

domination of the Conservative party on the one hand, or the Labor Party on the other hand. It is quite impossible for any new party to emerge and to have any prospect of gaining a majority: the democratic game is closed, and the system is locked with strong keys.

I could also deal with *Italy*, in a different respect. We have recently seen, and fortunately it is no longer the case, the risk of a plutocratic regime establishing itself in the name of democracy. The country and the votes could well have been up for sale, given the personal control exercised by the Prime Minister over the media and over powerful economic firms. Is such a risk definitely eliminated? That remains to be seen.

Finally, last but not least, the *United States*. I don't want to go back to the 2000 presidential elections, about which some questions remain unsolved. But, on two grounds, we currently may keep some concerns. First, the modalities of the vote, with a lot of uncertainties remaining concerning the electoral lists and concerning the way the votes are counted. Unfortunately, the Federal Rules in this respect are weak at the very least. Second, after the 9/11 attacks, several new rules and practices have put into question some basic requirements of democratic institutions, altering the balance of power which is one of the main conditions for a democratic regime.

All these remarks are not intended to conclude that the West is not basically a democratic area, and that the culture of democracy is declining. On the contrary, in the end, democracy is able to overcome these difficulties. One of the main advantages of democratic regimes is their ability to criticize and correct themselves. But, even in the Western world, democracy asks for concerned and vigilant citizens. And we should remain modest and cautious when we seek to promote and export these values.

This leads me to a second set of observations which specifically address our topic. *How should we promote, export and defend democracy?* I will be brief, because it will be precisely the focus of our forthcoming discussions. Five short remarks.

My first remark is obvious: *we cannot pretend to have a unique model of democracy*. If we consider the diversity of our institutions, traditions and political systems, all of which deserve to be called democracies, there is no single democratic standard or criterion. On the contrary,

each one of our regimes is rooted in a specific culture, history and sociology. So there is a need to take into consideration the specific characteristics of every State, to use them as a basis, and not to try to just export our rules and processes.

My second remark is that the *implementation of democratic institutions is a process which requires time*. Our countries have needed more than a century to deserve the name of democracy, with its civil liberties, universal vote, equality of votes, competitive and fair elections, rotation of majorities to power, balance of power. We cannot expect some kind of instantaneous democratic revolution to occur. Even in the former European communist countries which are now members of the European Union, and where the process is well advanced, some progress still needs to be made. Indeed the willing participation of these countries in the EU was a great boost for democracy, but it would be a mistake to take this democracy for granted on a permanent basis.

A third remark deals with the result we seek to obtain with States which are not currently democratic—and there are still many in various parts of the world, despite the universal reference to the values of democracy, as the rule of people by people and for the people. Do we seek *policy change or regime change*? Can we consider that internal reforms undertaken by the depositaries of power are the best way to proceed, even if it is slow, or do we think that there must be a more stringent change, implying a new political personnel, a kind of revolution in the institutions? Probably there cannot be a single and universal answer, but we should be aware that a process which is not rooted in the demands of the people themselves, and imported from outside, is likely to fail.

A fourth remark is linked to this: we should not consider the legal rules and institutions alone, *separately* from the *sociological and cultural realities of any given country*. Education, effective practice of civil rights, equality of rights among groups and individuals, internalization of democratic values, are essential for the rooting of a democratic process.

Lastly, it derives from all the precedent observations that *the worst way to expand and protect democracy is coercion and/or war*. Democracy is neither implemented nor protected by the power of guns. Basically, such means hurt nationalism, which is a strong component of any col-

lective identity—and you cannot have democracy if you do not have, and if you do not respect, a collective identity.

Which leads me to a concluding observation, even if it is not directly related to our topic: despite its current fashion, *democratic peace should not be considered as a given*. Look for instance at the recent Lebanon war: Israel and Lebanon were both democracies, and Hezbollah indeed has democratic roots. It did not prevent the war, and, whether we like it or not, the question of international peace and security cannot only be solved by the universal expansion of democracy.

Part Two

Chapter 3

Democracy Promotion and Transatlantic Relations: A View from Canada

Jeffrey Kopstein

Canadians tend to be wary of democracy promotion. It smacks of telling others how they should govern themselves. As well-intentioned as such sentiments are, however, they are misguided. The central message of this essay is that democracy promotion is here to stay. Surveys suggest that Europeans support democracy promotion just as strongly as Americans do. Notwithstanding the new “realism” in Washington that seemed to remove democracy promotion from the transatlantic agenda almost as fast as it first appeared, democracy promotion is a recurrent theme in the foreign policy of most strong liberal democratic states. Even if democracy promotion as a tool of foreign policy is no longer the flavor of the month in Washington, it will return because its major premise — that democratic states are more peaceful and prosperous than non-democratic ones — is powerful and true.

Rather than pretending it does not exist or will go away, Canadians need to think about what their distinctive approach should be. In doing so, it is helpful to consider the different transatlantic models. American thinking on democracy promotion tends to favor “civil society” and be “bottom-up.” Europeans approach the matter more from the standpoint of “governance” and the “state”; it therefore appears to be more “top-down.” These differences have roots in very different perceptions of past democracy promotion projects. The good news is that Canada does not need to choose between the two approaches. In fact, they are complementary. Canada could contribute to strengthening the transatlantic relationship by picking and choosing the best parts of both approaches and establishing them within the framework of an international institution. Democracy promotion will persist on the transatlantic agenda and Canadians can best participate in it by understanding how it came on the agenda in the first place.

Democracy Promotion

In his 2005 inaugural speech, President George W. Bush placed democracy promotion at the center of his second term agenda. Yet, with no budget or strategy offer in the days or weeks that followed, Europeans and Canadians grew increasingly cynical. Given the shifting rationales for the war in Iraq emanating from the White House, it would have been understandable if European and Canadian leaders and the broader public remained highly suspicious of democracy promotion, interpreting it as a repackaged commitment to the unilateral use of force as well as justification for a war and occupation that were not going as smoothly as expected. Immediately following the speech, op-eds appearing in newspapers in Europe and Canada asked skeptically, “First, they say it was Al Qaeda, then weapons of mass destruction, and now the purpose of the war is democracy?” Europeans in particular have argued that, even if sincere, the United States has a notoriously short attention span. Democracy promotion may be the flavor of the month, but how long can this infatuation last?

It is important to recall that despite these doubts, EU Commission President José Manuel Barroso noted during his visit to the White House in October 2005 that the European Union and the United States “share the idea that our strategic partnership should serve to promote democracy, human rights, [the] rule of law, and [the] market economy around the world.” Indeed, transatlantic cooperation on democracy promotion preceded the second Bush inaugural speech, especially following the announcement of the Broader Middle East and North African Initiative at the G-8 summit at Sea Island, Georgia in 2004. These trends suggest there may be grounds for further transatlantic cooperation on democracy promotion.

The devil, of course, is in the details. The key question may be how democracy is promoted rather than whether it should be promoted. To understand why, it is important to think about how democracy promotion first ended up on the transatlantic agenda, in the wake of the revolutions of 1989. The United States and the EU each came away with unique interpretations of these events, perspectives that continue to shape their attitudes toward and experience with democracy promotion.

Transatlantic Interpretations of 1989 and Post-Communist Democracy Promotion

The U.S. interpretation of 1989 is one of civil society opting for democratic government, overthrowing dictators, and rolling back the state to make room for a market economy. It was a bottom-up movement, a celebration of freedom in which people managed to cast off the yoke of dictatorship. The main Soviet contribution to these events was the decision to step aside peacefully and let the course of freedom play itself out. Once the Berlin Wall fell, democracy was thought to be all but inevitable, the natural order that would emerge from its dust. For most Americans, the post-Communist 1990s were really an epilogue to the main event.

Europeans have a different perception of 1989, and their interpretation has profoundly shaped their views on democracy promotion in Iraq and elsewhere. From Western Europe's perspective, democracy promotion after 1989 was primarily a top-down effort. The true *dramatis personae* of history in their reading of 1989 were found in the Kremlin and not in the streets of Warsaw or Budapest. Gorbachev was the true hero of 1989. Political leaders and diplomats, not demonstrators, brought about regime change.

Perhaps even more importantly, for Western Europeans, the revolutions of 1989 were only the beginning of the story. What kind of regimes would replace Communist tyrannies remained an open question in 1989. In fact, hadn't the demonstrations been a bit too disorderly for comfort? Wasn't German unification something that everyone gave lip service to but no one actually wanted? The statements and actions of then-British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher and then-French President François Mitterrand were simply the more public side of this skepticism, something that Eastern Europeans noted at the time. For most Europeans then, the revolution of 1989 was not the key to democracy's promotion's story but merely its prologue. What remained to be done was the heavy lifting of creating stable institutions of democratic representation, transforming planned economies into market economies, and regulating relations among ethnic communities—in short, almost everything. This was Europe's accomplishment of the 1990s.

Democracy Promotion, American Style

Clearly, the script from which the U.S. was working in Iraq during the spring of 2003 was based on its reading of the events of 1989 in Eastern Europe: topple the leader, pull down his statue, and let civil society take over. When Secretary of State Donald Rumsfeld said, in April 2003, during the ransacking and looting of the Iraqi National Museum, that “freedom’s untidy,” he was not being cynical or disingenuous. Rather, he was interpreting events through the dominant U.S. lens of how liberation from tyranny is supposed to look.

Whatever the real motivation for the war, as an act of democracy promotion, it was based on three premises. First, it was assumed that inhabitants of non-democratic countries (in this case, in the Middle East) want democratic citizenship. Although the idea that people in the Middle East prefer democracy over alternative regime types remains unproven in practice, there is nothing inherently wrong with this first assumption.

The second assumption, however, is slightly more troubling. Given the right to elect a parliament, Washington presumed, the citizens of the Arab world would bring to power parliamentary majorities or presidents that would please the West. Yet, a quick glance to the past (Hitler) or to other parts of the world in the present (Hamas, Hugo Chávez) reveals that such presumptions may be wishful thinking. Even so, this assumption may not be fatally flawed: the danger of electing non-democrats or leaders with uncivil policies is one with which all people committed to democracy must be prepared to live.

The third U.S. assumption about democracy promotion is that it is a bottom-up phenomenon. The United States tends to see stable democracy as the product of a healthy and vibrant civil society and networks of associational life. Once the dictator is removed and his coercive state apparatus is destroyed, the next logical step is to allow civil society to flourish, hold elections, and draft a constitution. The broader institutional environment in which all of this occurs is of secondary importance. Because it is difficult to run a democracy or anything else without a state that provides security, order, and the rule of law, this third assumption has proven the most problematic.

Democracy Promotion, European Style

Europeans first thought about democracy promotion in their neighborhood after 1989. The tragedy of Yugoslavia meant that creating stable and democratic states on their periphery became the main project of European statesmen. Yet, rather than simply support civic organizations, parties and constitution drafters throughout the region (which the United States did), the European strategy was to channel the post-Communist European elites' strong desire to join the EU into a grand project of state reconstruction and establish clear limits on domestic political behavior.

The EU strategy, which was supported by the leaders of its most powerful member states, was to concentrate on the post-Communist state, rather than on post-Communist society. Rhetoric emanating from Brussels emphasizing local initiative and stakeholder consultation notwithstanding, the entire effort was elite-driven and top-down. National politics in the candidate states quickly became contests over which party was more competent to satisfy Brussels and the leading EU member states and thus pave the way for admission to the EU.

Each candidate country had to pass thousands of pages of European law into its national legislation. Even more crucially, the EU constantly monitored these laws to ensure their implementation and published regular progress reports on each issue area for all candidate states. In addition to the EU, other European organizations such as NATO, the Council of Europe, the OSCE, and countless smaller international organizations produced their own country-based and issue-based reports, rendering post-Communist Europe the most continuously monitored region in history.

The European preference for order over freedom was strongly embedded in the entire process of EU accession. Rather than focus on civic groups, political parties and elections, the European monitoring regime has concentrated on building up state capacity to ensure that the entire *acquis communautaire* could be implemented. Democracy still mattered and indeed was the bare minimum requirement for all candidate members. The "Copenhagen criteria" for example include economic reform, minority rights and free and fair elections. The entire process of democracy promotion, however, was to be carefully controlled and orderly. Whereas the United States regarded the dem-

ocratic transitions more or less complete in the region by the mid-1990s when the second or third elections took place, the French, Germans and Italians did not consider democracy in post-Communist Europe consolidated until May 1, 2004, when eight Eastern European countries gained entry to the EU.

Enlargement has been hugely successful. Dangling the prospect of membership before potential entrants on the condition that they rebuild their states from a carefully designed menu constituted a powerful foreign policy tool in the hands of Europe's leaders. It has permitted European elites to solve an important security problem using Europe's soft power, which appealed to the general population.

The main flaw with EU enlargement as a democracy-promotion strategy is that it is designed more to stabilize countries that are already democratic rather than to promote "regime change" in non-democracies. Consider, for example, its role during the Orange Revolution in Ukraine. Although then-Polish President Alexander Kwasniewski acted as an advocate for Ukraine in Brussels, the EU's role in the Orange Revolution should not be overstated. The key players were the civic organizations throughout Ukraine and the street demonstrators in Kiev. To some extent, the interest of outsiders may have stayed the hand of the hardliners, but EU conditionality is not the real story here. The role and influence of the U.S. was arguably greater.

In fact, the EU has precious few policy instruments to deal with states not slated to become members in the short or medium term. Nowhere is this weakness more evident than in its Euro-Mediterranean Partnership and the subsequent European Neighborhood Policy. Although the EMP's and ENP's primary tools of statecraft are economic reform and trade harmonization, recent initiatives have expanded the remit of the partnership to include migration, energy, security and counterterrorism.

Yet, stabilizing and securitizing migration and borders is an older EU tendency that does little to promote democracy. In fact, despite significant discussion of political reform within the EMP's partnership agreements, the EU has been reluctant to push any political agenda on its equally reluctant Mediterranean partners. The primary approach of the Barcelona process is government to government, rather than promoting civil society and backing democrats. Neither the EU as a

whole nor its member states individually have shown a willingness to use membership conditionality or even aid conditionality to reshape the political landscape of the Euro-Mediterranean region.

Conflicting or Complementary Approaches

For democracy promotion to succeed, it will require elements of both the U.S. bottom-up emphasis on civil society and the European top-down appreciation for the role of the state. Canadians, being at once “American” and “European,” are uniquely positioned to push this point and perhaps even mediate this divide in thinking across the Atlantic. Without U.S. enthusiasm and optimism, democracy promotion will not get off the ground, yet without European care for institution building, democratic breakthroughs will be short lived and disappointing.

U.S. democracy promotion efforts outside of the Middle East, for example, have come primarily in the form of support for those civic organizations, political parties, and NGOs that initiated the “modular” revolutions against the increasingly authoritarian rulers of Serbia in October 2000, Georgia in November 2003, Ukraine in November 2004 and Kyrgyzstan in March 2005. In each of these cases, foreign-backed NGOs and opposition parties led mass demonstrations in the street that exerted pressure on authoritarian rulers in the wake of rigged elections. The authorities backed down and ceded power to the opposition.

Yet, although the U.S. model of civic revolution has been very successful at destabilizing semi-authoritarian states, it has enjoyed much less success in consolidating these new democracies. In countries with inefficient, corrupt, or collapsing state administrations, democratically elected parliaments have as little chance of enacting good policies as non-democratic ones. The newly elected “democrats” quickly find themselves dependent on the same political power brokers, oligarchs, or bureaucratic machines as the people they replaced. This is what has transpired in Georgia, Ukraine, and Kyrgyzstan, and to a lesser extent in Serbia.

Elections remain a necessary condition for democracy, but they are not sufficient to guarantee its stability. Equally important is the state’s capacity to carry out the will of the legislature in a fair and efficient manner. In Serbia, Georgia, Ukraine and Kyrgyzstan, weak state institutions and high levels of corruption threaten to discredit democracy.

The political dynamics of the post-Communist world have been mirrored in some places in the Middle East, such as Egypt, Saudi Arabia and even Iraq and Iran, where corrupt, rigged, or otherwise irrelevant elections have had at best an ambiguous democratizing effect.

European warnings about the single-minded U.S. focus on big events such as elections to the detriment of institution building are probably worth heeding. Here, again, Canada may have an important mediating role to play.

At the same time, however, Canadians are in a position to understand that democracy promotion will not be as clean as state building, which is a more limited consolidation strategy, and it will most likely falter if the preference is always for efficiency over participation. Introducing democracy will always be slightly messy and certainly more complex than the EU's strengthening of existing democracies in post-Communist Europe. If the Europeans are truly interested in democracy promotion, they will need to live with a measure of uncertainty and open-endedness characteristic of the transformation of subjects into citizens.

Promotion Sharing and Canada's Approach

Democracy promotion need not become a new source of transatlantic tension if both sides are willing to draw on the other's strengths and experiences. It is true that Europeans may not share the U.S. zeal for democracy promotion as a project and will only reluctantly adopt policies designed to introduce democracy where it does not already exist. Moreover, there are certainly issues over which the transatlantic partners will continue to disagree, including the U.S. use of regime change in the case of especially intractable foes such as Saddam. Yet, although public opinion polls indicate that Europeans are generally wary of the U.S. role in the world and remain especially distrustful of the current Administration, they are keen to promote democracy in the rest of the world. One opinion poll conducted by the German Marshall Fund in 2005 suggested that Europeans are even more supportive of democracy promotion than Americans. As long as they are included as partners in the project, democracy promotion can even be the ground on which the transatlantic alliance can be rebuilt in the decades ahead.

The outlines of the division of labor seem clear enough. Elements of the bottom-up U.S. democracy promotion strategy that emphasizes civil society, political parties, and clean elections are most appropriate where democracy is absent or where rigged elections are used as a cover for illiberal or autocratic regimes. The European top-down strategy of democracy promotion that uses membership conditionality to promote order, good governance, and institutional capacity, even though it must evolve beyond EU enlargement, should be included in the democracy promotion repertoire to help consolidate regimes that have initiated but not completed their democratic transitions.

What is Canada's role in all of this? Should Canadians even care about democracy promotion? I believe that they should—it provides one of the few instances in which our most deeply held values can be reconciled with our most vital interests. As a “small” country next to the world's most powerful one, Canada's first instinct over the past five decades has been to embed its pursuit of values and interests in international institutions, especially the United Nations. One possible track that Canada could pursue is the creation of a caucus of democracies within the General Assembly. This is a strategy that would appeal to Canada's foreign policy elites who have invested so much energy in the United Nations.

On the question of democracy promotion, however, it must be stated that the UN has been a dismal failure. So much so that it has all but lost legitimacy on the question. The recent debacle over the Human Rights Council, which appears to be incapable of discussing anything beyond Israel's supposed crimes, is but the latest in a long line of embarrassments for the UN on democracy promotion. Clearly if Canada wants to embed democracy promotion in a broader international institutional order, a different institution from the UN will have to be chosen. One that comes to mind is the Community of Democracies initiated in Warsaw in 2000. Although there remain important obstacles to breathing life into this organization (including, first, defining what exactly a democracy is, and, second, convincing the U.S. to take it seriously), Canada would be well served by launching an initiative in this field. This does not have to come at the expense of the United Nations but clearly the UN is unequipped to deal with every collective action problem in the world, and in democracy promotion its norm of strong sovereignty even for non-democracies makes it

uniquely ill equipped. This observation should not be cause for despair. As Francis Fukuyama has recently noted, it would indeed be surprising if one international institution could solve every collective action problem, from the environment to terrorism.

Canada is well suited to taking up the task as North America's main sponsor of a renewed Community of Democracies. Canada's tradition of placing values at the forefront of its foreign policy makes it typically liberally democratic. Canada's respect for international institutions makes it a credible player in creating a new one or reanimating one that is moribund. Finally, Canada's position between Europe and the United States, as a country that is at once "American" and "European" makes it the perfect candidate for translating and reconciling the differing transatlantic visions of democracy promotion. Canada's role in democracy promotion should not be that of a mediator between the Americans and the Europeans (this is a permanent delusion of some Canadians) but as a beacon of clear thinking on what it means to be part of an international community of like-minded democratic states.

Chapter 4

Is Democracy the UN's Business? The United Nations and Sustaining Democracy

Magdy Martinez-Soliman

The Democratic Way to Dictatorship: How Everything Was Lost

The quote attributed to Thomas Jefferson “The price of freedom is eternal vigilance” comes to mind immediately when discussing how the gains of democracy can be squandered and lost: as simply as by falling asleep on one’s watch. Where vigilance fails or falters, those less interested in what Democracy represents will take the opportunity of subverting it. The clearest example in history has been given by those who, not believing in democracy, have accepted it temporarily to better destroy it. This acceptance is hypocritical and pragmatic: in its extreme vision, democratic institutions are seen as the poison that will eventually kill democracy; the democratic shortcut to power allows then and from there, to rein in a society and deprive it from its freedom, from any restraint mechanisms that stand in the way of absolute dominion. Benito Mussolini entered Parliament in 1920 and was offered the Italian government after his threatening “Marcia su Roma” (March on Rome) in 1922—combining the terror of his squads of war veterans with a political party running for elections. Hitler was a minority leader in the 608-member strong German Reichstag and used the electoral route that never offered him a victory to access power through another combination of terror, intimidation and agitation. He did not wait one month after his appointment as Chancellor in January 1933, and set fire to the Reichstag on February 27 of the same year—a quite graphic indication of what he thought of parliamentary oversight. Most nations in the east of Europe held relatively free elections after World War II—only to see how the different communist parties, with the support of the Red Army, systematically trans-

formed the results of these elections into absolute rule: in the German Democratic Republic, for instance, the Communists forced the social democrats and others into a coalition first and a merger later, replacing a multiparty democracy by a one-party Stalinist regime. In Bulgaria, the opposition parties, supported by the UK and the US, were wiped off the political map in the constitution-drafting debate and finally banned—by a communist party that had come to power through competitive elections, which it had won. In Czechoslovakia, the landslide victory of the Communist Party in the 1946 elections was only the preface of the ban of all other political parties that would happen only two years thereafter. One can look through East and Central Europe's 1945-1950 politics and recognize the same pattern: elections leading to totalitarianism.

Are Rich Democracies Safe? Are Poor Democracies at Risk?

What is the lesson from these pages of recent history? One, that democracy is always fragile and never a given. Two, that democracy can be reversed, especially in times of social unrest and economic depression (the cases of Germany and Italy). Adam Przeworski¹ has developed mathematic formulae to show that democratic countries do not fall back into authoritarianism, no matter how tough the social situation, once they have reached the Gross Domestic Product line of US\$6,000: the recent social difficulties suffered by Argentina are often quoted as an example of how recession can cruelly hit a society with

¹ Przeworski, Adam, *Multilateral Strategies to Promote Democracy* (New York: Carnegie Council, 2003). The author has studied the facts and the statistical proportion of countries in which governments are selected through competitive elections, with their attendant freedoms. The first fact is that such a proportion is today higher than ever before, and it is not falling. Starting his statistical analysis in 1946, with a proportion of 45 percent, the post-war period has been one of decline, including the entrance of 47 new independent countries between 1957 and 1982, many of which were not democratic. 1982 is the starting point of the third wave of democratization in Latin America, Eastern Europe and Africa. Regarding the quality of these democracies, the author states that "they suffer from dissatisfaction and shallow political participation all around the world." This is certainly confirmed by both the United Nations Development Programme's Human Development Report 2002 and the more recent UNDP Democracy Development Report in Latin America. In studying democratization, it is important to analyze the emergence factors (why are democracies established) and the survival factors (and probabilities, depending on such factors, i.e. income). The survival probability has again increased since 1982, leading to a stabilization of emerging democracies. In very poor countries, about one in eight democracies die per year (12 percent probability of democratic collapse). When GDP per capita reaches US\$6,000 (Argentina 1976), all democracies survive: no democracy ever failed above this line, even if going through every possible crisis.

its damaging sequels of mass unemployment, evaporation of social services and aggravation of extreme poverty and still have its democratic system survive, albeit hurt and weakened. This thesis of an economic virtuous circle that maintains democracy afloat has also been expressed in geopolitical terms. The more democratic a society is, the less its public opinion, its published opinion and its legislature will tolerate double-standards, i.e. the eventual support, for geo-strategic or economic reasons, of foreign authoritarian regimes, and the more it will promote democracy abroad, especially amongst its neighbors. This generates a virtuous domino effect of democracies promoting democracy and helping democratic systems not to slide back.

Despite his impeccable empirical series, there is no guarantee however that Professor Przeworski will always be proven right in the future. On the other hand, we have the assurance that when the poverty needle attains the red zone, very poor democracies that do not improve their citizens' livelihoods will remain extremely exposed to takeovers, *pronunciamientos*, populist saviors dressed in technocratic suits or in fatigues—all subspecies of the authoritarian family and none comfortable with the checks and balances democracy implies. Deprived of popular support, palace coups and unconstitutional transmissions of power will happen frequently amidst the indifference of the homeless, hungry and unemployed citizenry. One of the most pernicious (and fallacious) discourses has been the myth, beloved and propagated by dictators, that democracy implies a degree of indiscipline that is somehow the enemy of development rather than an essential ally of welfare. From there, we have seen some political platforms expressing, in a democratic contest, the “need for an authoritarian smack,” not openly questioning the democratic values, but ‘just’ appealing to a “better” *sequencing* between what is again presented as “a period of order” (during which to build infrastructures and rein in deficits, produced inevitably by the earlier prodigality needed to feed democratic consensus), and time that will come later for elections, political pluralism, parliamentarianism, local governance, free press and other such expensive and messy processes that allegedly slow down growth. This thesis is a fairy tale without factual basis—worse: an attempt to negate reality by mystifying it. Authoritarianism has historically been equal to disorderly economics, individual prodigality of office-holders, left to handle public finances without any oversight, and privileges for the few without the slightest accountability. Demo-

cratic decision-making is seldom a hurried process, never the result of an error due to lack of time. Much as the parsimony of democratic procedures has been criticized, they lead to more reliable results, guarantee a fair amount of local input, constituency buy-in, national ownership and prevent the effects of bad decision and bad government: there is always a limit on how bad things can get, inasmuch there is always an election day around the corner. Every democratic decision matures the development process and every step ahead in development ripens the democratic system. In the words of Amartya Sen,² “a country does not have to be deemed fit *for* democracy; rather, it has to become fit *through* democracy.”

The Commercial State

If, as put by Prof. Guillermo O’Donnell,³ the actor of democracy is not so much the voter, asked to opine once every four years, but more the citizen, who exercises his or her rights every day, at every step, in all aspects of life, we are in a more realistic position to analyze what the gains of democracy are and where they can be seriously put in danger. Another way of a democracy losing foot, weakening its participation menu, its processes of consultation and decision-making is the transformation of the State into a regulator or a provider—and the citizen into a client, denying that the relationship between them is mainly political, rights-based, and replacing it through a basically commercial or contractual linkage. The new currency is now satisfaction (and tax money) for service, a currency that is easy to sell precisely because the State has often been a poor provider, hiding behind its faceless monopolistic control of entire sectors of human activity, and nobody tolerates bad public service, if given a choice! The new currency substitutes legitimacy, accountability and democratic oversight. Democracy, once again, is weakened.

Factors of Erosion

Erosion of democracy seems to be invariably the result of less democratic forces gaining power and bringing back their agenda—one of

² Sen, Amartya, “Democracy as a Universal Value,” *Journal of Democracy* 10.3, National Endowment for Democracy and the Johns Hopkins University Press, (1999) p. 3.

³ O’Donnell, Guillermo, Remarks during a presentation of the panel on “Strategies to Promote Democracy,” held at UN Headquarters in New York, on July 18, 2006.

“people’s power” usually without the people, one of “strong man rule” with no intermediaries, an agenda where other values are set as absolute priorities—security, economic recovery, reconstruction after a natural disaster. We all know how we are ready to trade off part of our liberties against more security, more jobs or the regrouping of forces and discipline necessary to make an extraordinary effort in special circumstances. The problem is that those who taste exceptional powers as rulers usually get accustomed to them and quickly enjoy the absence of checks and balances, the discretion and what is often presented as efficacy at the service of an unimpeded executive force. It takes a society with strong democratic values and very solid institutions to bring the process back on (democratic) track.

Erosion happens to democracy for a number of reasons: because it is unable to deliver on the social agenda and loses its support base; because the elite in power has an agenda that precisely consists in subverting democracy; because the rulers of the day who were once preferred by the people have decided to continue without its permission and are obsessed with remaining in power—we have seen how many constitutional provisions of mandate limitation have been amended to allow the incumbents to remain in their high offices; or because unexpected emergencies seem to call for extraordinary powers, and these are extended, beyond the lifetime of the event that seemed to justify their concession.

A further factor of erosion has to do with the maladministration of the mandate received democratically. Dishonest behavior of elected officials, widespread corruption and kleptocracies rob the citizens their most valuable good—trust—in addition to the monies of the treasury. While rigged elections—or even worse, no elections at all—are the preface of an announced misrule, period of generalized embezzlement and disregard for citizens’ concerns, free and fair elections that reflect the will of the people hold the promise—regardless of whether it is actually fulfilled—of honest and accountable government, hard-working and exemplar public office-holders, transparent and integer decision-making in state affairs. This is why, perhaps, the erosion of trust caused by corruption has such a cruel impact on democracy: it leaves scars that take a long time to fade and generates disbelief in the different political programs. Instead, there seems to be only one: to arrive in public office to generate private gain.

The last erosion we need to measure in terms of impact and propagation is the diminishing human rights protection shield under the impact of national security legislation. No matter how we look at the issue, human rights are commitments of the international community, norms of *ius cogens* that do not admit immunities, fiscal paradises or temporary exemptions. They apply *urbi et orbe* and no derogation from them is permitted. One of the tough tests to define a democracy's quality and depth is the way in which it treats its foes, those who put it at risk. The impact of tolerating lower human rights standards invoking the Raison d'État is that others will use the same lower standards and apply them to any situation they describe as contrary to their security—this time, with barely any control. Such a situation is especially grave when we refer to standard-bearing nations: the import-export of repressive laws that combat terror to use them elsewhere against political dissidence labeled with misleading names has already been documented. The response to those who try to destroy our rights and deter us from living in freedom is more, not fewer rights, more, not less freedom.

The Achilles Heel

Erosion is of course not as brutal today as was the fire in the Reichstag. But we can still see smoke at times, and detect the fire underneath. Erosion attacks the Achilles Heel of democracy, its checks and balances. These are put under pressure and decaffeinated. The basic democratic arrangements, political practices and institutions that define a democracy are put at risk or emptied of their functions. Independent journalists are harassed, editors intimidated, while the state-owned or private media ancillary to the rulers receive unlimited leeway to transit from information to defamation, propaganda and personality cult. The legislature is weakened, ridiculed and transformed in a ritual chamber, often closed down, convened *ad calendas graecas*, ripped of its prestige, depleted of budgetary means and the Members left hanging without a function or a real possibility of maintaining a serious relationship with their constituents. Government acts as if it had no obligation to remain accountable to the representative bodies, and prefers “direct dialogue” with the people, TV addresses to the nation and “plebiscites” or referenda, rather than parliamentary control, Accountant Generals and Inquiry Committees. The Judiciary

is subjected to obedience and politicized; promotions and demotions are made to depend on political loyalty. Soon, the entire judicial zenith is beholden to the ruling elite because it has risen to that position thanks to political influence, not professional proficiency and/or seniority. While Montesquieu's death is celebrated, the separation of powers is buried and the only survivor is always the Executive branch of government.

Orchestrated libel is frequently used as a political weapon against discrepant leaders. The mechanisms of decision-making often suffer another tweak: they are re-centralized where there was a decentralized structure, or strengthened elsewhere. Local government is left to starve, deprived of any fiscal revenue and totally written off in terms of authority; it is often replaced by delegates of the center, Governors who have the sole direct line to the only real power, the center. Everything has to be dealt with in the capital, and soon the elected authorities will simply be replaced by others, more to the liking of the rulers —through rigging local elections, heavily weighing in with less than legitimate means or simply making the investments depend on the result. Civil society receives a very special treatment and is either co-opted if docile or demonized if attempting to remain independent. Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) with foreign partners are portrayed as lacking any real roots in the community, agents of external powers or intellectualized minorities with no real concern for the people's problems. Sometimes non-governmental organizations have actually been the front for other countries' less-than-respectful interventions in sovereign nations and ways to 'continue diplomacy by other means.' This reality has paved the way for such criticism. Civil society organizations that do not have sufficient backing in society, grass roots organizations with almost no roots and consultancy firms that adopt the external shape of a Non-Governmental Organization to access funding sources damage the entire CSO movement's credibility and reduce the terrain for their operations. Illiberal rulers tend to make strong nationalistic arguments and rally support through picturing civil society as alien, foreign and not connected to genuine values —and sometimes, arguments are served to them on a silver tray.

Very important work has been produced to date by numerous institutions to develop governance indicators or democracy indexes, to try to classify countries in clusters of democratic, less democratic and

non-democratic, and analyze their respective evolution. A good overview of the main indicators (and their shortcomings) is provided by Munck and Verkuilen in their essay “Conceptualizing and Measuring Democracy.”⁴ We would prefer however, rather than trying to reach an agreement on attributes and thereby a universal definition, embrace Dahl’s suggestion that a democracy is a country “where the government is generally referred to as democratic by most of the people in that country, by many persons in other countries, and by scholars, journalists and the like. In other words, in ordinary speech and scholarly discussion, the country is called a democracy.”⁵

More Democracy Than Ever

Against this grim backdrop, it has to be stated that we are analyzing the quality of democratic consolidation, and deepening our knowledge and analysis of the “democratic retreat” because we now can! Only 15 years ago, we were so busy in supporting those who were bringing about democratic values and institutions in their countries that the issue of quality remained a distant bridge that we would cross when we would get there. First came first: lifting the ban on political parties, a free press, elections, legislatures, local governments, and independent judges. We can now afford this more sophisticated debate because we have arrived at an almost universal acceptance of democracy as the best form of government and a quite generalized adoption of democracy’s most salient institutions. We are now discussing how to reenergize social support and legitimacy of democratic systems because the world has achieved, in a very short period of time, spectacular results in terms of democratization. Yesterday, news of a military coup was part of the daily brief. Today, we feel shocked when we see men in uniform, as we have recently in Bangkok, intervening to curb the course of constitutional representation.

Often, even in this paper, democratic values, processes and institutions are amalgamated and dealt with as a continuum or parts of the same reality. In some ways, they are: institutions without underlying values are fragile and soon can fall in ritualism and lack of support.

⁴ Munck, Gerardo L. and Jay Verkuilen, *Comparative Political Studies*, Vol. 35 No. 1, February 2002, pp. 5-34.

⁵ Dahl, Robert A., “What Political Institutions Does Large-Scale Democracy Require,” *Political Science Quarterly*, Volume 120, Number 2, 2005, p. 188.

Values without institutions generate a positive culture and social ambiance that society enjoys in its more informal groupings—the family, work, the village or neighborhood—but does not permeate upwards to the national level policy decision-making boards. Values or institutions without a well-oiled process result in badly functioning mechanisms that do not translate truly the opinions of the citizens, can be captured easily through procedural tricks and deprive the values from a landing strip and the institutions from their engine belt. The trilogy is therefore needed to make democracy meaningful to everyone's life on a daily basis, from the most strategic decisions of a nation to the way individuals relate to each other in the polis. But even admitting that the three legs are needed to give stability to the democratic stool, the principles and values are still more important than the trimmings and trappings of democracy. It is a long endeavor to build the former, while the latter can be set up in a reasonably short time if there is sufficient political will to promulgate norms and build governance edifices.

The UN's Role in the Promotion of Democracy

Regardless of the language—backlash, erosion, and frailty—democracy is a precious but relatively fragile system where it has not enjoyed decades of consolidation, and it presents permanent challenges, threats, and opportunities. The United Nations has the responsibility of addressing them. Professor Michael Doyle⁶ has indicated that “democratic values are deeply and ambivalently embedded in the UN system. Democracy and human rights are embedded in the Charter itself, in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights but constrained by views on sovereignty and non-intervention. The UN espouses no single model of democracy.” He believes that the UN performs its role in the promotion of democracy both directly and indirectly: “Indirectly through the promotion of economic growth and maintaining peace; directly via technical assistance, election monitoring and diplomatic negotiations.” The vast majority of UN efforts are deployed as voluntary assistance based on the host-country's invitation or conventional commitment; very few are coercive enforcement actions, under Chapter VII of the Charter.

⁶ Doyle, Michael, Remarks during a presentation of the panel on “Strategies to Promote Democracy,” held at UN Headquarters in New York, on July 18, 2006.

UN democratization is not democratic coercion—it is overwhelmingly a form of technical and strategic consensus. This already explains the limitations but also the virtues of this tool—the UN persuasion and peer pressure—when the subject of the democracy backsliding does not want to agree on the diagnosis or on the solution and is rather part of the problem. However, sanctions and impositions have such a bleak record in this regard that diplomatic efforts and persuasion are still what the international community has best to offer. Capacity development and strengthening of self-correcting mechanisms of democracy are the pillars of a strategy that basically consists in providing support before the ship hits the iceberg. So how can it work, and why?

The basic answer is that for want of a better solution, democracy persuasion has worked—slowly, gradually, but with the advantage of not leaving deep wounds and generating national ownership over the process. We have also seen how, increasingly, democracy matters to the UN, and the UN matters to democracy. The UN has done more than any other organization to promote democracy through quiet diplomacy and hands-on cooperation with its Member States at the country level. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights adopted by the General Assembly in 1948 has inspired constitution-making in every corner of the world, and contributed greatly to the eventual global acceptance of democracy as a universal value. The development of human rights standards, the implementation of the right of all peoples to self-determination, and assistance to good governance and electoral assistance have been among the key tools that the UN has used to promote democracy. The UN has also served as a forum for the development of specific initiatives such as the movement of New and Restored Democracies, initiated by the Philippines, following the country's democratic transformation in the late 1980s. More recently, a group of states established itself as Community of Democracies and started to organize consultations within the framework of some of the UN bodies.

In addition, with the assistance of the UN system, major progress has been achieved in terms of fair and regular elections, representative legislatures, accountable government—national and local—predictable justice, honest civil service, transparent public management, a free press, civil society organizations as numerous as needed and a system that protects all rights for all. The debate on development and

democracy has also evolved. Freedom and democracy are not seen anymore as luxury items: all societies in the world can afford them and know it. The position on the development index is no reason anymore for lowering the bar of fundamental freedoms—if anything, it has become a motive to increase that level and unleash the capacity of people to move a society ahead with the engine of their freedom. Even in political contexts that do not observe the principles of pluralism, one can observe that effectiveness and success stems from areas of activity such as economic sectors where there is wider choice, ampler freedom and a stronger creative impulse. Sen points again to the “overwhelming evidence to show that what is needed for generating faster economic growth is a friendlier economic climate rather than a harsher political system.”⁷ The challenges to democracy are not exclusive to developing countries: numerous challenges affect rich nations, from the disenchantment of their younger generations with regards to politics and politicians, to very serious doubts about the level at which citizens’ decisions and governments’ influence really matter, overruled as they seem to be by multinational corporations of the globalized economy, including the media giants, regional super-structures, world financial institutions and other powers that are not accountable before any democratically elected institution. As a result, in advanced countries too the State faces a crisis of legitimacy, and the level of trust in political parties and in institutions such as the legislature or the courts is at a record low. As indicated by Dahl, “every actual democracy has always fallen short of democratic criteria. (...) we should be aware that in ordinary language, we use the word democracy to refer both to a goal or ideal and to an actuality that is only a partial attainment of the goal.”⁸ Consequently, just as we need strategies to bring about a transition to democracy in non-democratic countries and for consolidating democracy in newly democratized nations, so in the older democratic countries we need to consider whether and how to move beyond our existing level of democracy.”⁹

These are some of the reasons why democracy is an essential part of the Secretary-General’s Reform plan: a sustained effort to help build where necessary and strengthen everywhere else the democratic

⁷ Sen, *ibidem*, p. 5.

⁸ Dahl, *ibidem*, p. 187.

⁹ *Ibid*, p. 197.

fabric of a nation, a fabric that can be very different in texture, color and size but that does result in listening to the voice of the people and respecting their preferences. This strong democracy bid has a concrete expression in today's United Nations, it is called the UN Democracy Fund; a new and dynamic platform that we hope is the foundation of something more important yet to come. It has all the ingredients: an independent experts' team that harnesses what the UN has best to offer, from political analysts to peacekeepers, from development practitioners to gender specialists, from anti-corruption professionals to human rights experts. It also has a Board on which 11 Member States serve, from the North and the South, the East and the West, developing and high income, landlocked and insular; stellar academics and leaders of global civil society complete the trustees who steer the Democracy Fund at the UN. Institutionally housed in the UN Office for Partnerships, is an important platform to build alliances and an example of how indispensable the cooperation between civil society, governments and the UN has become to successfully address the challenges of democracy-building.

There are good reasons why the persuasive approach works: because the bearer of support is believed to be equidistant, non-partisan, with no lesser agenda than the admittedly ambitious one of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the Charter. Even where the support of the UN appears as uncomfortable, the cost of blocking it may be assessed as higher. The result is that oversight mechanisms, processes and institutions are gradually strengthened and increase their usefulness and moral authority. The one exception is perhaps that of the most hostile environments, where the UN has not found an effective way of engaging a dialogue to open up a process of democratization. But then nobody else has found the "Open Sesame" words, and all efforts seem to go in the direction of identifying democracy champions and providing discrete and quiet support, while not putting those activists who have to face complex and repressive political systems at even greater risk. When the Secretary-General of the UN approved the first round of 125 Democracy Fund projects, out of 1,300 concepts that had been submitted by civil society and other organizations in 110 countries, he was actually contributing to strengthen, in all these Member States, the self-correcting mechanisms that every democracy has availed itself of. The Fund has essentially invested 60 percent of its resources in strengthening local civil

society—to keep less attentive governments on their toes and to help more sensible governments benefit from the inputs of civil society. Many governments are ready to play the democratic game with CSOs, indicating that they will let them operate and participate in the definition, implementation and evaluation of public policies. Providing breathing space through the UN's endorsement to human rights activists who may feel suffocated has been another important line of work over the past six months.

Where the electoral process is far too closely monitored by law enforcement agencies, Human Rights Commissions will dedicate efforts to monitor the behavior of the police and other security forces during election time. Where there is undue pressure on media, the Fund will support networks of lawyers who protect journalists and uphold their freedom of expression, while the news people in turn support the jurists in their bid for independent justice. Where transparency is a major factor, civil society is using digital means to create dynamic portals that provide citizens access to information on interests of candidates running for public office, a measure that is usually very well received by many candidates themselves, especially those who would benefit from a level playing field. Where political turmoil needs to be reabsorbed and translated into future legislative frameworks, such as Bolivia and Zambia, the Fund is helping facilitate the constitutional reform deliberations leading to new *magna cartae*; in countries where free and fair elections are still an issue upon which depends the respect of the people's will, the Fund supports independent monitoring of the polls by international and domestic observers. Everywhere in the world, it sponsors civic education and voters' awareness, as well as capacity development of political parties in a non-partisan way. The rights of ethnic minorities, once respected but progressively neglected as the limelight dims, have been especially targeted by the Fund.

Democracy is a process of permanent discovery rather than a finish line at which some have arrived and many are still running towards. We are all in the same race, and have tried here to discuss why some might be seen as running backwards, are slowing down their pace or have stopped on the sidelines. The challenge is of course to see how we can hit the road again and catch up with the lead group.

Chapter 5

**The United States,
the European Union and
the Consolidation of
Democracy in Eastern Europe**

Jan Zielonka

Democracy promotion is now one of the leading international “industries.” It is applied in various corners of the world from Kosovo to Burma and to Iraq. It is practiced by powerful states, international organizations, transnational NGOs and even by financial institutions such as the IMF and World Bank. And the justification for it seems pretty obvious. As Robert J. Art put it: “The reasons to support democracy abroad are simple and powerful: democracy is the best form of governance; it is the best guarantee for protection of human rights and for the prevention of mass murder and genocide; it facilitates economic growth; and it aids the cause of peace.”¹

However, this paper will suggest the democracy promotion project may well have its best days behind it already, at least in post-Communist Europe. The success of the project in this region was closely linked with the policy of EU and NATO enlargement. The current “enlargement fatigue” and the fight against terrorism demand a fundamental re-thinking of the democracy promotion strategy vis-à-vis such countries as Russia, Belarus, Ukraine, Georgia, Macedonia, Albania or Serbia. Persistence of democracy in the new members of the EU and NATO cannot be taken for granted either. Even in these states, the democracy promotion project may be unsuited for addressing the current democratic deficiencies.

¹ Art, Robert J., *A Grand Strategy for America* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2003), p. 69.

Origin of the Project

The democracy promotion project is relatively new. It originated in the early 1980s when evidence began to emerge of a democratic breakthrough within the Communist bloc. (This was especially manifested by the rise to power in Poland of the independent trade union Solidarity.)

Of course, there are numerous examples in history of intervention in other states with the aim of promoting certain normative or political models. The Romans exported their laws and models of administration, the medieval crusades converted “barbarians” to Christianity and the French revolutionaries spread their universal principles of “*liberté, égalité, et fraternité*.” However, none of these projects were aimed at promoting democracy *per se*. In fact, before the 1980s, autocracy was usually seen as a plausible solution for countries facing economic malaise and political instability.² Moreover, some dictatorial regimes were seen as legitimate simply because they were anti-Communist. The Helsinki Process in Europe was concerned with security, economic cooperation, and human rights: the three famous baskets.³ Democracy was not one of the objectives. The West tried to get the Eastern European dissidents out of prison, but not to make them government ministers through free and fair elections. It was widely assumed at the time that any overt attempts at regime change could cause a nuclear confrontation. It was not until a small group of intellectuals and public activists established the National Endowment for Democracy in 1983 that promotion of democracy was put on the political agenda.⁴ But as far as I know, none of them envisaged at the time that their project would soon become the official policy of the United States and many other actors.

To sum up, the democracy promotion project proved to be enormously successful. But it would be wrong to think that this project—only twenty years old—will stay with us forever. In fact, my brief introduction tried to suggest that democracy promotion was the prod-

² See e.g. Robinson, Mark and Gordon White, eds., *The Democratic Developmental State: Politics and Institutional Design* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), p. 1.

³ See e.g. Korey, William, “Human Rights and the Policy of Leverage for Human Rights and Security in Eastern Europe,” in Mastny, Vojtech and Jan Zielonka, eds., *Human Rights and Security. Europe on the Eve of a New Era* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1991), pp. 77-105.

⁴ See e.g. Scott, James M. and Carrie A. Steele, “Assisting Democrats or Resisting Dictators? The Nature and Impact of Democracy Support by the United States National Endowment for Democracy, 1990-99,” *Democratization*, Vol. 12, No. 4 (2005), pp. 439-460.

uct of specific historical circumstances that were grasped by a small group of political entrepreneurs not only within the NED but also in some other, largely non-governmental bodies such as the Soros Foundation or the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung.⁵ The question is whether the project can be adjusted to the new circumstances of today.

Explaining Successes in Central and Eastern Europe

The record of democracy promotion is mixed. It is enough to consider such cases as Iraq, Afghanistan, Cambodia, Zimbabwe or Belarus to see the limited effectiveness of the project. There is no doubt however, that Central and Eastern Europe represent a unique success story of democracy promotion. This is largely due to three factors. First, throughout the 1990s, the international environment was conducive to democracy building in Central and Eastern Europe. The Soviet Empire collapsed in a largely peaceful way and there was basically no effort on the part of Russia to stall reforms in Central and Eastern Europe by the use of force. The U.S. and EU were actively engaged in Central and Eastern Europe as “pacifiers,” aid providers and democracy trainers.⁶ Even the war in the Balkans had (ironically) some positive impact on democracy building in Central and Eastern Europe because it deterred populist politicians there from self-destructive confrontation.

This leads me to another factor behind democracy promotion success in this region. I call this a compatibility factor, but Karl Deutsch used to call it “the autonomous probability of events.” Western pressure reinforced the domestic developments already taking place in Central and Eastern Europe. These countries were culturally close to the West with a high percentage of solid democrats. (This has hardly been the case in countries such as Albania, Moldova, Belarus, Ukraine and Russia where there are no more than 25 percent of solid democrats).⁷

⁵ For instance, according to 1998 statistics, the Soros Foundation has invested more in democracy-related projects in Russia than the European Union or its largest member states, such as Germany or Great Britain. See *The Economist* (December 12, 1998). See also Quickley, Kevin F.F., *For Democracy's Sake: Foundations and Democracy Assistance in Central Europe* (Washington: Woodrow Wilson Center Press, 1997), pp. 122-3.

⁶ For the use of the term “pacifier” in this context see Joffe, Josef, “Europe’s American Pacifier,” *Foreign Policy*, 54 (1984), pp. 64-82.

⁷ See Fuchs, Dieter and Hans-Dieter Klingemann, “Eastward Enlargement of the European Union and the Identity of Europe,” *West European Politics*, 25/Special Issue 2 (2002), p. 40.

Finally and most importantly in our context, both the EU and NATO identified democracy as a precondition for joining their ranks. This is usually called a policy of conditionality and in this particular case it worked remarkably well because the incentive was very substantial and the linkage between EU/NATO membership and democracy was clear and direct.⁸ True, there is enough evidence to suggest that Western crafters were never in full control over democratic developments in the applicant countries. Moreover, the West has been crafting not only democracy but also the market economy, security and other matters. These various crafting projects were not necessarily in harmony and they often fell prey to intra-institutional rivalry or partisan (selfish) pressures of farmers, bankers or traders. Nor was there always a natural harmony between the various means applied by the West vis-à-vis the candidates to the EU and NATO. Although Western politicians often claimed to possess an overall strategic design for creating a democratic Europe, their rhetoric was often vague and ambiguous and their policies lacked a clear sense of direction. It is also important to point out that both the EU and NATO accession processes have often been handled in a dictatorial rather than democratic fashion: the candidates were presented with a long list of conditions for entrance and they were hardly in a position to negotiate these conditions let alone reject them.⁹

However, all this should not put into question the success of Western policies. The instrumental crafting of democracy with the use of leverage and linkage may have been less effective than claimed by Western officials. Nevertheless, the indirect impact or if you wish “demonstration effect” of the West was enormous and it coincided with the policy of leverage and linkage. Elites and the electorates in Central and Eastern Europe have been ready to put up with the Western policy of conditionality because they clearly believed that democracy Western style would be good for them. The question is whether these factors are still at play. What has changed and how will the ongoing changes affect democracy promotion?

⁸ See e.g. Jacoby, Wade, *The Enlargement of the European Union and NATO: Ordering from the Menu in Central Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004) and Vachudova, Milada A., *Europe Undivided: Democracy, Leverage, and Integration after Communism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005).

⁹ See e.g. Smith, Karen E., “The Evolution and Application of EU Membership Conditionality,” in Cremona, Marise, ed., *The Enlargement of the European Union*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), pp. 114-5 or Barany, Zoltan D., “NATO’s Peaceful Advance,” *Journal of Democracy*, 15 (2004), pp. 63-76.

The Nature of Change

There are three new developments that affect current democracy promotion, especially towards such countries as Russia, Belarus, Ukraine, Georgia, Macedonia, Albania, or Serbia. First, there is powerful pressure in some of the member states of the EU and NATO to halt the process of enlargement. This is due to a growing fear, especially within the EU-15, that further enlargements would make it difficult to handle the “imported” cultural and economic diversity. In fact, there is ample evidence to suggest that the vote against the European Constitution was in part a vote against further enlargements. Within NATO there is concern that further enlargements will bring it closer to very unstable regions without enhancing the organization’s financial and military resources. It is also feared that further enlargements will paralyze the decision-making system of both the EU and NATO.

However, the prospect of accession to EU and NATO represented the most powerful leverage towards the applicant countries. This prospect was also a stabilizing factor conducive to democracy building in the applicant countries. Local politicians resisted the autocratic temptation and tamed their mutual conflicts because they did not dare to frustrate their countries’ accession to the EU and NATO. Less attractive carrots would not have achieved similar effects. In fact, alternative solutions to fully-fledged membership have been tried in the past, but they failed especially in the case of the EU. (The NATO’s Partnership for Peace has been more successful than the EU’s projects of European Confederation or European Political Areas).¹⁰ There is no reason to assume that any offer of “semi-demi” EU/NATO membership would have a similarly beneficial effect for the democracy promotion project. The question is: can democracy promotion ever succeed in the former Soviet space or in the Balkans without a EU/NATO membership offer? And if not, what kind of leverage would have to be used in this situation?

The war on terror has also had numerous detrimental effects on democracy promotion. To start with, the war has made the U.S. and the EU soften their critique of authoritarian policies in countries considered partners in the war on terror. Russia is a good example here

¹⁰The former was proposed by then French President François Mitterrand, and the latter by the EC Commissioner Frans Andriessen. See e.g. Vernet, Daniel, “The Dilemmas of French Foreign Policy,” *International Affairs*, 68/4 (1992), pp. 655-64 or Andriessen’s speech to the 69th Assembly of Eurochambers, Brussels, April 19, 1991.

and so are several autocracies in the Caucasus. The Western message to local power holders has been clear: strategic rather than democratic considerations have again gained the upper hand. Moreover, the war on terror has made Western governments curb civil liberties in their own countries and enhance the powers of the executive branch (including the secret services) at the expense of the parliamentary and judicial branches. This has encouraged politicians in some of the former Communist countries to follow the Western path, albeit often in a more robust and undemocratic manner. It is also important to mention that the war on terror has so far had a destabilizing rather than stabilizing impact on the global international environment, although some may argue that things could have gotten much worse had such a war not been undertaken.

Finally there have been some disturbing developments on the democratic front in several Western countries, and they undermine the positive demonstration effect that the West used to have vis-à-vis other states. For instance, if Berlusconi's government in Italy could manipulate television broadcasting for partisan (if not personal) political ends then it is hard to expect that any autocrat outside the EU would be ready to follow EU's demands to make television broadcasting fair and free from political manipulation. Likewise, the ENRON scandal has made many people in the non-democratic world skeptical about the sincerity of Western anti-corruption campaigns that, after all, played an important part in democracy promotion. There are numerous similar examples.

The latter two factors will have a more detrimental impact on democracy in the former Soviet and Yugoslav republics than in the new member states of the EU and NATO. But it is also increasingly evident that membership in these two organizations was also a mixed blessing for democracy. Let me concentrate here on the case I know better: the EU.

Democracy After Joining the EU

As already stressed, the EU played an important role in democratic consolidation in Central and Eastern Europe. One of the EU's conditions for entrance was the establishment of a workable democracy. As the 1993 EU summit in Copenhagen stated: candidate states must

have “stability of institutions guaranteeing democracy, the rule of law, human rights, and respect for and protection of minorities.”¹¹ Moreover, joining the Union was a means of creating the economic, political and institutional conditions under which a new democracy could consolidate and persist. This has been proven by the Greek, Spanish and Portuguese cases, and the idea was to repeat the same success story in Central and Eastern Europe.¹²

However, EU membership has also some detrimental impact on democracy in the new (but also in the old) member states. In fact, some critics go as far as to argue that EU membership perverts rather than enhances democracy in the new member states. First, and most obviously, the EU’s membership complicates the structure of democratic decision-making by making it more multi-layered and multi-centered. (I should add that the competencies of various layers and centers are currently under-defined and overlapping). Second, EU membership enhances the powers of non-majoritarian institutions such as the European Commission, the European Court of Justice and various regulatory agencies. National parliaments tend to be less powerful democratic players after a country joins the EU (or even before that, as the EU accession process has shown). Third, EU membership broadens the democratic public space. As a consequence, democratic decision-making within the EU will have to accommodate a more diversified set of interests and cultural orientations.

Of course, it is hoped that the Union will manage to find new ways of assuring the transparency, responsiveness and accountability of its institutions. It is also hoped that this imperfect democratic unit will manage to assure greater system effectiveness and thus compensate for its inability to enhance genuine participation by its citizens. However, there is no doubt that joining the EU has changed the nature of democracy in the new member states and it is far from clear how these new members will cope with the new challenges. For instance, providing greater access of citizens to the European decision-making process seems to be most urgent in the new member states from Central and Eastern Europe whose citizens feel particularly detached from this

¹¹ See Council of the European Union, *Presidency Conclusions: Copenhagen European Council* (Brussels, 1993).

¹² See Tsoukalis, Loukas, *The European Community and its Mediterranean Enlargement* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1981).

process. According to the 2006 Eurobarometer, in most of the new member states, the vast majority of citizens believe that their voice does not count in the EU. In Latvia, only 18 percent of those polled believe that their voice counts, in the Czech Republic, 20 percent and in Estonia and Slovakia, 21 percent (the EU average is 36 percent).¹³

What is at stake here is not so much a turn towards authoritarianism, but erosion of democratic quality in the new member states. It seems to me that the democracy promotion project as we know it is quite unsuited for addressing the democratic quality problems just mentioned.

The EU and U.S. as Democracy Promoters

Do the EU and the U.S. promote democracy differently in the region? My answer is basically negative although with certain important qualifications.¹⁴ To start with, there is a problem of a EU-U.S. dichotomy when analyzing foreign policies in general and democracy promotion policies in particular. The EU is extremely heterogeneous. There are some states such as France and Great Britain that are historically interventionist, but there are also states such as Finland, Sweden, Austria or Ireland that try to be “neutral” and refrain from active intervention in other countries’ “internal” affairs. Some of the EU member states tend to side with America, while others tend to oppose American policies in an open or discrete manner. Moreover, different parties and political leaders within each of the discussed states have different worldviews and policies. For instance, some European politicians tried to reach out to civil society in autocracies (e.g. Max van der Stoep), while others preferred to rely on inter-state channels (e.g. Hans-Dietrich Genscher). Similarly in America, some believe that democracy requires first of all popular participation, while others argue that it is difficult, if not impossible, to be a democracy without a workable state. Again, there are numerous similar examples.

Differences exist because the EU and the U.S. are different types of actors, and they are under different kind of domestic pressures. Let me first illustrate the latter, more obvious point. It is easier for the

¹³ See *Eurobarometer* (Brussels: European Commission, June 2006), p. 30.

¹⁴ For an opposite argument see Kopstein, Jeffrey, “The Transatlantic Divide over Democracy Promotion,” *The Washington Quarterly*, 29 (2006), pp. 85-98.

U.S. to recommend further EU enlargements because these are European not American electorates that are reluctant to agree to further waves of EU enlargement. But the U.S. electorate is not entirely agnostic when it comes to Eastern Europe either and official U.S. policies are clearly taking account of this pressure. Consider for instance the U.S. refusal to grant visa free travel to Polish citizens. The U.S. government is also quite careful in recommending further enlargement of NATO. (Both policies could enhance the effectiveness of democracy promotion).

The U.S. and the EU act differently in international affairs because they are different types of actors. Unlike the U.S., the EU is not a state with a foreign policy reflecting its “national interest.” The EU lacks the basic legal and institutional characteristics of a state and it is even difficult to talk about its own equivalent of *raison d’etat*. Its foreign policies are more about internal power diffusion than about external power projection. The mechanism of foreign policy coordination within the EU is still relatively weak.¹⁵ Moreover, the U.S. possesses an impressive military might, while the EU is basically a civilian power trying to shape the international environment through trade, aid, and diplomacy. These differences cannot but influence democracy promotion policies. For instance, EU common “strategies” or “positions” towards external actors are usually vague and individual EU member states tend to label their own (and at times partisan) foreign policies as European. Consider the EU’s incoherent response to the Orange Revolution in Ukraine last year.¹⁶ This does not mean, however, that U.S. policies are always coherent. Consider the recent “royal” treatment by the U.S. of Nursultan Nazarbaev, President of Kazakhstan, despite his poor democratic record registered by the U.S. Department of Justice.

Transatlantic coordination of these already somewhat incoherent democracy promotion strategies is not easy, especially in a situation of crisis. Although some European countries tend to align their own policies with those of the U.S., the pattern of transatlantic coherence is neither constant nor clear. Much depends on the issue and the peo-

¹⁵ See e.g. Nuttall, Simon, “Coherence and Consistency,” in Hill, Christopher and Michael Smith, eds., *International Relations and the European Union*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), pp. 91-112.

¹⁶ See e.g. Ash, Timothy Garton and Timothy Snyder, “Ukraine: The Orange Revolution,” *New York Review of Books*, LIII/7 (2005), p. 30.

ple in charge of foreign policies at a given time. Consider, for instance, diverging U.S. and German approaches to the 1981 crushing of Solidarity (even though at the time Germany was one of the U.S.' closest allies).

Conclusions

Several conclusions can be drawn from this analysis. First of all and most obviously, democracy can hardly be imposed by decree, especially those issued by external actors. A complex institutional system of incentives and disincentives has to be put in place to make democracy promotion work. It is equally important that elites and electorates in the targeted countries are convinced that democracy is good for them. In other words, democracy is unlikely to emerge in a country with few democrats, even if there is strong external pressure.

This leads me to another important conclusion. The democratic credentials of the democracy promoter are crucial for the effectiveness of democracy promotion. The point is not only to avoid double political standards, but also to convince targeted countries that democracy can be as good for them as it is for the democracy promoters. Efforts to craft democracy in other states will remain fragile if the crafter itself engages in undemocratic practices. Crafters should be able to set the examples of good democratic practice to be followed by others.

Another related conclusion is that external crafting and engineering of democracy has serious limitations. (Of course, this is not to encourage a policy of benign neglect towards autocracies). Democracy is not a kind of intellectual commodity that can be sold, imposed or transplanted onto other countries in a direct and straightforward manner. Democracy is a product of complex political bargaining involving both internal and external actors with different political interests and cultural backgrounds.

This paper has also tried to suggest that the democracy promotion project is more suited for facilitating or even orchestrating a democratic breakthrough in authoritarian states than for enhancing democratic quality in new democracies. This is because there are different legitimate models of democracy and it is difficult to establish which dimensions of democratic quality are superior or inferior. As Marc Plattner rightly observed: "Modern liberal democracy has a composite

nature, consisting of often conflicting aspects. [And] democracy is a form of government that must not only be democratic but also effectively governed.”¹⁷ The latter comment is particularly relevant to new democracies in Eastern Europe because they are still confronted with relatively porous borders, high levels of unemployment and widespread crime and corruption.

Moreover, external intervention in internal affairs of democratic states is a highly contentious proposition. This is even the case among member states of the European Union. Since the Amsterdam Treaty came into force, the Union has had the right to intervene not only if a member state violates a vast body of economic and administrative *acquis*, but also if it does not comply with the principles of democracy, human rights, and the rule of law proclaimed in Article 6(1) EU. However the Haider affair in 2000 has clearly shown the difficulty of applying this article in practice.¹⁸

The final conclusion is quite obvious if not trivial. Democracy promotion is doomed to be less effective when the Americans and Europeans fail to work together. U.S. and EU democracy promotion policies do not fundamentally diverge, but the plurality of different actors within the “trans-Atlantic” camp makes any coherent policy more of an exception than a rule.

These are all general observations that ought to be applied on a daily basis towards individual cases. Two cases seem to me particularly illuminating and important in present-day Eastern Europe: Ukraine and Poland. The case of Ukraine will show whether promotion of democracy through EU and NATO enlargement is still a viable option.¹⁹ It will also show whether the EU and the U.S. are willing and able to promote a wider international environment conducive to

¹⁷ Plattner, Marc F., “The Quality of Democracy. A Skeptical Afterword,” *Journal of Democracy*, 15 (2004), p. 107.

¹⁸ The Union applied this article for the first time in 2000 when Jörg Haider’s FPÖ extremist party became part of the Austrian government. However, the exercise proved only partly successful and was quite controversial. See e.g. Cramér, Per and Pál Wrangle, “The Heider Affair, Law, and European Integration,” *Europarättslig tidskrift* 28 (2000) or Matthew Happold, “Fourteen against One: The EU Response to Freedom Party participation in the Austrian Government,” *International and Comparative Law Quarterly*, 49 (2000), p. 953.

¹⁹ See an interview with then French President, Jacques Chirac in *Gazeta Wyborcza*, February 28, 2005, p. 28.

democracy in this country. One can hardly imagine democracy triumphing in Ukraine if an increasingly autocratic Russia is being embraced by the West for economic and strategic reasons.

The Polish case will show whether the erosion of democratic quality can be halted in a member state of the EU and NATO. In June 2006, the European Parliament's resolution condemned "the general rise in racist, xenophobic, and anti-Semitic and homophobic intolerance in Poland."^{20 21} And during his recent visit to Brussels, Poland's Prime Minister, Jaroslaw Kaczynski, was reminded by the President of the European Commission, José Manuel Barroso, that the EU is a community of values that forbids discrimination of minorities, introduction of the death penalty and curbing the central bank independence. However, it seems clear that more action on the part of the EU (and the U.S.) would be needed to halt the rise of autocratic tendencies in present-day Poland.

²⁰ See Bernstein, Richard, "Europa: Stung by EU Judgment, Poland has a Rebuttal," *International Herald Tribune*, June 29, 2006, p. 2. Available at: <http://www.iht.com/articles/2006/06/29/news/europa.php>

²¹ See *Gazeta Wyborcza*, August 31, 2006, p. 8.

Chapter 6

The United States, Europe, and Democracy in West Africa

Yann Bedzigui

After the end of the Cold War, Western values, such as democracy and human rights, quickly became the cornerstones of European policies in Africa, replacing containment of communism. Support of democracy and human rights was defined as a key component of development and cooperation policies.

The European Union Council passed a resolution in November 1991, which established promotion of human rights and democracy as a goal and a condition of development cooperation. This condition was reasserted by the Treaty of European Union (TEU) in 1992 in which the promotion of democracy is defined as one of the goals of its new Common Foreign and Security Policy. The trend was similar in the U.S. where the new Clinton Administration established democracy promotion a pillar of its foreign policy along with economic integration and national security.

West Africa appears for many reasons to be a favorable ground for the exercise of Western commitments due to the willingness of different countries to embrace democracy. In 1990, there were almost no democratic regimes in Africa (with the exception of Gambia, which is the oldest democracy in the region). The path to democracy was characterized by “national sovereign conferences” encouraged by both the U.S. and Europe, that rather confirmed autocrats instead of moving them out.

Nowadays, West Africa is the African region where democratization is paradoxically on the right track; paradoxically because, this sub-region concentrates many shortcomings and instability, illustrated by many ongoing and latent conflicts on the internal or sub-regional scale in Ivory Coast, Guinea, and Liberia. Moreover, West Africa is one of the poorest regions in the world according to the United

Nations Development Program.¹ We should also keep in mind that the sub-region experienced military coups throughout the last decade: Nigeria in 1993, Gambia in 1994, Niger in 1996, and Ivory Coast in 1999. Despite these handicaps, more and more countries experienced their first democratic transition during the last seven years, some more peaceful than others. This trend began with the election of Olusegun Obasanjo in Nigeria in 1999, which has been followed by the election on Mamadou Tanja in Niger in 1999, Abdoulaye Wade in Senegal, John Kuffuor in Ghana, Laurent Gbagbo in the Ivory Coast in 2000, Amadou Toumani Touré in Mali in 2002, Ellen Sirleaf Johnson in Liberia in 2005, Yayi Boni in Benin in 2006.

At the sub-regional level, the Economic Community of West African States has equipped itself since 2001 with a Supplementary Protocol on Democracy and Good Governance as a part of its Mechanism of Conflict Prevention. Yet, there are still countries which are sinking in instability and autocratic rules (Togo, Guinea, the Ivory Coast). Even for countries that achieved a peaceful and civilian transition, democracy remains fragile due to ethnic and religious tensions (Nigeria, Liberia, Sierra Leone), showing they still have a long way to go before fully embracing democratic values and habits. Conflicts, economic crisis, and poverty still threaten the implementation of democracy in those countries. Because democracy is drifting in the sub-region, there is a critical need for transatlantic support to root this process definitively.

So the challenge of promoting democracy in the region is complex both for the U.S. and the EU: how to foster development and solve conflicts without hampering support for democracy? Unable to harmonize these issues, the EU, as well as the U.S. tended in the past to favor the former (socio-economic issues and security issues) at the expense of the latter. The EU for instance quieted its critical stance on the Sani Abacha rule in Nigeria in 1997 because it needed Lagos to launch a peacekeeping force to stabilize Sierra Leone.

Focus on economic and social issues and security has often been explained by the fact that they were a pre-condition to democracy in

¹ Ghana (65th), Nigeria (75th), Togo (76th), Mauritania (79th), Cote d'Ivoire (84th), Senegal (87th), Gambia (88th), Guinea Bissau (93rd), Benin (95th), Sierra Leone (98th), Mali (101st), Burkina Faso (102nd), Niger (103rd) in the rank of 108 developing countries in *Human Development Report 2005*, United Nation Development Program, p. 229. Available at: http://hdr.undp.org/reports/global/2005/pdf/HDR05_HDI.pdf.

the region. Since the events of 9/11, the focus on security in West Africa was reinforced by the fear that terrorists might take advantage of different conflicts to establish training camps or trafficking activities. But does promoting democracy constitute a solution to such curses?

The perception of the U.S., the EU and even former colonial powers diverge on the matter, and each of them has a different approach to the sub-region. Due to France and Great Britain's colonial past, Europe has historically established more links than the U.S. with the different countries of the sub-region. France is the most influential European country here, especially in its former colonies; meanwhile, since 2000, the UK's influence has expanded through its intervention in Sierra Leone. The UK has engaged in a new political process in Sierra Leone.

As many studies showed, since African independences, France's major interest in West Africa was to maintain its influence by supporting pro-French regimes instead of promoting democracy ("something Africa was not ripe for" according to President Jacques Chirac²), which could bring anti-French regimes to power.

This policy differs from the EU ones, for which the promotion of democracy is a core element of its cooperation policy, as specified in Treaty on the European Union in 1992. This contrast spurred tensions between displayed ideals and realpolitik goals in many cases—in Niger and Togo for example.

Elsewhere, the United States does not have any vital interest in a region usually considered as constituted of "countries of small markets, instable economies and non-critical raw material exports"³ except in Nigeria, which exported 1.014 million barrels of oil per day in 2005.⁴ The other country with strong links to the U.S. is Liberia. Founded by former black slaves and with local natural rubber production that used to be exploited by U.S. companies, Liberia became a

² Yengo, Patrice, "Affinités électives et délégation des compétences," *Politique africaine*, no. 105, 2007, p. 107.

³ Morgan, Earl Conteh, "Post Cold War in West Africa: Implications for U.S. Foreign Policy" in Magyar, K., ed., *U.S. Interests and Policies in Africa, Transition to a New Era* (London: Macmillan, 2000), p. 56.

⁴ Energy Information Administration, *Table 3.3.d: Petroleum Imports from Nigeria, Venezuela, Total Other OPEC, and Total OPEC*, Department of Energy. Available at: http://www.eia.doe.gov/mer/pdf/pages/sec3_11.pdf.

sentimental interest rather than a vital one. So in the absence of vital interest or any other competing issue, support for democratization is expected to be the top priority of the U.S. in the sub-region.

While democracy is definitely a new process in the sub-region,⁵ how can the U.S. and the EU support its consolidation in West Africa where no defined path to full-fledged democracy has already been laid out? Is there a risk that the programs set to support democratization tend to reflect more Western concerns than taking into account local realities? The way developed countries like the U.S. and many European countries experience democracy has little to do with the way developing countries more accustomed to authoritarian regimes will do so. That is the paradox of both democratization in areas like West Africa and support for this process by Western countries. David Held sums up the problem quite well: “there is a striking paradox to note about the contemporary era: from Africa to Eastern Europe, Asia to Latin America, more and more nations and groups are championing the idea of democracy but they are doing so at just that moment when the very efficacy of democracy as a national form of political organization appears open to question. As substantial areas of human activity are progressively organized on a regional or global level, the fate of democracy and of the independent democratic nation-state in particular, is fraught with difficulty.”⁶ The underlying question is this issue of knowing if democracy promotion by countries of the Transatlantic Alliance is, in West Africa, an unfinished business at its core, trapped between the evident limits of this form of government nowadays?

The following study is divided in three sections. Section I will review different instruments used by Western countries to promote democracy in West Africa over the last ten years. Section II will raise the question of the kind of democracy European countries and the U.S. intend to promote in West Africa through the stress put on elections and decentralization. Section III will propose a few solutions to improve the promotion of democracy by the United States and European countries in the sub-region.

⁵ During local elections in Nigeria in 2003, some politicians referred to democracy as an “experiment.” See Peel, Michael, “Nigeria sees flaws in fledgling democracy,” *Financial Times*, April 2, 2004.

⁶ Held, David “Democracy and Globalization,” in Archibugi, Daniele, David Held and Martin Kohler, eds., *Re-Imagining Political Community: Studies in Cosmopolitan Democracy* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1998), p. 11.

Section I—Instruments To Promote Democracy in West Africa: Reactive Rather than Proactive?

Not Much Assistance Promoting Democracy

Both the United States and the European Union included democracy assistance in their overall program assistance. The U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) mainly funds democracy assistance programs through its Democracy and Governance Program in eight countries in West Africa (Benin, Ghana, Guinea, Liberia, Mali, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone⁷) and a sub-regional program. The EU used to deliver democracy assistance through the European Development Fund (EDF), currently the 9th installment which runs until 2007, and the European Initiative for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR).

In their allocations for democracy promotion, the EU and the U.S. both favor the main regional power, Nigeria. Over the last six years Nigeria was, with Ivory Coast and Sierra Leone, a focus country of EIDHR in the sub-region: six programs out of ten funded by the Initiative since 2000 targeted the sixth oil producer in the world.⁸ It is also the main recipient of USAID Democracy and Governance Program with \$8.312 million allocated in 2005 and \$8.017 million for 2006 (out of total development assistance to the country of \$ 45 million).⁹ This assistance represents twice what Mali received from the same agency to promote democracy.¹⁰

Except in Nigeria, democracy aid represents only a fraction of the total aid for development. Ghana, which is among the best performers in the democratic area, does not benefit from a single democracy promotion program in its cooperation strategy with the EU. In the five-year strategy paper of the European Community with Ghana, democracy is not a policy objective and is barely mentioned through “good

⁷ USAID, *Democracy and Governance in West Africa*. Available at: http://www.usaid.gov/our_work/democracy_and_governance/regions/afr/.

⁸ European Initiative for Human Rights and Democracy, EU Annual Reports. Available at: http://ec.europa.eu/comm/europeaid/projects/eidhr/documents_en.htm#eu-reports.

⁹ USAID, *USAID Budget: Nigeria*, USAID. Available at: <http://www.usaid.gov/policy/budget/cbj2006/afr/ng.html>.

¹⁰ USAID, *USAID Budget: Mali*. Available at: <http://www.usaid.gov/policy/budget/cbj2006/afr/ml.html>.

governance” (that is relegated in the section “other programs” along with conflict prevention and the fight against HIV/AIDS).¹¹ In 2004, USAID only provided \$1.987 million to Accra out of a total \$36.363 million dedicated to development assistance.¹²

These proportions are equivalent for most of the countries of West Africa and clearly demonstrate that democracy is not the top priority in development cooperation strategies set by both the U.S. and many European countries. The reasons for this lay in the respective conceptions the U.S. and European countries have of the promotion of democracy.

For many scholars, those discrepancies are not such a surprise. According to Olsen, EU commitment to democracy since the end of Cold War aims primarily at strengthening the creation of a European identity around such universal values because the Community clearly lacks the means to implement this policy the way former colonial powers like France do.¹³ The same can be said about U.S. foreign policy for whose spread of democracy around the world had been a traditional foreign policy goal but far from being the first, despite the rhetoric.¹⁴ In U.S. policies towards this particular sub-region, democracy promotion comes after other issues, like fostering economic development and conflict resolution, because the latter are considered prerequisites to democracy. Seymour Lipset’s statement (“The more well-to-do a nation, the greater the chances that it will sustain democracy”)¹⁵ seems to continue to matter for many donors. It explains why in his major speech about African Policy in 2003, President George W. Bush evoked democracy only once, to link it to the restoration of security and the establishment of free market economies. “Introducing democracy is hard in any society. It’s much harder in a society torn by

¹¹ European Commission, *Republic of Ghana and European Community: Country Strategy Paper and Initiative Programs, 2002-2007*, 2002, p. 27. Available at: http://ec.europa.eu/comm/development/body/csp_rsp/print/gh_csp_en.pdf#zoom=100.

¹² USAID, *USAID Budget: Ghana*. Available at: <http://www.usaid.gov/policy/budget/cbj2006/afr/gh.html>.

¹³ Olsen, Gorm Rye, “Europe and the Promotion of Democracy in Post Cold War Africa: How Serious Europe is and for What Reason?,” *African Affairs*, no. 388, 1998, pp. 342-367.

¹⁴ Rieffer, Barbara Ann J. and Kristian Mercer, “U.S. Democracy Promotion, the Clinton and Bush Administrations,” *Global Society*, vol. 19, no. 4, October 2005, pp. 385-408.

¹⁵ Lipset, Seymour Martin, “Some social requisites of democracy: Economic development and political legitimacy,” *American Political Science Review*, 53, pp. 69-105.

war or held back by corruption. The promise of free markets means little when millions are illiterate and hungry or dying from a preventable disease.”¹⁶ This vision is not shared by former Organization of African Unity (OAU) or ECOWAS (whose Protocol on Democracy and Good Governance is part of its Mechanism of Conflict Prevention), which instead see democracy as a prerequisite to development and stability.¹⁷

Moreover, one can wonder why democracy spreads in West Africa despite the focus on socio-economic issues (which did not foster development) and security by European countries and the U.S. According to Abdoulaye Bathily, “The demand for democracy has therefore been impelled primarily by a vast resistance movement by actors from different sectors of African society, in reaction to the deterioration of their living conditions as a result of the combined effects of the failure of the nation-building project and structural adjustment programs”¹⁸ supported by both the U.S. and European countries throughout the 1990s in West Africa. The focus on other issues like economic development and conflict resolution in the sub-region led the EU and the U.S. to give up their “pro-active” approach of democracy promotion.

The Stress on West African Performance

During the 1990s, in the absence of activism in this area, passive (indirect) ways of promoting democracy became the norm. A particular stress was put on the African responsibility to reform, so as to embrace democracy. Consequently, political dialogue was set up, according to a political conditionality requesting the West African countries to fulfill criteria to receive aid or benefit from trade preferences.

Both U.S. and European trade agreements with countries of the sub-region require the latter to commit at least to democracy. For example, EU-ACP Cotonou Agreement Article 9 expresses the sup-

¹⁶ George W. Bush, “President Bush Outlines his Agenda for U.S.-Africa Relations,” June 26, 2003. www.whitehouse.gov.

¹⁷ Diara, Cheikh Oumar, “ECOWAS and the Supplementary Protocol on Democracy and Good Governance in the Building of Peace and Democracy” in Sahel and West Africa Club, *Building Peace and Democracy in West Africa*, November 2005, pp. 63-70.

¹⁸ Bathily, Abdoulaye, “Democracy in West Africa: An Appraisal” in Sahel and West Africa Club, *Building Peace and Democracy in West Africa*, November 2005, p. 25.

port of the partnership for “human rights, process of democratization, consolidation of rule of law and good governance.”¹⁹ Thus, these agreements seem to be directed to countries that are on the path to democratization as much as those who are democratic. As far as the eligible countries of the U.S. African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA) in 2006, some of the least advanced, such as Guinea, are standing next to good performers such as Senegal or Ghana.²⁰ The same contrast can be found in the Cotonou Agreement with almost all West African countries being eligible, with the notable exception of Togo, as if it was the sole regime unable to sustain a democratic process. The principle of the democracy criteria in such trade/aid agreements seems to reside more in the commitment of the recipient countries rather than in their actual performance in this domain.

In fact, the main difference between the U.S. and Europe on this point is a shift made by the Millennium Challenge Account created by the George W. Bush administration in 2003. Contrary to traditional assistance programs, MCA implements a rewarding approach of assistance, devoting great amounts of funds to countries which “rule justly,” among other criteria like fighting against corruption and investing in people. Six countries from West Africa are eligible for the program: Burkina Faso, Cape Verde, Gambia, Ghana, Mali, and Senegal. They will receive grants they never would have received due to the lack of strategic or economic interest of the U.S. Cape Verde, for example, which represents less than 0.1 percent of U.S. imports from Sub-Saharan Africa²¹ will receive \$110 million over three years to support its poverty reduction strategy.²² Gambia was judged eligible in 2004, but was suspended after the MCC Board noticed “human rights abuses and increased restrictions on political rights, civil liberties, and press freedom by the government, as well as worsening economic

¹⁹ *The Cotonou Agreement*, European Commission, (2000), p. 15. Available at: http://ec.europa.eu/comm/development/body/cotonou/pdf/agr01_en.pdf#zoom=100.

²⁰ Presidential Proclamation on 2006 AGOA Eligibility for 37 Countries, www.agoa.gov. Available at: http://agoa.gov/eligibility/country_eligibility.html.

²¹ US International Trade Commission, *Sub-Saharan Africa: U.S. imports, total, and under the African Growth and Opportunity Act*. Available at: www.reportweb.usitc.gov/africa/total_gsp_agoa_import_suppliers.jsp.

²² Millennium Challenge Corporation, Millennium Challenge Corporation Congressional Notification, July 12, 2005. Available at: http://www.mcc.gov/countries/capeverde/071205-cn_CapeVerde.pdf.

policies and anti-corruption efforts.”²³ This suspension illustrates the shift induced by the MCA approach. One should also notice that these eligibility criteria are measured by independent observers and NGOs such as Freedom House. This aims to avoid a diplomatic “magnanimity” often observed on this issue. Nevertheless, in the West African context, the MCA still presents many flaws. In its very conception, it finally does not differ from others’ aid programs since it only reacts to democratic performances and does not initiate them. The grants allocated to the eligible countries mostly target some particular economic sectors, and not the consolidation of democracy as such. The underlying assumption of the MCA is that democracy is a process that can only progress, so the strategy designed by the recipient country and the MCA does not project any support for democracy. It neglects the fact that democracy is a new process in the sub-region and that it experienced many setbacks—(e.g. Nigeria in 1994, Niger in 1996). There is a need to plan a section to support the consolidation of democracy in the strategy enacted for the use of grants allocated under the MCA.

Despite these flaws, MCA differs from the Cotonou Agreement (and other U.S. assistance programs) notably because the Cotonou Agreement suspends its aid only in case of major crises such as a military coup or civil unrest. In such perspective, “minor” violations of democratic principles that do not lead to large-scale violence only remain subject of “concerns” for Western countries.

Sanctions Focused on Democratic Change of Power

In the troubled history of democracy in West Africa, the sanctions imposed by the Western countries had two characteristics: firstly they only occurred in cases of exceptional crisis or undemocratic changes of power, as the table below shows. Secondly, they mainly targeted the aid programs (aid sanctions), but hardly ever trade.

Table One sums up European and U.S. sanctions correlated with democracy-related crises in West Africa. They are clearly illustrative of two trends:

²³ Millenium Challenge Corporation, *The Gambia Suspended from Participation in MCC Compact Program*, Available at: <http://www.mcc.gov/press/releases/2006/release-061606-boardsuspendsgambia.php>, June 16, 2005.

Table 1. Reaction to Crisis or Undemocratic Change of Power in Western Africa²⁴

	United States	European Union
Ivory Coast	2000: Restriction on humanitarian aid after the troubled election.	1999: Consultation after military coup and popular uprising; no interruption for development cooperation.
Niger	1996: Suspension of economic assistance according to the Foreign Assistance Act after the military coup in January.	1996: After the military coup in January, suspension of development cooperation. In July, France vetoed the continuing of the suspension.
Nigeria	June 12, 1993: After the presidential election was annulled, and in light of human rights abuses and the failure to embark on a meaningful democratic transition, the U.S. imposed numerous sanctions on Nigeria. These sanctions included the imposition of Section 212(f) of the Immigration and Nationality Act to refuse entry into the U.S. of senior government officials and others who formulated, implemented, or benefited from policies impeding Nigeria's transition to democracy; suspension of all military assistance; and a ban on the sale and repair of military goods and refinery services to Nigeria. The U.S. Ambassador was recalled for consultations for four months after the execution of the Ogoni Nine on November 10, 1995.	1993: Sanctions were tightened after hanging of Ken Saro Wiwa. 1997: Additional sanctions applied.
Gambia	2000: Sanctions under Section 508 of Foreign Assistance Act after military coup. 2006: Millennium Challenge Corporation suspends Gambia eligibility due to disruption of human rights and civil liberties situation.	1994: Military coups, suspension of development cooperation. 1997 and especially 2000: continued normalization.
Togo	1993: Suspension of economic aid after elections.	1992: Development cooperation suspended until now.
Guinea Bissau	2003: Sanctions under Section 508 of the Foreign Operations Appropriations Act after military coup. Lifted in August 2004.	2003: Consultations after the military coup without suspension of cooperation.

²⁴Heinze, Wolfgang S., The European Union Human Rights Democracy, FES Library 2003. Available at: www.library.fes.de/fulltext/id/01713.HTM, www.europa.eu.int, www.state.gov.

- There were mostly sanctions against countries which had military coups (Niger in 1996, Guinea in 2003 for example). Sanctions rarely targeted countries where the political situation deteriorated; the only exceptions being sanctions adopted by both U.S. and the European Community against Togo after the 1994 flawed election and against Nigeria in 1995 after then hanging of the Ogoni Nine.
- Sanctions that generally consist of economic assistance suspension were actually implemented against countries of little interest to U.S. and European countries.

A closer examination of the countries targeted shows that the sanctions had hardly any impact. There are only a few examples of authoritarian regimes reforming under the pressure of sanctions. In Niger for instance, the response of Ibrahim Bare Maïnassara to the European Union pressure only consisted of the organization of new elections, which he won with 96 percent of the votes.

In fact, it is mostly the evolution of the internal situation that made the difference rather than the suspension of assistance. In many countries, democracy generally emerged under “special circumstances.” In Nigeria, the democratic transition was essentially allowed by the death of Sani Abacha, followed by the accession to power of General Abubakar. More than soft sanctions, it is the willingness of Abubakar to consent to the democratic transition (supported by European countries and the U.S.) that finally brought Nigeria back to the rule of a democratic and civilian power. In Niger, a military coup overthrew Baré Maïnassara; it was the good will of the new regime that led to the election of Mamadou Tanja in 1999.

One can also conclude from this that neither the European countries nor the U.S. can do much when democracy is endangered in West Africa. Aid sanctions, despite their lack of efficiency, were still preferred to other means of action over the years, and they became the most Western countries were ready to do to promote their top foreign policy priority for the region: democracy. Nevertheless, the issue is more complex than it looks, since the commitment of the U.S. and European countries was not as deep as it should have been.

Sanctions barely involve trade, which is much more vital to the survival of faulty regimes than assistance provided by the Western

donors. Of course, one can wonder about the relevance of embargoes against Guinea-Bissau which is a minor trade partner of both the U.S. and European countries. However in the case of Niger, Nigeria or Côte d'Ivoire, this hypothesis is more pertinent due to the importance of some exportation sectors: respectively uranium, oil and cocoa.

In fact, Western countries always have avoided targeting sensitive sectors that represent a strategic interest. There are many examples:

- In 1996, France advocated resuming EU aid to Niger, suspended after Ibrahim Bare Maïnassara overthrew a democratically-elected president in January. Paris resumed its bilateral cooperation in July, six months before European Community did so under its pressure.²⁵ The reason for this magnanimity was the strategic importance of Niger as a uranium producer.
- Despite major violations of human rights under Sani Abacha's rule from 1993 to 1998, neither the U.S. nor the EU adopted sanctions targeting the sensitive oil sector which was the regime's main resource. Sanctions adopted further against Nigeria and the Ivory Coast essentially targeted persons and rarely goods. The U.S. sanctions toward Nigeria in 1995 banned Nigerian officials from coming to the U.S. and froze military assistance notably, but barely touched the oil sector ("ban refinery services").
- In the Ivory Coast sanctions adopted against Laurent Gbagbo's regime target officials but not the cocoa sector for example.

In a world where competition for raw materials is extreme as ever, trade sanctions have quickly become taboo even to defend or support democracy. By adopting such a position, Western countries try to pressure authoritarian regimes to embrace democracy without real leverage. As Gordon Crawford stated: "If a donor's commitment to the principles of human rights and democracy is at best partial and dependent on the lack of competing self interests, they can hardly require development partners to abide by those principles in a manner that commands respect."²⁶

²⁵ Olsen, Gorm Rye, "Europe and the Promotion of Democracy in Post Cold War Africa: How Serious Europe is and for What Reason?," *African Affairs*, no. 388, 1998, pp. 342-367.

²⁶ Crawford, Gordon, "Foreign Aid and Political Conditionality: Issues of Effectiveness and Consistency," *Democratization*, volume 4: no. 3, summer 1997, p. 103.

As the analysis above shows, democracy does not constitute a priority in the U.S. and the EU development strategies in West Africa. Sanctions are mainly reactive and confined to policies lagging behind events. However, a close examination of sanctions demonstrates that democracy is a closely watched issue in periods of changes of power, showing the importance of this stage for the democracy the Western powers are trying to promote in the sub-region.

Section II—What Kind of Democracy to Promote in West Africa?

In the promotion of democracy, the United States and the European Union have their own favorite idiosyncrasies, which mostly reflect their own preoccupations and not those of West African countries. The democracy they wish to spread somehow meets minimal standards narrowly related to recurrent topics such as support to civil society, decentralization processes, organization of elections etc.

Focus on Elections as a Way to Respect Constitutional Legacy

The promotion of free and fair elections had been a priority of both the U.S. and the EU in West Africa where most countries experienced changes in heads of state rather with military coups or successions and rarely with elections. If democracy assistance tends to remain low, it used to rise in a pre-election period. In Ghana for example, where democracy assistance is low compared to the evolution of the political context in recent years, elections were preceded by donations to support electoral process by the EU, which does not have any program especially devoted to democracy. There was a slight decline in the budget of the USAID Democracy and Governance Program between 2004 (year of the presidential elections) and 2006: it passed from \$2.045 million to \$1.5 million.²⁷

This episodic, if not opportunistic, concern reflects Western countries preoccupation with having free and fair elections. Despite the good intentions lying behind such concern, it demonstrates the tendency to support parts of the democratic process in the sub-region,

²⁷ USAID, *USAID Budget: Ghana*. Available at: <http://www.usaid.gov/policy/budget/cbj2006/afr/gh.html>.

not the whole. The danger of this assumption would be to reduce the state of democracy in a country to the organization of elections which is mostly an administrative process, thus with political consequences.²⁸

This trend is not new considering the record of the United States and European countries. Most of the time, the Western powers have to deal with unconstitutional changes of power through military coups as occurred in Côte d'Ivoire, Gambia, Nigeria. So the promotion of free and fair elections logically became the main vehicle for ensuring the change of power in compliance with constitutional legacy. From a certain point of view, it is the right move to think West African leaders by respecting a democratic constitution will soon adopt behavior complying with it. On the other hand, it can justify the inertia of Western countries and induce political stagnation. That position was confirmed by the United States and European actions during the Togolese crisis in the first quarter of 2005.

Togolese Succession Crisis

Following the death of President Gnassingbe Eyadema on February 5, 2005 after 40 years of strict rule, his son Faure Gnassingbe Eyadema, then Minister of Defense, set up—with the support of the army—a constitutional coup that established him as President. The coup was unanimously condemned by the whole international community. The sub-regional organization ECOWAS along with the African Union (AU) voted for sanctions against Togo, called for Faure Eyadema's resignation and for organization of elections. The U.S. and the European countries supported and applauded African reactions that showed the willingness of African leaders to break with past habits. Faure Eyadema resigned on February 25 under international pressure, but announced his candidacy for the future election. The election was planned for April despite the calls of the opposition to postpone them to improve the organization of polling (which included a set of new electoral lists). Neither Europe nor the U.S. actually pushed for a delay of elections, and they limited their support for the electoral process by funding the ECOWAS Elections Monitoring Mission. Under these conditions, the presidential elections, obviously

²⁸ Windsor, Jennifer, "Democracy and Development: the Evolution of U.S. Foreign Assistance Policy," *Fletcher Forum*, vol. 27, no. 2 (2003), pp. 141-150.

won by Faure Eyadema with 60 percent of the votes, were flawed and irregular according to the ECOWAS Election Monitoring Mission. Nevertheless, the Nigeria presidency (which held African Union Presidency) followed by the entire sub-regional heads of state, then AU, validated the outcome of the election and recognized the winner. The U.S. did so, the EU “took note of the election,” Germany called it an “election flawed by irregularities”²⁹ while the European Parliament refused to acknowledge the results of the polling. It appeared that the concern of Western countries, as for some neighboring States, was not the accession to power of Faure Gnassingbe but *the way* it occurred. Nigerian President Olusegun Obasanjo clearly stated a few days later the ECOWAS goal: “the return to constitutional legitimacy.”³⁰ The eagerness of the EU and the U.S. to back the validation of the elections tends to prove that it was also their primary goal. So it is hardly a surprise that the organization of new presidential elections was not included among the 22 commitments the European Union asked Faure Eyadema to fulfill in order to resume its economic assistance.

The way the U.S. and the European Union addressed the change of power in Togo taught some lessons. The first is that limiting inducements for democracy to calls for the return to constitutional legitimacy by the holding of elections, even if it represents an important stage in the democratization process, must not constitute the ultimate goal of a policy.

The second lesson is that assimilating democracy to constitutional legacy and not to rule of law always favors the incumbent party. Those parties have a decisive advantage: they don’t necessary need to tamper with the elections but may fully exploit government resources and may define the rules of the electoral process for their exclusive advantage. In the Togo case, the opposition candidate’s chances to win the election were unclear, in particular with the electoral list then established.

Burkina Faso is another example of the limit of the electoral process as a proof of democracy. Burkina Faso’s President Blaise Compaoré has regularly organized (and won) elections since 1992, and won the November 2005 presidential elections with over 80 percent of the

²⁹ Signoret, Muriel, “Des élections contre la démocratie?” *Jeune Afrique L’Intelligent*, no. 2313, May 8-14, 2005, pp. 32-34.

³⁰ Soudan, François and Marwanne Ben Yahmed “La Grande Interview: Les vérités d’Obasanjo,” *Jeune Afrique L’Intelligent*, no. 2316. May 29-June 4, 2005, pp. 40-45.

votes due to advantages of incumbency, according to Freedom House.³¹ After thirteen years of rule, Burkina's President managed to modify the constitution in 2000 in order to run in the next presidential election. In this case, support of the electoral process or monitoring the polling does not matter a lot since the difference was made upstream. So the holding of "credible" elections in Burkina Faso, like in other countries, does not necessarily mean that democratization is on the right track, even if it looks that way, a vision embraced by the European Union and the U.S. which feel comfortable with these apparent signs of democratization.

If the electoral period is the time when Western countries pay more attention to democracy as a top priority in their relations with West African countries, it is also one of the rare times when the central government or state is considered a key element of the democratization process and is supported for this.

Decentralization: Democracy Promotion without the Executive Branch?

Except during electoral periods, elections do not command much of the attention of Western democracy assistance programs. Acknowledging that democracy is not only regular elections and rule of majority, the programs launched in West Africa target varied areas like constitutional support, assistance to local government and to the decentralization process, support to civil society, support to the building of independent legislative and judiciary branches.³² Somehow this focus addresses major weaknesses of democracy in West Africa or on the rest of the continent: irregular elections, lack of state accountability towards citizens, weak opposition... Nevertheless, the way the U.S. and Europeans tackled these issues raises some questions.

Mali is one of the best performers in democratization in the area and experienced a peaceful transition when Amadou Toumani Touré was elected in 2002. The USAID Democracy and Governance Program targeted three areas to support Mali democratization for the

³¹ Freedom House, *Freedom in the World in 2006: Burkina Faso*. Available at: <http://freedom-house.org/template.cfm?page=22&country=6931&year=2006&view=mof>.

³² Carothers, Thomas, "Democracy Assistance: The Question of Strategy," *Democratization*, volume 4, no. 3, pp. 112-113.

year 2005: Support Democratic Local Government and Decentralization, Strengthen National Governance Institutions, Strengthen Civil Society.³³ If EU Strategy Documents rarely address the democracy issue directly, they did support the decentralization process and the creation of commons in 2001.³⁴

The trend is the same in Ghana where the common point between the U.S. strategy to promote democracy and EU Cooperation strategy is the stress on support of the local government.³⁵ It should be noted that when USAID Programs refer to “Strengthening National Governance Institutions” in Mali or Ghana, it means the reinforcement of the capacity of the Central State to delegate more power and capacities to local entities or the strengthening of Parliament’s role.

These two examples sketch the profile of democracy assistance programs in the sub-region. Their common point, apart from the targeted areas, is the small role given to central government as the stress on decentralization and local government shows. Democratization is perceived to be more advanced by devolution of power away from the executive to other branches of government.³⁶

In this perspective, decentralization is viewed as the best way to encourage West African States to be responsive to the needs of citizens. From this point of view, local government representatives could be more accountable towards citizens.³⁷ However, in a region mostly colonized by France who led a heritage of strong and centralized states, democracy promotion by decentralization constitutes a great challenge that raises many questions.

³³ USAID, *Democracy and Governance in Mali*, pp. 1-2. Available at: <http://www.usaid.gov/policy/budget/cbj2006/afr/pdf/ml688-008.pdf>.

³⁴ European Commission, *Mali-Communauté Européenne: Stratégie de coopération et Programme indicatif*, p. 30. Available at: http://ec.europa.eu/comm/development/body/csp_rsp/scanned/ml_csp_fr.pdf#zoom=100.

³⁵ USAID, *Democracy and Governance in Ghana*, pp. 1-2. Available at: <http://www.usaid.gov/policy/budget/cbj2006/afr/pdf/gh641-005.pdf>; Crawford, Gordon, “The European Union and Democracy Promotion in Africa: The Case of Ghana,” Paper prepared for the European Community Studies. Association of South Africa’s conference on ‘The relationship between Africa and the European Union,’ University of the Western Cape, January 22-23, 2004, p. 12.

³⁶ Carothers, Thomas, “Democracy Assistance: The Question of Strategy,” *Democratization*, volume 4, no. 3, p. 114.

³⁷ National Endowment for Democracy, *Democratization, Human Rights, and Good Governance in Africa: French, American and African Perspectives*, June 3, 1998. Available at: <http://www.ned.org/publications/africaReport/part1.html#cooperation>.

The first of them concerns the actual accountability of local government representatives. If there is a general lack of democratic culture in the whole country, it is not certain that decentralization should ensure a better comprehension of the needs of the citizens. The risk remains that the lack of management skills and democratic control leads to the constitution of local fiefdoms, as it has been the case in Nigeria.³⁸

Secondly, in countries where the State has traditionally played a central role, the creation of local governments can usher in tensions between these two entities over sharing power and resources, with the citizens caught in the middle.

Moreover, in countries with strong ethnic diversity, where the central State is the plinth of the national union, the creation of local entities tends to deepen ethnic/internal disputes and divides. In recent years, one of the major sources of instability in Nigeria was federalism itself, which fostered the creation of Islamic tribunals challenging the authority of the central government. The perception of decentralization or federalism by local entities in West Africa may thus totally differ from the European perception.

*Promotion of “Low Intensity Democracy”?*³⁹

Decentralization, just like the election process, does not qualify democracy, but is just a part of it. If decentralization could be a good step in the path to democracy in West Africa, the focus on it tends to reduce democracy “to the delivery of services aiming to satisfy local needs,” to the “administration of things” as Karl Marx would say. The stress on decentralization and the necessary accountability of local or national government avoids questioning policy orientations of the aforementioned entities. But this question does have its own importance in West Africa, where there are thirteen out of the eighteen poorest countries in the world, and economic policies are designed by

³⁸ Peel, Michael, “Yenagoa Dispatch: Election Division,” *The New Republic*, TNR Online, May 14, 2005.

³⁹ “Low intensity democracy is a form of democracy where the focus is on formal electoral rights with little consideration paid to socio-economic power structure.” according to Smith, Steve, “U.S. Democracy Promotion: critical questions” in Cox, Michael, John Ikenberry and Takashi Inoguchi, *American Democracy Promotion: Impulses, Strategies and Impacts* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 73.

donors like European countries and the U.S. along with the World Bank and the IMF.

Democracy promotion by the European Union and the U.S. is quiet on this point because they make an “a priori separation between economics and politics.” As the National Security Review claimed, after the Cold War “political liberalization will continue to clash with economic reform and civil unrest caused by economic austerity measures has led some regimes to stop the political and economic reform process.”⁴⁰ For instance, before the presidential elections of 2004 in Nigeria, there were demonstrations requiring President Obasanjo to halt the pursuit of the austerity policies for which he was hailed by Western donors.⁴¹

So, the focus on elections is not surprising since democracy is understood only as the choice of leaders, not of the policies. Indirectly, this trend is dangerous for the spread of democracy in the sub-region because it anesthetizes the political debate necessary to a democratic process. If democracy progresses slowly in the sub region or remains fragile, it is because ethnicity remains a structural issue of political proceedings and a source of internal tensions. Democratic countries like Nigeria are still troubled by ethnic tensions despite the democratic transition they have achieved. The way European countries and the U.S. promote democracy foster this trend rather than the contrary because they don’t address it. Yet, many Africans assert that ethnicity is the main challenge for the appropriation of the concept of democracy by African people.⁴² But the lack of any other issue, except governance-related themes like the fight against corruption, makes it difficult to overcome the persistence of ethnicity in the political debate. Slovenian philosopher Slavoj Žižek analyzed “when proper politics is progressively replaced by expert social administration, the only remaining legitimate source of conflicts that remain is cultural (ethnic, religious) tension.”⁴³ The civil war in the Côte d’Ivoire provided a per-

⁴⁰ Quoted in Morgan, Earl Conteh, “Post Cold War in West Africa: Implications for U.S. Foreign Policy” in K. Magyar, ed., *U.S. Interests and Policies in Africa, Transition to a New Era* (London: Macmillan, 2000), p. 61.

⁴¹ “Des milliers de manifestants contre le président Obasanjo,” *Les Marchés Tropicaux*, September 23, 2004.

⁴² Diallo, Massaër, “Role and Responsibilities of Political Parties in the Building of Democracy and Peace in West Africa,” *Building Peace and Democracy in West Africa*, p. 37.

⁴³ Žižek, Slavoj, “Bienvenue dans le désert du réel,” *Ellipses*, 2005, p. 194.

fect example since the concept of “*ivoirité*” became the main theme of the country’s political life due to the lack of democratic debate (and decision) throughout the 1990s about many issues like the liberalization of the cocoa sector as part of the implementation of SAPs and its consequences on the Ivorian society.⁴⁴ Such situations should lead the promotion of democracy by the United States and the European Union to be more aware of the sovereignty of West African countries in the management of its economic policies and its impact on the evolution of the whole democratic process.

Section III—Solutions

Since the end of the Cold War, much has been said about democracy promotion by European countries and the U.S. However, few of the proposed solutions can be actually implemented and many that would permit a real tip in the way the EU and the US promote democracy appear unrealizable.

There are not many methods to support democratization or the consolidation of democracy in the sub-region. However, there is an absolute necessity to reduce the gap between the official statements and the aid policies implemented on the ground.

General Recommendations

- Make democracy promotion an actual top priority of the cooperation between West African countries, the U.S. and the European Union and increase funds devoted to this task.
- Considering that the first responsibility of democratization lies in the people of the concerned states, the transatlantic approach should consist in supporting the appropriation of democratic process by West African countries and populations thus framed by global standards, defined by the Human Rights Declaration or the UN Charter.

⁴⁴Banégas, Richard, “Côte d’Ivoire: patriotisme, ethno-nationalisme et identités africaine,” *Les Carnets du CAP*, no. 1, Winter 2005-2006, p. 24.

Bilateral Level

- Increase support to the whole civil society, particularly to the traditional and ethnic-based organizations which remain important in many countries to improve the local political context and political proceedings.
- The U.S. and the European Union should take into consideration the power configuration of West African countries by stressing and supporting the role of the central government (executive branch) as the axis of democracy and nation in these countries.
- Strengthen political parties at different stages in the different countries of the region. Because the weakness of the opposition is weakening democracy in West Africa, there is a crucial need to improve management and organization skills of major political leaders in order to ensure that the ruling parties will not always take advantage of their position to win elections.
- Encourage the involvement of ideologically-oriented foundations like Germany's Friedrich Naumann Stiftung (centrist open-market) or Friedrich Ebert Stiftung (social-democrat) in order to enrich political proceedings in West African countries and overcome ethnicity as the only disputable issue.

Sub-Regional Scale

The U.S. and the European Union should keep supporting ECOWAS in the management of democracy-related crises and as a strong lever of democracy promotion.

- Support the implementation of West Africa Protocol for Democracy Promotion and Good Governance signed in 2001. Ratify and the implement this Protocol to establish for example its conditionality in the negotiations for the launching of Economic Partnerships Agreements between ECOWAS and the EU, and the ratification and the implementation of this Protocol could be set as the political conditionality of such partnerships. Then, requesting that the government of West African countries comply with criteria and values set by their peers will be less painful and will have more value.

- Secondly, support and assist the ECOWAS in the codification of its patterns of intervention in crisis related to democracy disruptions as a major goal of the cooperation sub-regional cooperation strategy of Europe and the U.S.⁴⁵ to avoid another Togo-like situation, where ECOWAS validated an election despite the pessimistic observations of its own Election Monitoring Team.
- Lastly, even if it seems utopian in the contemporary world, give more sovereignty to West African countries in the management of their internal affairs in order to give consistency to the democratic process in these societies. Democracy should be more than elections and changes of power but a change of the policies pursued, even when they challenge donors' interests. Despite the utopian aspect of such a recommendation, it would determine the success or the failure of democracy in West Africa. The legitimacy of the state in the sub-region is questioned if despite elections and transitions, the policies remain the same. The challenge faced by West African countries is huge because they are asked to pass from authoritarian regimes to post-politics democracies which fit more with European and U.S. societies, a move that will likely bring social frustration and lead to instability rather than the opposite.

Conclusion

Ten years ago, in 1996, euphoria that followed François Mitterrand's famous speech in La Baule had disappeared in West Africa.⁴⁶ Only Benin had achieved a democratic change of power in the sub-region. Nigeria was under Sani Abacha's tight rule as was Togo under Gnassingbe Eyadema's. Niger's fragile democracy collapsed with the military coup of Ibrahim Bare Mainassara. Despite instauration of a multi-party system and democratic constitution, Blaise Compaore in Burkina Faso

⁴⁵ Wilton Parks Roundtable, "Sovereignty and Transition in West Africa," March 7-8, 2005, p. 9. Available at: <http://www.wiltonpark.org.uk/themes/regions/pastconference.aspx?confref=WPS05/27>.

⁴⁶ In this speech in a French African Summit on June 20, 1990, the late French President cautiously announced that France from now would support democratization in Africa as part of a development strategy. If for many Western scholars, this speech constitutes the landmark of the spread of democracy in West Africa, many African scholars like Abdoulaye Bathily fiercely deny it. See Bathily, *Ibid*, p. 24.

and Jerry Rawlings in Ghana for example, both ruling since the former decade, were still in power. This stagnation was obviously a reason to be pessimistic about the future of democracy in the region as the wait-and-see attitude of Western countries in this area demonstrated.

However, despite poor economic performances and recurring instability, democratization nowadays seems to be on the right track in most West African countries. The task of European countries and the U.S now consists in redefining their support for the consolidation of this process in the sub-region. As it was stated above, it is necessary to adopt a binary approach. On one hand, it will consist in rewarding good performers in the area of democracy not only by exceptional programs like the Millennium Challenge Account but also in ordinary assistance programs. On the other side, there should be more pressure on poor performers to reform. In the past, fear of violating states' sovereignty was the core argument to resist to such demands. But it should be recalled that nowadays respect of sovereignty is a counterpart to respect of its own people.

Pressure on an administration is essential because of the political context of West African countries. Most regimes in the sub-region happen to be presidential; so allocating assistance on the reinforcement of counter powers like Parliaments, civil society groups is yet necessary but will not be enough to make any difference. Because an administration is constitutionally the "voice" of the people and the nation, the United States and Europe must focus on it their calls to democratization.

Part Three

Chapter 7

The Russian Political System and U.S. National Interests

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Does it matter if Russia is a democracy? Classic great power diplomacy assumes that it should not; the experience of the Cold War suggests that it should. If it does matter, should the U.S. and its transatlantic partners nonetheless refrain from democratization strategies that may be ineffective or even counterproductive? These are questions that probably will never have a definitive answer, but they are especially important in contemporary security relations. At the same time that it is becoming clear that Russia's path to democratic development must once again be measured in decades rather than years, the complications and internal contradictions of transatlantic policies of democracy promotion have been thrown into sharp relief by the worsening situation of U.S. policy in Iraq, and Europe's energy dependence on Russia. Global security stakes in nonproliferation are being raised with diplomatic efforts to alter Iran's course towards a nuclear weapons capability, and to contain the effects of North Korea's independent nuclear weapons program. In an environment where it is tempting to downgrade democracy promotion for more traditional security strategies that focus on states' actions rather than their form of government, it is important to think through the reasons for democratization, understand why it has not been successful in Russia, and assess what an effective democracy promotion strategy would look like over the coming decades.

Why Democratization in Russia

It is easy to forget that U.S. objectives toward Russia after the break-up of the Soviet Union in December 1991 were driven more by fear of instability and system-shattering change than by ambitions for the emergence of a democratic Russia. As conflict within the Soviet Union developed in the late 1980s as a result of the failures of Gor-

bachev's half-hearted economic reforms combined with the much more substantial progress in political liberalization, the focus of U.S. policy toward the region was securing Soviet nuclear weapons, and recognizing the sovereignty of the newly independent post-Soviet states while reassuring Russia about the security of its own borders.¹

The first Bush Administration, like the Clinton Administration that followed it, did conceive of U.S. national security interests toward Russia as requiring the (peaceful) passing of the Soviet political-economic system, and of its Leninist foreign policy which assumed zero-sum conflict between socialist and capitalist systems. The West's security stake in the passing of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union and the political-economic system created by Stalin and his successors, however, did not automatically imply that U.S. policy would aim at democratization of Russia. The first Bush Administration, led by classic realists, was most concerned with a stable transition in the global balance of power, and Russian commitment to arms control and security cooperation. Since the U.S. had negotiated arms control and had moved toward limited security cooperation with a liberalizing but non-democratic Soviet Union, this realist perspective did not require that Russia be a democracy for U.S. national security interests to be secured after the Soviet demise. The first Bush Administration did allocate funding for supporting political and economic transition and announced changes in U.S. trade policy to encourage transition economies in the post-Soviet space, but the real focus was on securing nuclear weapons and preventing a surge in proliferation as a result of the Soviet break-up. The signature priority and achievement of the Bush Administration's last year in office (driven primarily by Senators Sam Nunn and Richard Lugar) was the Cooperative Threat Reduction Program for securing and building down the post-Soviet nuclear arsenal.

A greater focus on democratization as security strategy toward Russia came with the new Clinton Administration. President Bill Clinton, and important figures on his foreign policy team, were Wilsonian liberals, rather than realists.² They embraced the liberal proposition that

¹ Blackwill, Robert D. and Sergei A. Karaganov, "Introduction and Conclusions," in Blackwill, Robert D. and Sergei A. Karaganov, eds., *Damage Limitation or Crisis? Russia and the Outside World* (Washington: Brassey's Inc., 1994).

² Goldgeier, James M. and Michael McFaul, *Power and Purpose: U.S. Policy toward Russia and the Cold War* (Washington: Brookings Institution Press, 2003), ch. 5.

democratic political systems have created among themselves a zone of separate peace, and a security community in which the use of force is ruled out and thus deep security cooperation the norm.³ Therefore, if countries are democracies, the potential for conflict with them is lessened, and the potential for meaningful security cooperation with them is increased: both developments would enhance American national security. This principle lies at the heart of democratization in the post-Communist world as a central component of U.S. security policy. It informed the focus on democracy promotion efforts in U.S. policy in the 1990s, at least in principle if not always in practice.

With the second Bush Administration's assumption of leadership in 2001, the democratization aspect of U.S. national security policy was initially downgraded. Condoleezza Rice, President George W. Bush's National Security Advisor (and top Russia expert) had written an article for *Foreign Affairs* in 2000 which was a clear call for a return to a realist foreign policy: that is, one that did not primarily define U.S. national security in terms of the nature of the political system of its international counterparts.⁴

Yet, it proved impossible to sustain a solely realist U.S. definition of the nature of U.S. national security interests in the case of Russia. One reason is that the American foreign policy tradition has always managed—perhaps uncomfortably, but pragmatically—a mix of power-oriented and aspirational precepts, and Bush II realists found that ideational democracy promoters inhabited Republican as well as Democratic corridors of power.⁵ By 2004, democracy promotion as a component of U.S. national security policy toward the post-Soviet space had re-emerged as a central component of the American strategy on security.

In part, this was driven by the larger context of the Bush Administration's global war on terror and justification for the war in Iraq as a necessary strategy for denying terrorist groups safe havens or fruitful

³ On the democratic peace, see Doyle, Michael, "Kant, Liberal Legacies, and Foreign Affairs," *Philosophy and Public Affairs*, 1983; on security communities, Deutsch, Karl W. (et. al.), *Political Community and the North Atlantic Area: International Organization in Light of Historical Experience*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1957).

⁴ Rice, Condoleezza, "Campaign 2000: Promoting the National Interest," *Foreign Affairs*, January/February 2000.

⁵ Mead, Walter Russell, *Special Providence: American Foreign Policy and How it Changed the World*, (New York: Routledge, 2002).

recruiting grounds. However, democracy promotion in the U.S. Russia/Eurasia regional strategy has also been the result of a re-evaluation of the negative effects on non-democratic rule in Eurasia on components of national security beyond those of the democratic peace. In a January 2006 speech at Georgetown University, Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, announced a new security strategy of “transformational diplomacy” premised on the view that “the fundamental character of regimes now matters more than the international distribution of power” for peace and security, and that therefore U.S. foreign policy would work “to build and sustain democratic, well-governed states that will respond to the needs of their people and conduct themselves responsibly in the international system.”⁶ Rice’s argument was clearly aimed primarily at the security threat posed by “failed states” and their potential for serving as breeding grounds and safe harbors for transnational terrorism. Yet while she did not name Russia as a case that would fall under this category, Russia’s ongoing struggle with terrorism in Chechnya and the spread of ethno-religious conflict in Russia’s North Caucasus regions had caused considerable concern in official Washington circles that while Russia as a state may not fail, its failure to effectively govern was driving extremism in vulnerable areas of Eurasia.

By 2006, then, the “democratic peace” basis for seeing democratization in Russia as in American national security interests was joined by a concern that insofar as Russia’s non-democratic trajectory would lead to human rights abuses, extremism, and economic dislocation in important regions of U.S. national security interests would be at stake. The President’s second term brought belated recognition that a non-democratic Russia is a poorly-governed, potentially unstable, and recalcitrant global player, and that successful and stable democracy in Russia is ultimately a necessary condition for security and stability throughout Eurasia, including the western former Soviet Union, the Caucasus, Central Asia, and the Far East. Geopolitical security stability in Eurasia will depend on the quality of Russia’s political system, and therefore on the prospects for stable and effective democracy. As Zbigniew Brzezinski has argued for years, Russia-as-democracy and Russia-as-empire are incompatible: Russia’s neighbors will not be

⁶ Secretary Condoleezza Rice, “Transformational Diplomacy,” speech at Georgetown University, January 18, 2006. Available at: <http://www.state.gov/secretary/rm/2006/59306.htm>.

secure as sovereign and independent countries as long as Russia is not reliably on the path to European-style democracy.⁷

Or to put it another way: although the U.S. might in theory be able to live without a democratic Russia, a stable and successful Russia would preclude many of the sources of security threats that U.S. policy-makers have to worry about today. Whether one is worried about geopolitical rivalry in Eurasia, conflict among nation-states with modern destructive weapons, or the host of new security threats (terrorism in the Eurasian borderlands, transnational crime, and WMD proliferation), Russian democratization would be a net positive for American national security interests.

This is far from an ideological or idealistic case for Russian democratization as a U.S. security interest. It is one that assumes that democratic states are better governed, better able to cooperate, and more capable (as well as willing) to tackle common global challenges. This strategic perspective on U.S. interests continues to co-exist uncomfortably, and therefore compete periodically, with a realist perspective that dismisses the idea that how states are governed internally affects how they behave and affect security relations internationally. Most recently, heightened concern about Russia's "wrong direction" away from democratization—expressed in both governmental and non-governmental circles⁸—has been counterbalanced by Bush Administration efforts to secure Russian cooperation on nuclear nonproliferation efforts toward Iran and North Korea, as well as U.S. and European concerns about global energy supplies and Russia's influential role as a major energy exporter.⁹ Of course, a Russian elite and society committed to democratization would mean that the United States might not have to face trade-offs or a choice in democratization strategies in the region, since such a Russia would not view such a strategy as a threat and be disinclined to cooperate as a result. Therefore, the prospects for

⁷ Brzezinski, Zbigniew, *The Grand Chessboard: American Primacy and its Geostrategic Imperatives*, (New York: Basic Books, 1997), p. 44.

⁸ For an official perspective, see remarks by Deputy Secretary of State David Kramer, 25 July 2006. Available at <http://usinfo.state.gov/xarchives/display.html?p=washfile-english&y=2006&m=July&x=200607241531441cjsamoht0.1661646>. For the non-official expert community's view, see *Russia's Wrong Direction: What the United States Can and Should Do*, Independent Task Force Report Number 57 (New York: Council on Foreign Relations, 2006).

⁹ Wallander, Celeste A., "Suspended Animation: the U.S. and Russia after the G-8," *Current History*, (October 2006), pp. 315-320.

U.S. strategy depend not only on the logical basis for the strategy itself, but on the conditions in Russia for its realization.

Democratization and De-Democratization in Russia, 1988-2006

One must recognize that the impetus for political liberalization in the Soviet Union came from within the country in the waning years of the Cold War, as a result of the strategic calculations of certain individuals in the Soviet elite, led by Mikhail Gorbachev. It is also instructive to keep in mind that the liberalization that Gorbachev launched in the last years of the Soviet Union arose from his assessment that the economic reforms necessary to sustain and renew Soviet power would require greater political competition and competing sources of information and ideas within the Soviet system, as well as great integration with the Western-defined global economic system.

So the reformist Gorbachev objective was ultimately national power and well-being, the immediate objective was economic reform, and political liberalization was an instrument toward those objectives. Certain political elites in the Soviet Union were willing to experiment with their degree of state control because they saw that the system was failing to sustain the Soviet Union's international power, and that the political system was an obstacle to reform required to correct that crisis. Glasnost and democratization were meant to shake-up a rigid system that by 1987 was blocking Gorbachev's efforts at economic reform.¹⁰

Having broken the Communist Party's monopoly on information and debate, and having introduced the principle of competitive elections for the Congress of People's Deputies in 1989, the Gorbachev political liberalization evolved from an instrument of a still-authoritarian leadership to a force that began to have unanticipated effects. New social groups, and activists who—unlike the Gorbachev leadership—had as their goal not reforming the Soviet system to save it, but overthrowing it (through democratic means), were able to challenge the Communist Party and the state. Democratic movements were

¹⁰This section draws heavily on the comprehensive account of Russian democratization in McFaul, Michael, *Russia's Unfinished Revolution: Political Change from Gorbachev to Putin* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001).

formed, and blocks of democratic-oriented elected deputies worked to organize in the Parliament. Boris Yeltsin won the Russian Federal Republic Presidency in June 1991 against old guard candidates, and the locus of political initiative and opposition shifted to the 15 republics of the Soviet Union. Gorbachev's most immediate crisis became holding the Soviet Union together, and in some manner other than the use of force (as he had in January 1991). To deal with the crisis, he broke with hardliners and opened negotiations with republic leaders and democrats for a renegotiation of the Soviet Union treaty. The result was the August 1991 failed attempt by elements of the old Soviet leadership to overthrow Gorbachev by force and preserve (or re-impose) the Soviet political system by force.

When the Soviet Union was declared dissolved and thus the Russian Federation became a sovereign and independent state on December 8, 1991, dictatorship was gone, but democracy did not replace it. Russia lacked political parties, independent media, an active civil society, and legal institutions for managing the boundaries between and relationship of political and economic power. Russian political actors were polarized, fragmented, and radicalized.

Most problematic of all, Russia's political system and leaders would have to simultaneously cope with three fundamental issues that required resolution in order for stable democracy to be established in Russia: the definition and security of the nation-state, the functioning of the economy, and institutions for managing political competition that were legitimate and generally recognized by all political actors. Russia's borders and its external security were in question: Russian citizens and military were deployed in its newly independent neighbors, centuries of links with the outside world were now in the hands of neighbors which often viewed Russia as a security threat, and while the United States declared cooperation in the security relationship, it now held considerable superiority over the remnants of Soviet power held by Russia.

On the economic front, severe contraction arising from the dislocation of an integrated economy into 15 countries was exacerbated by the immediate freeing of prices on January 1, 1992. Scarcity of goods and iconic Soviet-era lines outside shops disappeared, but inflation began to erase the value of Russians' wages, which were often not paid in any event as the government struggled to develop its new fiscal and

macroeconomic system. Russia's economic reformers believed they needed to change certain fundamentals quickly while Yeltsin remained popular in order to prevent the possibility of a return to a command economy: they were likely right, but the suddenness and thoroughness of the change created great social costs and sacrificed the opportunity for building political support for economic reform.¹¹

As a result, in 1992, the main political development in Russia became the emergence of substantial political opposition to the economic reform program, which became known as "shock therapy." Furthermore, because the Yeltsin reformers had followed the advice of many Western experts, the economic dislocation became associated with Western policy.¹² Political opposition and chaos convinced Yeltsin to hold off on disbanding the old Soviet-era Supreme Soviet, which simply preserved and intensified the growth of political opposition. By the middle of 1992, opposition to the economic reforms had caused Yeltsin to endorse a halt on the full menu of radical change, leaving Russia with many of the costs but few of the benefits of radical reform. Industrial subsidies were sustained, government spending was not limited, and inflation surged. By late 1992, the economic reform team was gone, and Russia's new Prime Minister was Viktor Chernomyrdin.

Instead of resulting in a workable compromise to find moderate middle ground, these changes preserved and intensified the confrontation over economic reform policy, and grew into a confrontation over political authority between Russian President Yeltsin and the Supreme Soviet, where conservative forces were well-represented. Yeltsin won a referendum in April 1993 endorsing his leadership, and used it to advance a new constitution for October 1993. That brought the confrontation to a head, and in September 1993 Yeltsin unilaterally dissolved the Parliament, unconstitutionally. The Parliament refused to disband and leave the Parliament building, and after being isolated by Yeltsin's orders, used force to seize a television station and government buildings. Yeltsin ordered the use of force against the Parliament, and

¹¹ On the argument for the need for a sharp and drastic break with the Soviet economic past, see Boycko, Maxim, and Andrei Schleifer, and Robert Vishny, *Privatizing Russia*, (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1995).

¹² For a passionate critic of western advisors as the cause of Russia's economic contraction, see Wedel, Janine R., *Collision and Collusion: The Strange Case of Western Aid to Eastern Europe, 1989-1998*, (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1998).

won. Russia's leading democrat had acted unconstitutionally, and then used military force in a confrontation with opponents to retain power. This was not democratization, and the Russian public began to view the term "democracy" negatively for its political and economic effects.

With his political opponents dispersed or in prison, Yeltsin was able to achieve ratification of a new constitution in December 1993 that enhanced the power of the president and created a new bicameral legislature. Despite the sad showing of October 1993, progress toward a democracy was still very possible in the mid-1990s. Several national political parties developed, although they were often weak and unevenly distributed at the regional level and of uneven quality at the national level,¹³ there were diverse media outlets that reported critically on competing political figures and the government, regional governments and legislatures were sources of competition and constraint on central authority, and elections were not systematically fraudulent or manipulated.

The problem of Russian democratization in the 1990s did not so much lie directly in the political system, but rather in the rise of the "oligarchs" and in Russia's external security environment. While Russia had a constitution, elections, and a potentially functioning federal system, the appearance of a handful of businessmen who were able to use position and insider knowledge to acquire large chunks of the residual Soviet economy made the nascent democratic features of the Russian political system essentially irrelevant to the functioning of the state.¹⁴ Their influence was heightened by the continuing incompetence of Russian macroeconomic policy, which drove inflation and continued the long slide in economic well-being. The Yeltsin government became dependent on loans from both the international community in the form of IMF credits through a special arrangement designed to prop up the Yeltsin leadership, and on loans from Russian banks and oligarchs. As the economy weakened and Russia's living standards continued their post-Soviet decline, Yeltsin's popularity sunk to the single digits, with a presidential election looming in 1996.

¹³ Hale, Henry E., *Why Not Political Parties in Russia? Democracy, Federalism, and the State*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

¹⁴ On the rise of these men, see Solnick, Steven, *Stealing the State; Control and Collapse in Soviet Institutions*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999); Hoffman, David E., *The Oligarchs: Wealth and Power in the New Russia*, (New York: Public Affairs, 2002).

At the same time that they felt insecure in their daily economic lives at home, Russians also had reason to fear that their external security environment had worsened as a result of the passing of the Soviet Union and successive leadership's experiments in democratization and cooperation with the West. In the U.S. and Europe, NATO enlargement is viewed as a democracy-promotion policy, and for the alliance's new members, it has been. But with respect to Russia, NATO enlargement was viewed as a violation of the negotiated end to the Cold War, and a strategy aimed against Russia. Russian democratic figures were also among the late-Soviet "new thinkers" who had argued for security cooperation with the United States: Their argument for security cooperation and democratization was undermined by NATO enlargement in the mid-1990s, and by NATO's unilateral use of force against Serbia (a Slavic country) in 1999.¹⁵

In terms of the democracy promotion aspect of U.S. strategy toward Russia, therefore, the 1990s was the worst of both worlds. U.S. policy in both rhetoric and in material support propped up the Yeltsin government (and notably the person of Boris Yeltsin himself) while that government's irresponsible policies were eroding the Russian public's living standards in the name of democracy and reform. A new system of corrupt political and economic rule was being created under the banner of democracy, but in fact political power was wielded by a small handful of increasingly wealthy and unaccountable businessmen who were busy producing little and instead acquiring assets, usually selling off what was profitable and moving the profits abroad. Even worse, the 1996 presidential elections contributed to the further development of this corrupt political economic system. In exchange for loans to keep the state afloat and convince Russians to vote for his presidency, Yeltsin agreed to the "loans for shares" deal that resulted in a second round of highly profitable but thoroughly corrupt privatization of Russian state-owned firms. The Clinton Administration had staked its democratization strategy on strengthening President Yeltsin in the hope that a strong President Yeltsin would effectively hold off retrograde conservative forces in Russian politics.¹⁶ The price of doing so, however, was to support an increasingly undemocratic and corrupt

¹⁵ See Wallander, Celeste A., "Lost and Found: Gorbachev's New Thinking," *The Washington Quarterly*, Vol. 25, no. 1 (Winter 2001), pp. 117-129.

¹⁶ On the strategy, see Talbott, Strobe, *The Russia Hand: A Memoir of Presidential Diplomacy*, (New York: Random House, 2002).

Yeltsin, and to be associated with a figure that Russian citizens viewed with contempt by the end of his presidency.

When the government's macroeconomic incompetence and unaccountability of the true oligarchic power structure resulted in the 1998 default, devaluation, and financial crash, the Russian public had come to view "democracy" not as a desirable objective, but as at best a smoke-screen for domestic injustice and greed, and as at worst a Western policy meant to undermine and possibly fragment the Russian population.

When in the summer of 1999 Russia suffered a series of bombings, and the assault on a neighboring region by Chechen terrorists who had enjoyed safe haven under a Yeltsin-government brokered cease-fire, it was the last straw. Their external security situation was precarious, their living standards had plummeted while a few corrupt insiders became ostentatiously wealthy and powerful, and by late 1999 Russians could not even believe themselves to be secure in their own apartments. All this in the interests of "democracy," an objective which also had played no small role in the break-up of the Soviet Union.

This is not to minimize the cynical and deliberate assault launched on the few elements of pluralism and contestation in the Russian political system by the new Putin leadership beginning in 2000. But it is to explain that for Russians, "democracy promotion" means loss of power and status, economic depression, a weakened and ineffective state, enormous debt, vulnerability both externally and domestically, and possible malign intent on the part of the West. When Putin and his associates began to eliminate the elements of pluralism and competition that had survived the 1990s by eliminating independent national media, they were viewed with sympathy and enjoyed overwhelming support by a Russian public inclined to agree that democracy brought only weakness and poverty. Subsequent actions by the Putin leadership to eliminate competition and strengthen the Kremlin's hold on power have all been justified in terms that implicitly or even explicitly criticize the role of a questionable policy of democratization in harming Russians and Russia.

The Russian political system in 1999 was not a democracy, but it was pluralistic. Developments since then have seen the consolidation of a patrimonial authoritarian political system. Individual and human

rights are not secure, the state owns the important outlets of national media, oligarchs who are not politically subservient to the Kremlin have had their assets taken or been pressured to sell them to compliant businessmen, regional governors and governments have been placed under direct president control or indirect influence, both houses of parliament are run by the Kremlin through appointment or control of the Kremlin's party (United Russia), and national competitive political parties have been effectively eliminated.¹⁷ What passes for the periodic public exercise of voting should be called "selections" rather than "elections" in Russia, because the process is thoroughly managed by the Kremlin in order to ensure that the outcome will be one in which meaningful competition or contestation cannot emerge.

The Putin leadership now unabashedly dismisses "democracy promotion" as at best a naïve strategy that has done Russia a great deal of harm because it ignores Russia's important historic and contemporary realities, and at worst a hostile strategy aimed at weakening and containing the country. The current Putin leadership is directly threatened by democracy promotion, since it retains its hold on power and control over Russia's considerable assets through non-democratic means. This is a broader problem for the Russian leadership, than just that of Russia: U.S. democracy promotion in Russia and Eurasia is seen in terms of geopolitical containment and the weakening of Russia.¹⁸ The Russian political elite's obsession with this threat was illustrated by new reports of a classified study for the Russian Duma on American plans to launch a "color revolution" in Russia akin to those in Georgia and Ukraine.¹⁹

It is particularly interesting, however, that while Russia is not a democracy, its leaders and society are not ready to accept that fact. Instead, the Kremlin has tried to advance the argument that the Russian political system is a democracy of a different sort: the term first advanced was "managed" democracy, and more recently "sovereign"

¹⁷ McFaul, Michael, and Nikolai Petro, and Andrei, Ryabov, "Postscript: The 2003 Parliamentary Elections and the Future of Russian Democracy," pp. 292-298 in McFaul, Michael, and Nikolai Petro, and Andrei Ryabov, eds., *Between Dictatorship and Democracy: Russian Post-Communist Political Reform*, (Washington DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2004).

¹⁸ Wallander, Celeste A., "Suspended Animation: the U.S. and Russia after the G-8," *Current History*, October 2006, pp. 315-320.

¹⁹ See "Experts Warn of U.S. Subversion Efforts," *The Moscow Times*, September 22, 2006, p. 3.

democracy. Since neither variant involves the fundamental attributes of democracy (free media, competitive political parties, free and fair elections, and institutional constraints to keep elected officials accountable), adding an adjective should not mislead anyone into the conceptual sleight of mind the Kremlin theorists seem to be aiming for. However, it is important to understand that Russian leaders have felt the need to make the case that Russia is developing a form of democracy, simply one that is not defined, imposed, or manipulated by the West (and particularly the United States). Russian democracy is “sovereign” because it takes whatever form Russians want, without being dictated to by foreign powers. Therefore, Western policies of democracy promotion are not merely unwelcome: they are viewed as instruments of anti-Russian intentions.

Nevertheless, the attempt to claim the mantle of “sovereign” democracy is interesting, and instructive. Despite the bad reputation that democracy has in today’s Russia as the cause of the Soviet break-up and Russia’s decline in the 1990s, the term still seems to have a normative weight and attraction. Russians and their leaders do not like being told how to run their political system, but they also do not like being told that their political system is not a democracy. If they do not seem to value the substance of democracy, why would this be?

I would suggest it is because they recognize that to be modern, integrated, European, and powerful in the 21st Century—in short a contemporary great power—Russia needs the legitimacy and moral authority of democracy. Autocracy is a throwback to tsarist times, and authoritarianism to the late Soviet period. For all its retrograde actions, the Putin leadership’s political system should not be viewed as a throwback: it is a new configuration of institutions meant to make Russia powerful, with a strong state controlling the terms and modes of that power.²⁰

This suggests that the term “democracy” still has elements of a normative meaning to Russia’s leaders and citizens. Its leaders may not welcome an effective democratic system, because that would complicate and possibly break their hold on power. And Russian citizens may have disdain for what “democratization” did to their living standards

²⁰ For an analysis on this new political system and its implications for Russian foreign policy, see Wallander, Celeste A., “Russian Transimperialism and its Implications,” *The Washington Quarterly*, Spring 2007.

and security during the 1990s. Yet, there is an attraction to democracy, even in weary and cynical Russia, and that holds out hope for a renewed transatlantic strategy for partnership and integration with the goal of a secure, prosperous, democratic Russia.

Lessons and Implications

For a renewed strategy to have a chance for success, the transatlantic community needs to be hard-headed and self-critical about the lessons of the past 15 years. Blaming Russian culture, or Putin, or high (or low) oil prices is not a fruitful basis for evaluation and a renewed strategy. Understanding what makes democracy work, and why that was missing in Russia, is a more realistic approach. The question of the sources of successful democratization is an enormous one, and the evidence and debate of experts goes far beyond what this paper can encompass. However, a few lessons are clear, and should be kept in mind as we begin to think about the next decade of Russia policy.

Lessons of the Period of Liberalization, 1988-1991: The incentives for liberalization, economic change, and efforts for global integration came from within, and were embraced by important (and powerful) leaders in the Soviet system. Certainly, Western policy played a role in shaping the incentives and attractiveness of the Western political and economic system, and the Western strategy of patient containment ultimately forced the internal contradictions and weaknesses of the Soviet system to weaken it from within. Nonetheless, the selection by the Politburo and the elite support that launched Gorbachev's career and policies were internal to the Soviet system. Certainly, Gorbachev faced many opponents, and critics warned that he would weaken the Soviet Union. But Gorbachev's policies were his own, and depended primarily on his ability to create support and allies within the Soviet system. He sought a supportive international environment, of course, and pursued arms control and an end to East-West confrontation in order to justify his internal reforms and to reduce the burdens of high defense spending in order to free resources for reform. Nonetheless, his support, the strategies his coalition launched, and the potential benefits to stakeholders in the reformist leadership were primarily home-grown. Gorbachev and his reformers were products of the Soviet Union: they had the legitimacy and experience to make politics in their country work. Certainly, in the end they failed, but we cannot

overlook how much they achieved until the final year or two when opposition consolidated and launched an active counter-strategy. The lesson of late Soviet liberalization and its success in eroding the hold of the Stalinist system is that legitimate domestic leadership is essential to successful political reform.

Lessons of the Period of Resilient Old Institutions, 1991-1993: The Soviet Union, its laws, constitution, and eventually its Communist Party were formally disbanded in the exciting, hopeful aftermath of the Cold War. However, formal rules are not necessarily the source of power, and persistent practices, relationships, and influential networks meant that old Soviet institutions were more important and powerful than the formal appearance of the new Russian state seemed to signify. Securing the loyalty of the residual Soviet military required half-hearted reform and maintenance of the Soviet military cultural and professional assumptions about the West and the security problems it posed, for example. Privatization meant in principle that new market forces and a new generation of market-savvy entrepreneurs would become Russia's business realities, but in fact access, power, and connections in Russia's Soviet-rooted bureaucracy proved much more important for access to wealth and property than knowledge of liberal economic theory or Western business practices. Russian citizens valued political change, but were not prepared for the collapse of state and social services, along with rapid decline in the economy: their elected representatives turned out to be effective forces of a conservative backlash against Western liberalization in those early years. And the Soviet/Russian security and intelligence services, we now know, were only formally downgraded, fragmented, and disbanded. Personal and professional relationships and cultures were sustained, and the elite cohort that looked like it had lost everything it had been trained for with the end of the Cold War was sustained and nurtured through connections and access in the 1990s, ready to re-emerge with Putin's leadership in 2000. So the second lesson is that old political institutions and practices do not disappear with formal change, and can be more powerful and resilient than the visible formal trappings of a reformed political system.

Lessons of the Period of Personalized Politics, 1993-1999: Successful democratization is not the result of good leaders or a president with reformist views. It is rooted in institutions, processes, and the system

of checks and balances, constraint and accountability, legitimacy and respect for liberal values. Western efforts to prop up Yeltsin might, perhaps, have served Russian democratization if the effects of reinforcing that individual were to enable him to build those fundamental institutions of liberal democracy. However, propping him up by bending or breaking the standards on IMF credits and G7/G8 membership, demanding (or at least strongly advising) policies for which he had little domestic support or legitimacy, excusing his use of force against a legitimate legislature, rationalizing aggressive force against Russian citizens in Chechnya, and turning a blind eye to the corruption and rapacious greed of his government all served to weaken support for political liberalization and to waste precious time for reinforcing institutions of rule of law and accountability necessary in democracy. In other words, in its zeal to support the great man in history who was the only guarantee (so it was argued) that Russia would stay on a democratic path, the transatlantic community helped to make it possible for Boris Yeltsin to retain power, but by undermining nascent democratic institutions and processes. The deep irony of the lesson of Russia's period of failed democratic institution-building in the 1990s is that Russians believe that this was their experience with Western democracy promotion, when in fact U.S. and European policies were helping the Yeltsin regime disregard the basic political institutions which should be at the core of a strategy of democratization.

Lessons of the Period of Popular Elections, 1999-2006: Elections are among the least important and most misleading components of a strategy of democracy promotion. Ultimately, of course, free and fair elections are the *most* important component of a successful strategy of democracy promotion. However, elections are not only meaningless, they are misleading, and potentially a tool of anti-democratization, if they are not free and fair. The function of elections in a democracy is to hold government leaders accountable to the citizens, but they cannot function unless citizens have a genuine choice among candidates and parties, and have independent information about the policies and performance of elected officials and candidates. Without access to meaningful information and a genuine choice among candidates, elections may be not only meaningless, but counterproductive for democratization. In Russia, "elections" have been held under the Putin leadership for some six years, allowing the government to claim that it is a

democracy of sorts, and that it is supported by Russian citizens. Far from advancing democratization, these quasi-elections have thus helped to legitimate the consolidation of an authoritarian Russian political system. Election monitoring and related programs for parallel vote tabulation to assess whether elections are free and fair are an essential component of a policy of democracy promotion, but unless they are part of a package involving the entire range of capacities and activities which make for meaningful choice and effective accountability for voters, these programs risk serving anti-democratic strategies instead.

The implications for transatlantic policy on defending the gains of democratization in the case of Russia are not surprising. First, democracy promotion is consistent with national self-interest and core security interests. Although values also motivate support for democracy in American political culture, the strategic security reasons for democratization remain as relevant in dealing with Russia today as they were when everything seemed possible with the passing of the Cold War and Soviet Union.

Second, defending the gains of democratization requires a multifaceted set of policies that include election monitoring and support, but does not begin or end there. A strategic policy of democratization toward Russia (and the other countries of the post-Soviet region) requires integrated policies that support a benign security environment, sustainable economic reform and development, resources for social support in coping with change and dislocation, and providing independent and objective information for citizens.

Third, while individuals can make a difference, institutions are more important to the long-term stable progress of liberalization and democratization. Perhaps the U.S. will at times in its security relations support corrupt dictators for reasons of national interest. However, the U.S. should never support corrupt dictators against rule of law and other institutional mechanisms that provide for constraints on political power and accountability to voters in the misguided illusion that supporting a non-democratic leader somehow supports democratization. Either that leader will retain power, and thus be non-democratic by definition, or, even if well-intentioned, he is creating the basis for authoritarian rule for the leader who will take power after him.

Finally, the transatlantic community cannot be more committed to democratization in Russia than Russians, and particularly their liberalizing and reformist leaders. Democracy has a negative, and distorted, meaning in Russia today because of the experience of the 1990s, and because of the manipulation of information by the current Russian leadership. An effective effort for democratization in Russia will have to involve better education, engagement of Russian citizens, and opportunities for Russians to interact with the transatlantic and global communities in order to begin to reverse the negative impressions and correct the misunderstandings that Russians have about their own stake in democratic governance. The key to democracy is the accountability of the government to its citizens, so it makes little sense to advocate a policy that Russia's citizens do not value themselves. A renewed strategy of democracy promotion might start with listening to Russian citizens and learning from them to understand their priorities and ideas for making their government work for them.

Chapter 8

Case Study: Zimbabwe

David Monyae¹

Introduction

The most notable feature of recent commentary and analysis on the crisis in Zimbabwe is the widespread sense of optimism, that the removal of President Robert Mugabe and his cronies in Zanu PF will in itself promote and consolidate democracy. In a recent South African daily newspaper article, Paul Moorcraft, the director of the Centre for Foreign Policy Analysis in London, wrote:

I interviewed Mugabe at length for Time magazine when he first returned to the then Salisbury in January 1980. After the dullards in the Rhodesian Front, it was a breath of fresh air to talk to such an intelligent, articulate man. Above all, I believed his sincerity about racial reconciliation. So how did he become a monster?²

At the heart of the crisis in Zimbabwe as clearly demonstrated by Paul Moorcraft lies the notion that; to quote from Doh Chull Shin:

The promotion of the democratization process, no longer seen as a result or product of higher levels of modernization, illustrated by its [country's] wealth, bourgeois class structure, tolerant cultural values, and economic independence from external actors. Instead, it is seen more as a product of strategic interaction and arrangements among

¹ I would like to thank Dr. John Hinshaw at Lebanon Valley College in the U.S. for his comments and support. He deserve my thanks, even as he is exempt from responsibility for any errors of fact or insufficient political sagacity on my part.

² Moorcraft, Paul, "Passing Parade in Havana, Harare," *Business Day*, Wednesday, August 16 2006, p. 13.

political elites, conscious choices among various types of democratic constitutions, and electoral and party systems.³

There is a rich body of illuminating literature on democracy and democratization. This brief presentation is an attempt to use this literature to enhance our understanding of the erosion of democracy under Mugabe's Zanu PF government in Zimbabwe. Unlike most countries in Africa, Zimbabwe's independence in 1980 came about as a result of two competing and conflicting processes. Zimbabweans embarked upon an intense national struggle to liberate themselves from colonial rule. The major question in this struggle was about who governed us. However, the dawn of a new era in 1980 in turn demanded new questions. The central question became: how are we (Zimbabweans) governed? Therefore, the main aim of Zimbabwe's liberation struggle was largely aimed at instituting democracy by mass popular action.

The liberation of Zimbabwe also invited the intervention of regional and extra-regional players. Although the Zimbabwean question was and remains an African issue, the United States (U.S.) and the European Union (EU) played a significant role at Lancaster House in 1979. It was the Lancaster House agreement that largely twisted the hands of the Zimbabwean political elites to abandon the violent route to independence in favor of a negotiated transition. The Lancaster House agreement produced what was once held as a remarkable win-win solution for the warring parties in Zimbabwe. The country was on its way to a democratic path with a promising transitional constitution. What went wrong in Zimbabwe's nascent democracy? To what extent therefore has the U.S. and the EU's intervention in Zimbabwe strengthened or weakened democracy; *or the process of democratization; dynamics of democratization or authoritarianism?*

This therefore raises further questions about our understanding of democracy. It is perhaps illustrative to pose the question whether democracy can be enforced and sustained by external actors? For instance, Larry Diamond clearly stated in 1992 that, "the global democratic revolution cannot be sustained without a global effort of assistance." On the other hand, Joan Nelson reminds us that "vigorous

³ Shin, Doh Chull, "On the Third Wave of Democratization: A Synthesis and Evaluation of Recent Theory and Research," *World Politics*, Vol. 47, October 1994, p. 139.

outside intervention to encourage participation and competitive democracy can jeopardize the legitimacy of those reforms.” She goes further to argue against the use of conditionality as a ‘policy medium’ for promoting democracy abroad.⁴ These conflicting views about democracy pose enormous challenge to both academics and agents of democratic change in developing countries in Africa. The current Zimbabwe political and economic crisis raises more questions than answers. What role, if any, can external actors, particularly the U.S. and the European Union (EU) can play to arrest the erosion of democracy in Zimbabwe?

Historical Background: Zimbabwe and the Democratization Debate

Zimbabwe’s political elites negotiated the transition from the white minority government of Ian Smith to multiracial democracy at Lancaster House in 1979. This negotiated transition was widely held as a win-win solution for both the black majority yearning for political and economical freedom and the privileged white minority. Looking at the political deal reached at Lancaster House in 1979 retrospectively, one tends to agree with Arend Lijphart who wrote in 1991, “The success of democratization depends a great deal on the kind of a democracy that is adopted at the outset.”⁵ Zimbabwe’s transition from the colonial rule to multiracial and multiparty democracy was flawed in a number of ways. Firstly, the political settlement was reached outside of Zimbabwe. In doing so, Zimbabweans were denied the ownership of their peace process. Secondly, the direct pressure applied by Britain to protect the interest of white Zimbabweans produced unintended consequences. For instance, white Zimbabweans’ property was constitutionally guaranteed for the first ten years of independence. Furthermore, they were granted 20 percent of uncontested national seats in parliament. This planted and *reinforced the already existing* seeds of division and mistrust between the black majority and white minority, instead of unity around nation-building.

⁴ Nelson, Joan M., “Encouraging Democracy: What Role for Conditionality Aid,” Overseas Development Council, July 23, 1996.

⁵ Lijphart, Arend, “Constitutional Choices for New Democracies,” *Journal of Democracy*, Vol. 2, No. 1, Winter, 1991.

This was further compounded by three other factors. First, a low intensity conflict, led by some members of the PF Zapu's military wing, Zipra in the Matabeleland erupted in early 1980s. Second, the existence of the apartheid state right on Zimbabwe's doorstep *facilitated the Zanu-PF's drift to authoritarianism as it combated a real external threat*. Third, the intensity of the Cold War in Southern Africa plunged Samora Machel's government in Mozambique deep into a brutal civil war with the Renamo rebels. President Mugabe used these perceived threats: domestic, regional, and international environments, to gain moral and legitimate leadership for Zanu PF from 1980 to 1990. Mugabe effectively used state power to present himself and the party as the sole leader of the nation. The transitional constitution was altered in 1987 after the signing of the Unity Accord between Mugabe and his main political rival Joshua Nkomo, leader of PF Zapu. Effectively, Zimbabwe under Mugabe altered the transitional constitution to collapse the powers of both the President and Prime Minister into an Executive President. He attempted to use his executive powers to declare Zimbabwe a one party state. At the regional level, Mugabe gained leadership roles within the SADCC and the OAU. He helped Mozambique fight the apartheid South Africa-sponsored Renamo rebels. Globally, Mugabe assumed the position of a good spokesperson for Africa in the fight against the apartheid regime. As a skillful diplomat, Mugabe successfully led SADCC, OAU, Commonwealth, G77 plus China and NAM in isolating the apartheid South Africa. Regardless of the use of excessive force in Matabeleland, that caused the death of almost twenty thousand people by Mugabe's North Korean trained 5th brigade, there was no pressure applied to Zimbabwe by either Britain or the U.S. As a matter of fact, Robin Cook stated that:

There was no word of criticism from any Minister. There was no cut in overseas aid—on contrary; Lady Thatcher increased aid by £10 million at the time of the massacres. No attempt was made to use the Commonwealth against Zimbabwe at the time.⁶

The sudden end of the Cold War and the demise of the apartheid system in South Africa opened new challenges for Mugabe. The Economic Structural Adjustment Programme (ESAP) encouraged by the

⁶ *Hansard* (Commons), March 27, 2001, col. 799.

IMF and the World Bank brought tensions between Zanu PF and the trade union, war veterans and university students. When state subsidies were removed from basic commodities and services such as health and education, Zanu PF lost political legitimacy and hegemony over society in the 1990s. Unlike in the 1980s, when Zanu PF maintained high moral leadership and legitimacy, in the 1990s it was only left with state power to maintain control. The more the Zanu PF government failed to satisfy the needs of its people, the more it lost support. Zanu PF also lost support due to corruption. Mugabe responded to the new challenges by closing the political space in the country. The media was intimidated. The other strategy was to co-opt civil society, particularly the war veterans. However, in the mid 1990s Zimbabwe experienced endless strikes led by ZCTU. At the end of the 1990s Mugabe embarked upon a massive payment of war veterans and deployed troops in the DRC. These acts alone further worsened the economy of Zimbabwe. The demand for land provided Zanu PF with the only source of legitimacy in the countryside, where hard-pressed peasants looked for any source of additional land or income. The rest of Zimbabwe's story after the year 2000 is well-known. The Zanu PF government has maintained political power through the use of violence.

How Have the U.S. and the EU Responded?

When the Warsaw Declaration⁷ was adopted in June 2000, it was quite clear that President Robert Mugabe's government was going to collide with the newly founded international norms on democracy. In a recent article, Michel McFaul asserts that "Democracy as an international norm is stronger today than ever, and democracy itself is widely regarded as an ideal system of government. Democracy also has near-universal appeal among people of every ethnic, every religion, and every region of the world."⁸ There has been a mixed reaction to the erosion of democracy in Zimbabwe. The U.S. and the EU reacted randomly, frankly, *inconsistently* which often strengthened Mugabe's

⁷ In June 2000, 110 nations adopted the Warsaw Declaration, that defined democracy as "Periodic multiparty elections that are free and fair, respect for fundamental civil and political rights, universal and equal suffrage, an elected parliament, an independent judiciary, a free press, civilian and democratic control of the armed forces, and transparent and accountable government."

⁸ McFaul, Michael, "Democracy Promotion as a World Value," *The Washington Quarterly*, Winter 2004-05, p. 148.

hand instead of encouraging the democratic forces. More specifically, most developed democracies disagreed on the ways, strategies, and tactics to promote democracy. For instance, the U.S. and the EU's exclusive claims as the sole custodians of democracy have been challenged. There are regional organizations and countries that promote democracy. In Africa, attempts are being made within the African Union (AU) and in the southern African body SADC to promote democratic norms and values. However, this process tends to be slow and not favored or fully supported by the U.S. and the EU.

First, the major reason for the U.S. and the EU's lack of an effective response to Zimbabwe's erosion of democracy is the failure to realize that there is no universal blueprint for promoting democracy. It appears that Western powers, particularly the U.S. and Britain, prefer 'regime change' as the best way to effect democracy in some *targeted* countries while a gradualist approach is adopted *towards more favored ones*. President George Bush emphasized the moral and strategic imperatives for advancing freedom around the world as the key U.S. foreign policy objective in the aftermath of September 11, 2001. The current war in Iraq is a classic example in which a dictator (Saddam Hussein's regime) was militarily changed in favor of democracy; *in Pakistan, however, the gradualist (very gradualist) approach was adopted*. However, this noble action *towards Iraq and the Global War on Terrorism (GWOT)* has produced unintended consequences with direct impact on Zimbabwe. It has dug a deep hole within the Western democratic states *as they disagree on whether the GWOT is a war at all; is Iraq a front in that effort; and should the international standards such as the Geneva Convention still be maintained*. Dictators such as Mugabe have exploited the wide *ideological* gap between and among Western democracies and the developing countries. The U.S. and Britain's interventions in Zimbabwe in favor of democracy have been seen as the grand plan to 'change regimes' as the case in Iraq. This is seen as *a double standard towards ill-favored authoritarian regimes, as with Zimbabwe, versus favored ones (as in Pakistan, Egypt, and Saudi Arabia etc)*.⁹

Secondly, the current war on terror has been widely perceived to have extensively eroded major democratic principles. The war on terror requires the strengthening of states worldwide. Fighting terrorism has created tensions between liberty and control. For instance, the

⁹ Editor's note: Author's emphasis indicated in italics.

current debates over whether governments are infringing liberties in their attempts to control the movement of people, information, and finance. This global development has boosted Zimbabwe's governmental control over democratic forces. When Mugabe's political opponents exercise their democratic right to demonstrate, they are often locked up as posing a threat against 'national security' broadly defined. The reports about the abuse of prisoners in Abu Ghraib and Guantanamo Bay have further strengthened Mugabe's regime. What this has done is erode the moral high ground that the U.S. and Britain human rights reports used to enjoy in the developing world. Having said this, it is useful to look at the specific interventions by the U.S. and the EU in Zimbabwe.

The U.S.

The National Summit on Africa held on February 16, 2000, received wide nonpartisan support in the U.S. Much of the U.S. responses to Africa from the question of democracy, HIV/AIDS, and humanitarian assistance were largely informed by the Clinton Administration's national summit. However, when President Bush won the November 2000 election, the U.S. did not have a clear foreign policy strategy towards Africa, and more specifically, towards Zimbabwe. The general view expressed by the Bush Administration was that the U.S. will strengthen its relationship with key 'pivotal states' in Africa. The events of September 11, 2001, brought a sea of change in the U.S. foreign policy towards Africa. It is within this context that Washington's response to Zimbabwe should and must be understood. It is important to point out that the U.S., compared to Britain, does not have much political and economic interest in Zimbabwe. It has often reacted to the Zimbabwe crisis by following Britain rather than having its own proactive policy. Executive Order 13288 was signed by President Bush on March 7, 2003 which authorized the imposition of targeted sanctions on Mugabe and 76 government officials including the 24 farms they controlled. These sanctions included a travel ban to the U.S. However, these smart sanctions had little impact *on the Zanu-PF (although they had devastating consequences for ordinary people, especially urban Zimbabweans)*. This was followed by the 2004 State Department statement which said:

¹⁰ "Zimbabwe: Sanctions Enhancement," U.S. State Department Press Statement, March 2, 2004. Available at: <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2004/3/0091.htm>.

Should Zimbabwe's rulers continue to oppress its citizens and resist forthright efforts towards resolving the country's political crisis, we are prepared to impose additional targeted financial and travel sanctions on those undermining democracy in Zimbabwe.¹⁰

The threat to sanction Mugabe and his cronies was indeed realized. In November 2005, President Bush signed a new Executive Order superseding Executive Order 13288. This new Executive Order expanded the net of smart sanctions which included family members of those targeted in Zimbabwe and anyone in the U.S. and the world doing business with those individuals. In the same year, Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice called Zimbabwe an "Outpost of Tyranny." Although the U.S. imposed sanctions and carried through a tough diplomatic stance on Zimbabwe, it has not produced any tangible results. U.S. Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs, Jendayi Frazer stated that "Neither quiet nor loud diplomacy has worked to keep Mugabe from destroying his country."¹¹ This has led the International Crisis Group (ICG) to support a widely known fact that that the U.S. policy towards Zimbabwe, "suffers from fatigue and a lack of creativity."¹²

The EU

The European Union has not applied a sustainable foreign policy approach towards Zimbabwe. There are a number of reasons that can explain this state of affairs. Some members of the EU perceived Zimbabwe's crisis as one that could have been avoided if Britain (the former colonial power) and Prime Minister Tony Blair in particular had handled the genuine land concerns sensitively. For instance, President Chirac invited Mugabe to the Élysée Palace in an attempt to mediate the land crisis in 2001. The greatest weakness of the EU lies in its colonial past in Africa. Britain led the EU from a position of weakness. As the former colonial power, Britain under Tony Blair, formulated an incoherent foreign policy towards Zimbabwe. The Blair government's

¹¹ Fisher-Thompson, Jim, "United States Guided by Partnership not Paternalism in Africa," U.S. Department of State, April 20, 2006. Available at: <http://usinfo.state.gov/af/Archive/2006/Apr/20-22693.html>.

¹² "Zimbabwe: An Opposition Strategy," International Crisis Group (ICG): Africa Report, No. 117, August 2006. See also "Zimbabwe's Continuing Self-Destruction," International Crisis Group (ICG), Africa Briefing, No. 38, June 6, 2006.

failure to negotiate with Zimbabwe's government on the land questions legitimized Mugabe's views about the role of race in Zimbabwe. First, Clair Short, a senior cabinet minister stated clearly in a letter to the Zimbabwean government that the Labor government cannot be held responsible for commitments made by the Tories at Lancaster House in 1979 and throughout the 1980s. Secondly, Britain failed to realize that Mugabe will exploit its colonial past, especially the racial dimension of the land question. Britain's interventions in Zimbabwe were therefore seen by Mugabe and a large African constituency as the protection of white privilege that began at Lancaster House in 1979. Britain's attempts to be the bridge between the U.S. and the EU further complicated its position towards Zimbabwe. In Blair's words:

Though Britain will never be the mightiest nation on earth, we can be pivotal... It means realizing once and for all that Britain does not choose between being strong with the U.S., or strong with Europe; it means having confidence that we can be both. Indeed, that Britain must be both; that we are stronger with the U.S. because of our strength in Europe; that we are stronger in Europe because of our strength with the U.S.¹³

The more Britain supported the U.S. in the invasion of Iraq, the more some European countries tried to distance themselves from British-Zimbabwe policy. Although there has been a united European front against Zimbabwe in the form of sanctions, this has had little impact on the ground. It appears that Britain depends on the EU to take decisive leadership against Mugabe when the EU awaits London to do the same. The only noticeable success carried out by Britain and the EU against Mugabe's government has been in the field of public diplomacy. Britain nonetheless led a successive diplomacy effort within the Commonwealth to isolate Zimbabwe. However, Britain's strategic objectives were met at a very high cost. Firstly, the Zimbabwean crisis divided the Commonwealth along racial lines. Secondly, Britain and the Western countries were effectively left without any leverage over Harare when Mugabe preempted Zimbabwe's dismissal from the body. Zimbabwe's crisis was therefore left in the hands of African multilateral structures, SADC and the AU. The other body

¹³ Speech by Prime Minister Tony Blair on Foreign Affairs, December 15, 1998. Available at <http://www.number-10.gov.uk/output/Page1168.asp>.

that both the U.S. and EU relied on to exert pressure on Zimbabwe to democratize was the United Nations.

Zimbabwe has been effectively isolated in the Western capitals. But this has invited the intervention of China and other extra-regional players. President Mugabe managed to devise the “Look East policy” which literally meant that China and other Asian economies would collaborate with the Zimbabwean regime in diverse fields. The use of International Financial Institutions (IFI) World Bank and the IMF to pressure Harare were frustrated due to the fact that Mugabe printed more money to pay the country’s debt. He has relied heavily on Chinese investments to cover some of the short term foreign currency shortages. The Chinese are the major investors in Zimbabwe’s economy today. Although the move to rely on Chinese investments does resolve the crisis in Zimbabwe, it has however allowed Mugabe to buy more time in power.

Seymour Martin Lipset once argued that, “Whether democracy succeeds or fails continues to depend significantly on the choices, behaviors, and decisions of political leaders and groups.”¹⁴ The U.S. and the EU invested undisclosed amounts of resources to aid democratic forces in Zimbabwe. But these efforts have not only been undercut by Mugabe’s autocratic regime but by the opposition politics in Zimbabwe. The biggest opposition party, the MDC appears to be divided into two faction groups each claiming to be the authentic one and claiming the right to the usage of the MDC logo. Morgan Tsvangirai, the leader of the anti-Senate, commands more support but lacks creative ideas to unite the country against Mugabe and Zanu PF. Instead Tsvangirai appears to be the ideal brave leader to confront Mugabe’s dictatorial rule but incapable of demonstrating an alternative statesmanship posture. He has often allowed himself to be trapped by Mugabe in making compromising political statements. Tsvangirai spent a great deal of time attending ‘treason trials’ hatched by Mugabe instead of building a strong movement across the country.

South Africa as a Regional Power

One of the major mistakes made by the U.S. and the EU was pressuring South Africa’s President Thabo Mbeki to take a hard stance on

¹⁴Shin, Doh Chull, “On the Third Wave of Democratization,” *op cit.*

Zimbabwe. Principally, this was a good move but it failed to realize Pretoria's own limitations. Firstly, South Africa has worse cases of land inequalities compared to Zimbabwe. Secondly, the legacy of apartheid's regional destabilization lingers on within the southern African sub-region. For instance, there are numerous calls for South Africa to pay reparations for its destabilization policy during the apartheid era. To expect Pretoria to lead an aggressive foreign policy at a time when South Africa itself was seeking acceptance of its leadership role in Africa, was a naïve move. It is a fact that South Africa tends to succeed lending a leadership role in Africa's conflict zones where it gets both the African Union and Western powers endorsements. According to President Mbeki, South Africa should "walk on two legs" one in the developed world and the other in the developing world, especially Africa. It is within this context that South Africa's leadership role in Zimbabwe was weakened because of the lack of consensus between Africans and the developed countries, particularly the U.S. and the EU, on how to resolve the crisis in Harare. In short, South Africa can only achieve tangible democratic dividends in Zimbabwe if the gap between the African constituency and Western democracies is closed.

What is to be Done?

There is a need for an urgent foreign policy shift towards Zimbabwe to aid democracy. This can be achieved by finding a common ground between the U.S./EU and African countries. Firstly, more attention should be paid towards strengthening African multilateral institutions to be the main anchors of democracy in Africa. Secondly, the U.S./EU should avoid the temptation of over-emphasizing democracy in Zimbabwe while keeping silent about other African countries without a large population of white propertied class such as Swaziland. That is, maintain equal standards of responses to all affected countries. Thirdly, Britain should recommit itself to the Lancaster House agreements with regards to the land question. Instead of rejecting negotiations with Zanu PF, Britain should pledge tangible resources that could be used to settle the land question in Zimbabwe. This requires the intervention of neutral negotiators from both Western countries and Africans. The current sanctions have contributed to the massive exodus of Zimbabweans to Britain and South Africa. These political and economic refugees have denied the opposition parties in Zimbabwe an effective support base.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the more Zimbabwe is allowed to explode due to diverse views of how it should democratize, the more Mugabe wins. It is therefore imperative for the international community to adopt a common position on Zimbabwe. Lastly, China and Russia, two major global players, have declared their intentions to work with the Zimbabwean government. This has weakened South Africa, the U.S., and the EU in their attempts to pressure Mugabe towards democracy. This requires new and fresh approaches in Washington and Brussels to nag and cajole Zimbabweans towards democracy. Finally, it appears that the U.S. and EU's interventions in Zimbabwe have weakened MDC quite considerably. There is a need to widen the support net much further from the MDC. There are numerous democratic forces outside the MDC that require assistance to empower their meaningful contribution in the national question. Finally, the GWOT should not be confused with the process of democratization in the developing world. While seeking support for the war on terror, the U.S. and the EU should avoid strengthening the hands of dictators directly and indirectly as the case in Pakistan and Zimbabwe.

Chapter 9

International Response to Democratic Crisis in Venezuela

Jennifer L. McCoy

Venezuela's image abroad was transformed from a model of democracy during the Cold War years, to an unstable democracy in the 1990s, to a crisis-ridden and polarized country in the 2000s. Opinion was split over whether the election of Hugo Chávez in 1998 and his subsequent Bolivarian Revolution was deepening and transforming democracy, or eroding democratic institutions and political rights in a backsliding trend.

The clearest sign of crisis and international response was the coup removing President Chávez from power in April 2002, only to be reversed within 48 hours. The stark evidence of the severe divisions within the country led President Chávez to invite Jimmy Carter, and later the Organization of American States (OAS) and United Nations Development Program (UNDP), to facilitate a dialogue to help reconcile the country. That invitation led to two years of intensive involvement by the three organizations, as well as a Group of Friends of six countries, to help resolve the conflict and prevent violence in Venezuela. The international efforts spawned a new dialogue personally led by the Secretary General of the OAS for seven months, and the monitoring of a ten-month electoral process representing the world's first presidential recall referendum. The international involvement persisted through various manifestations of the conflict in Venezuela, from massive marches and counter-marches, to a two-month petroleum strike that paralyzed the country, an open military rebellion in a four-month "sit-in" by active military officers, and social mobilization at different levels across the country seeking both to exacerbate and defuse the conflict.

This paper examines the unraveling of the Punto Fijo model of representative democracy, the rise of Hugo Chávez and evolution of his Bolivarian Revolution, and international efforts to promote

democracy and prevent the political conflict from escalating into violence.

Consolidation and Unraveling of Venezuelan Representative Democracy

Venezuela was viewed as a “model democracy” in the hemisphere for four decades prior to the election of Lt. Col. Hugo Chávez in 1998. After a history of strongmen, violence, and a short-lived attempt at democracy 1945-48, Venezuelans forged a representative democracy under the banner of the Pact of Punto Fijo in 1958.¹ Through a series of accords, Venezuelan economic and political elites, the military and the labor unions agreed on a political and economic model based on the distribution of externally-derived rent (oil revenues), consensus-seeking mechanisms, and centralized political control under a strong presidential system. Crushing both a leftist insurgency and rightist military uprisings in the 1960s, by 1975 the new democracy faced no serious threats. Its continued success rested in no small part on the unprecedented income that the Venezuelan state received from the international sales of petroleum after 1973.² In late 1982, however, the price of crude oil began a decline that lasted, except for a brief period during the Persian Gulf War of 1990, until early 1999. During that seventeen year period, the political regime initially forged at Punto Fijo began to unravel.³

Clear signals of the unraveling erupted with the protests known as the Caracazo in February 1989, when the government of Carlos Andrés Pérez attempted to raise gasoline prices as part of an IMF package in the face of serious government international and domestic debt. The consequent rise in bus fares unleashed spontaneous riots across the country, during which a heavy-handed military and National Guard killed 300 (official count) to 1000 (human rights

¹ The Pact of Punto Fijo was a power-sharing agreement among Acción Democrática, Copei, and Unión Revolucionaria Democrática in December 1958 at the house of Copei leader Rafael Caldera, called “Puntofijo.”

² Although the percentages vary by year, roughly the oil sector has accounted for 25 percent of Venezuela’s GDP; 50 percent of its export earnings; and 75 percent of the government budget.

³ For an analysis of the unraveling of the Punto Fijo representative democracy and the rise of the Bolivarian Revolution, see McCoy, Jennifer and David Myers, eds., *The Unraveling of Representative Democracy in Venezuela* (Johns Hopkins University Press, 2004).

group estimates) protestors. The Pérez government's politically inept attempt to open up the economy further alienated the protected business class and contributed to discontent within the military.

On February 4, 1992, a secret club of mid-ranking military officers called the Bolivarian Revolutionary Movement (*Movimiento Bolivariano Revolucionario*—MBR-2000) attempted a coup against Pérez. The coup was put down by loyal generals and the leader, Lt. Col. Hugo Chávez Frías, arrested. Pérez permitted Chávez, though, to first make a statement calling on his comrades to lay down their arms. His 30 seconds of live television time made him a hero to millions of disgruntled Venezuelans as he criticized the corrupt democracy and uttered his famous line that he and his followers would put down their arms “for the moment” (*por ahora*).

Before the attempted coup, the apparent consolidation of control over the political system by the main political parties, *Acción Democrática* (AD) and Copei, left many Venezuelans extremely dissatisfied with their leadership, but unable to visualize an alternative. The overwhelming majority wanted “democracy,” but were split between those supporting a democracy with AD and Copei and those supporting one without them. Studies of Venezuelan public opinion at that time reveal that most Venezuelans viewed the two dominant political parties as corrupt and incompetent. They also blamed them for the country's economic decline. For decades, petroleum fueled growth and the middle class grew, with per-capita income peaking in 1978. Then came a sharp and persistent drop in real per-capita oil revenues, a poverty rate that shot up from 25 percent in the 1970s to 65 percent in the 1990s, and the massive disappointment of middle-class aspirations.⁴

Institutionally, the democratic political regime had remained highly centralized, with an ineffective Congress, a weak civil society penetrated by the political parties, and policymaking dominated by a powerful president who occasionally consulted labor and business in devising a state-led development strategy based on external rents, protection of domestic interests, and burdensome social commitments to the lower

⁴ The steepest rise in poverty occurred during the 1990s: the percentage living on less than \$1 per day increased from 12 percent in 1989 to 23 percent in 2000; and estimates of those living under the national poverty line doubled from 31 percent in 1989 to 67 percent in the late 1990s (UNDP *Human Development Report 1999*; World Bank website; CIA website).

and middle classes. The early priority given to political stability and democratic survival through consensus-based mechanisms eventually gave way to concern with political survival of individual political parties and leaders. At the same time, the centralized system of political decision-making failed to incorporate new groups that gained influence as economic and political modernization unfolded. These groups, which included the urban poor, intellectuals, emerging middle class civil society movements, and junior ranks of the military, became increasingly resentful and eventually found a voice, with important sectors deserting the Punto Fijo political regime completely.

Decentralization pushed by the neighborhood associations and new civil society movements in 1989, combined with political errors of elites, led to a fragmentation of the political party system in 1993, when for the first time, AD and Copei lost the presidency and achieved less than 50 percent of the congressional vote.⁵ This “deinstitutionalization” of the party system also opened space to charismatic leaders and led to the personalization of the new competitive political parties, particularly evident in the 1998 elections with the emergence of Irene Saez (IRENE party), Henrique Salas Romer (Proyecto Venezuela party), and Hugo Chávez (the Fifth Republic Movement, MVR) as leaders of new personality-driven party vehicles.

By the 1998 elections, real per capita income had eroded to the same level as in 1963, representing a one-third drop from the peak in 1978. Few Venezuelans recognized that oil revenues per capita had dropped precipitously. Instead, they continued to view Venezuela as a rich country.

Rise of Hugo Chávez Frías

President Rafael Caldera (1994-99) released the failed coup leader from prison and restored his political rights. While in prison, Chávez had become acquainted with intellectuals and politicians from the old Venezuelan Left who saw a chance to emerge from their long marginalization. On his release, Chávez quietly organized his own political party and prepared to run for the presidency. Caldera’s victory in 1993 and the perception that AD and Copei could be beaten were important in establishing anti-party candidates as viable challengers.

⁵ Ironically, a founder of Copei left the party to run and win the elections—Rafael Caldera.

Chávez's anti-elite message capitalized on Venezuelan frustrations and blame of the traditional political class for the slide in living standards in the 1980s and 1990s. He campaigned on a promise of radical change—to rewrite the constitution (a symbol for a political overhaul) and to eliminate the corruption of the “oligarchs” who had “stolen” the country's riches. He mercilessly attacked the traditional political parties, and eventually defeated his primary opponent, Henrique Salas Romer, who also promised radical change but who at the last minute received the endorsement of AD and Copei. Before that, Irene Saez had led in the polls until she accepted the backing of Copei. Thus, Venezuelans' deep desire for change did not necessarily mean that Chávez would be the one to carry it out. Chávez won when his competitors' acceptance of support from the traditional parties signaled to the populace that they would not, after all, represent a clean break with the past.

Chávez received 56 percent of the vote in an election endorsed by the OAS and the Carter Center. That vote was not only from the poor, however: while 55 percent of the poor voted for him, so too did 45 percent of the non-poor.⁶ Chávez was able to mobilize large sectors of the lower classes who felt excluded by established parties and did not possess institutionalized forms of political expression.

Inaugurated on February 2, 1999, Chávez' approval rating topped 80 percent and he enjoyed support across all classes and sectors. During his first year in office, he moved decisively to consolidate political power. Fulfilling his campaign promise, he held a referendum April 1 to approve the election of a Constituent Assembly to write a new constitution. The electoral formula selected to choose the members in July, with the approval by all of the parties, disadvantaged the disorganized opposition and gave the advantage to the governing coalition, which gained control of 94 percent of the seats. This same Assembly dissolved the Congress elected in 1998 and removed many justices from the courts.

Despite opposition from the private sector and the Catholic Church to welfare provisions and abortion rights, a referendum in December 1999 approved the new “Bolivarian” Constitution. The constitution both reassured and alarmed people, as it was less radical

⁶ Canache, Damaris, “The Urban Poor” in McCoy and Myers, *Unraveling*, 2004.

than expected, yet brought important changes. The Bolivarian Constitution extended the presidential term from four to six years, with immediate reelection; gave the president more direct control over the military while reducing Congressional oversight; changed the name of the country to the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela; and strengthened the power of the national executive at the expense of the legislative and judicial branches. It eliminated the Senate, created two new public powers (an electoral power and a citizen's power to control corruption), and provided for more direct democracy through the creation of popular referenda with the power to revoke legislation and recall elected officials. It continued the pro-state approach to economic affairs while protecting private property.

Chávez decided that all elected positions should be "relegitimated" under the new constitution, and so ran again in the "mega-elections" of July 2000, securing almost sixty percent of the vote (3.9 million votes)—similar to the number of votes he won in 1998—3.66 million. His main opponent was a former comrade in arms who had become a popular governor—Francisco Arias Cardenas. The political coalition supporting Chávez' candidacy overwhelmingly defeated the candidates of AD and COPEI for seats in the National Assembly, and captured all but five of the 22 regional governorships. Similar results in the municipal and neighborhood council elections of December 2000 completed the marginalization of the traditional political parties.

The new National Assembly was charged with appointing the members of the electoral and citizen's branches, and the Supreme Court. Previously, a small committee from the Constituent Assembly was designated to make temporary appointments to these branches, which it did without following the constitutional procedures, but also designating individuals perceived as Chávez sympathizers. When the newly elected National Assembly simply reconfirmed the appointments to the Court and the citizens branch, confidence in the independence of the public institutions and their ability to serve as a check on presidential power was seriously eroded.

Meanwhile, the military mission was expanded. Chávez favored the military as an institution over what he saw as the inefficient and corrupt public bureaucracies and political parties. He therefore enlisted military officers as top-level decision-makers in his government, employed the military in massive disaster relief and development pro-

grams, and intervened in the promotion process, promoting loyal officers ahead of more senior officers. These practices led to growing tensions within the military, between generations and between Chávez loyalists and opponents, which played out in dramatic terms in 2002.

After two years of pragmatic economic austerity and courting of foreign investment necessitated by low oil prices,⁷ Chávez moved to make economic changes in late 2001. Near the end of a year-long Enabling Law in which the legislature granted legislative-making powers to the president,⁸ in December 2001, Chávez announced forty-nine decree laws, without prior consultation to economic sectors or political parties, that reformed such sensitive areas as hydrocarbons, fishing rights, and land ownership. The outcry that followed resulted in an unprecedented joint call by labor and business for a national strike on December 10.

National divisions deepened in 2002 as more actors spoke out against the president. Splits within the MAS (*Movimiento al Socialismo*—Movement to Socialism), his coalition partner since the 1998 election campaign, reduced the president's strength in the National Assembly below the sixty percent majority that he needed to approve organic laws. Cracks in his own MVR (*Movimiento V República*—Fifth Republic Movement) threatened to reduce his supporters to minority status in the Assembly.

When the president's popularity dipped below 30 percent (in early 2002), his political opponents began to explore the feasibility of using constitutional devices such as the revocatory referendum to remove him by legal means. Even inside of the military, the very institution whose support President Chávez claimed as critical to carrying out his Bolivarian revolution, opposition crystallized.

In January and February of 2002, several active military leaders called for Chávez to resign; plans for a reported coup attempt in February were apparently postponed; the president's chief political strategist and close confidant, Luis Miquelena, left the government; and the CTV and Fedecamaras issued a joint call in March for the president

⁷ From a low of \$11 per barrel in 1998, the average price of oil rose to \$16 in 1999 and \$27 in 2000, with a subsequent decline in 2001.

⁸ This delegation had been used previously in Venezuelan democratic history, but the granting of power was more extensive in the economic arenas in 2001.

to resign. The catalyst for the greatest turmoil, however, was Chávez's replacement of the president and board of directors of the national oil company, PDVSA, in February in an attempt to gain more political control over the independent board and its spending decisions. The response was a series of clashes and work stoppages between the new board and PDVSA managers and workers that culminated in a strike by white-collar petroleum workers beginning April 4. Five days later, the CTV and Fedecamaras joined the petroleum strike in solidarity while the government declared the petroleum strike illegal and interrupted private television broadcasting of the strike with mandatory government announcements. The demands of the strikers escalated from reinstating the previous PDVSA board and fired workers to a call for Chávez' immediate resignation.

On April 11, the third day of the nation-wide strike, a large group of protest marchers in Caracas diverted their planned route and approached the Presidential Palace, where pro-government demonstrators were gathered. A confused hail of bullets resulted in 19 deaths and over 100 wounded. The night of April 11, military commanders reportedly asked the president to resign in light of the order to implement the Plan Avila.⁹ In another confused series of events, the Commander of the Armed Forces, General Luis Rincon, announced that the President had resigned and removed his entire cabinet, while hours later the Attorney General Isaias Rodriguez announced that the resignation letter was a fake, and the president's wife announced from Cuba that Chávez was being held prisoner at Fort Tiuna in Caracas.

With an apparent vacuum of power and no available succession (based on the presumed resignation of the president and his cabinet), the military swore in the president of Fedecamaras, Pedro Carmona, as the new president of the republic. Carmona immediately dismissed the National Assembly, announced that he would not recognize the 1999 constitution, named a new cabinet, announced that new elections would be held within a year, and began to arrest Chávista governors, legislators, and ministers. The country and the world were shocked at the clearly undemocratic moves.

Within 48 hours, the tide had changed as international condemnation of the authoritarian moves of Carmona reinforced the outpouring

⁹ The contingency plan for the security forces to provide order during public protest.

of Chávez supporters in the streets. The military reversed course and reinstalled Chávez to the presidency.

International Reaction to Democratic Crisis

The implosion of the Punto Fijo model of representative democracy in Venezuela generated very little international reaction. Even international scholars were slow to catch on. By the early 1990s, however, the warnings were clear and some North American scholarly analysis began to appear.¹⁰ International assistance for democracy promotion, on the other hand, did pick up in the 1990s as the party system unraveled, with the National Endowment for Democracy providing \$2.3 million in grants between 1993 and 1998. The election year of 1998 garnered the largest grants with \$600,000 devoted to democracy assistance that year.

The initial reaction to the Chávez electoral victory in 1998 was positive. The international financial community and investors heard positive messages from the new president, and the diplomatic community adopted a policy of “engagement” and “wait-and-see.” As the new government fulfilled its campaign promises of writing a new constitution and began to consolidate power through the Constituent Assembly, on the other hand, there was virtually no international response, even to the interventions in the judicial system and the adoption of legislative powers by the Constituent Assembly (displacing the elected Congress). Democracy promotion grants continued through the NED, however, both directly to Venezuelan NGOs and labor organizations, and indirectly through U.S.-based NGOs.

The clearest international response to political crisis came in reaction to the April 11, 2002 coup against Chávez, though that response was as confused, and divided, as the events on the ground. Leading up to the April events, in February and March, the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights had reported that press freedoms were endangered and the U.S. government had expressed concerns about democratic erosion in Venezuela. After Chávez’s detention, on April 12, the Rio Group of Latin American countries meeting in Costa Rica

¹⁰ See McCoy, Jennifer, et al, *Venezuelan Democracy Under Stress* (University of Miami: North-South Center, 2005); and Goodman, Louis, et al, *Lessons of the Venezuelan Experience* (Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995).

“condemned the interruption of the constitutional order” and called for new elections (assuming that Chávez’ resignation was a *fait accompli*) and a special session of the OAS. In contrast, the initial U.S. reaction was to recognize (and nearly applaud) the transitional government, asserting that “[T]hough details are still unclear, undemocratic actions committed or encouraged by the Chávez administration provoked yesterday’s crisis in Venezuela.”¹¹ A joint U.S.-Spain statement hoped that the “exceptional situation Venezuela is experiencing leads in the shortest possible time to full democratic normalization,” but did not recognize an alteration or interruption of democracy.

On April 13 at midnight, the OAS extraordinary session invoked the Inter-American Democratic Charter and condemned the “alteration of the constitutional regime,” calling on the Secretary General to conduct a fact-finding mission in order to restore the democratic institutional framework (CP RES 811). At dawn on April 14, Chávez was brought back to Caracas from the island to which he had been flown, and sworn back into office later that afternoon.

A few days later, OAS Secretary General César Gaviria reported on his visit to Venezuela, concluding there was an urgent need for dialogue, to end military political statements, to investigate the violence of April 11-14, and to guarantee the separation of powers and checks and balances.¹² The OAS resolution the same day expressed satisfaction with the restoration of Chávez and endorsed the government’s initiative to call a national dialogue (AG/RES 1; 39-E-02). The U.S. backedpedaled in its support to the Carmona government, but continued to assert that Chávez did as much to undermine democracy in Venezuela as his opponents who had tried to overthrow him.¹³

At the OAS General Assembly on June 3-4, 2002, the United States attempted to gain approval of a resolution calling for OAS facilitation of a national dialogue through the Inter-American Democratic Charter. Annoyed by the clumsy attempt of the U.S. after showing up late

¹¹ Statement by Department of State Deputy Spokesman Reeker, April 12, 2002.

¹² Report Pursuant to Resolution Cp/Res.811(1315/02) Situation In Venezuela, April 18, 2002 (AG Doc 9, April 18, 2002).

¹³ Remarks by National Security Advisor Condoleezza Rice, April 29, 2002, Johns Hopkins University-SAIS. Secretary of State Colin Powell’s speech at the April 18 OAS meeting also contended that the problems leading to the removal of Chávez had begun long before that day and he implied that Chávez’s own actions were in large part responsible.

for the negotiations, the Latins rebuffed the effort and instead approved a declaration reiterating an offer of OAS assistance for dialogue and reconciliation should the Venezuelan government require it, and welcoming all international assistance to Venezuela (AG/DEC 28 (XXXII-O-02)).

The April events weakened the presidency, discredited the opposition leaders most closely linked to Carmona, and horrified foreign investors. Chávez immediately made conciliatory gestures, acknowledging that divisions in the country needed to be addressed, reinstating the PDVSA board of directors, and ending subsidized sales of oil to Cuba. The National Assembly, meanwhile, announced it would review many of the 49 decree-laws and establish a Truth Commission to investigate the violence and nearly 60 deaths of April 11-14 (which involved both pro and anti-government demonstrators). The Supreme Court ordered the release from house arrest of four high-ranking military officials who participated in the April 11 removal of the president.

In June 2002, Chávez invited Jimmy Carter to facilitate a national dialogue and by August, Carter had proposed, and the government and opposition had accepted, an International Tripartite Working Group composed of the OAS, UNDP, and the Carter Center. The formal dialogue began in November 2002, amid high tensions. The following month, the opposition launched a devastating two-month national strike including the oil sector. Finally, a formal agreement was signed in May 2003 opening the way for a presidential recall referendum. Along the way, a Group of Friends of the Secretary-General formed to support the dialogue process.¹⁴

International democracy assistance continued, primarily to opposition civil society groups and labor organizations. In a rather clumsy effort in August 2002, the U.S. opened an Office of Transition Initiatives to be able to funnel democracy assistance more rapidly to civil society groups, given the lack of a USAID mission in this oil-rich country.

The opposition gathered signatures in November 2003 with the OAS and Carter Center monitoring the process in a joint mission. The observers monitored the five-month verification of signatures in an unprecedented observation role, and mediated disputes over the

¹⁴ Composed of the governments of Brazil (chair), United States, Chile, Mexico, Spain and Portugal.

rules along the way. Finally, the recall was announced in June and scheduled for August 15, 2004.

The Carter Center and OAS completed their role as facilitators by monitoring compliance with the May accord—namely the carrying out of the recall referendum. They jointly conducted a number of tests and a post-election audit to verify the results of the electronic voting machines. Despite numerous allegations of fraud by the opposition, the observer missions found no evidence of electronic fraud and endorsed Chávez' defeat of the recall.

In summary, the two-year international effort at conflict prevention and reconciliation in Venezuela was unusual in many ways:

- First, it was a conscious attempt by the international community to try to defuse a social and political conflict *before* it erupted into full-scale violence.
- Second, it represented an unusual alliance between two inter-governmental organizations (OAS-UNDP) and a non-governmental organization (The Carter Center).
- Third, the conflict within Venezuela was multi-level and multi-sector, lacking clear dominant cleavages based on ethnicity, race, religion, or class (although some of those elements were also present as part of the conflict). The Carter Center and UNDP conducted peace-building and mediation initiatives at several levels and with several sectors in addition to the high-level dialogue effort.¹⁵
- Fourth, it involved significant personal effort by many world leaders (e.g. Jimmy Carter, Lula da Silva, Alvaro Uribe, Fidel Castro and other Latin American leaders) and especially by the OAS Secretary General, César Gaviria, to mediate the conflict, as well as navigate complex relationships within the international arena.

¹⁵ See *The Carter Center and the Peacebuilding Process in Venezuela, 2002-2005*. Available at: www.cartercenter.org/documents/2138.pdf.

International Community Disengages

Following Chávez' resounding victory in the recall vote, the international community essentially withdrew from its previously intensive involvement. Venezuela's Latin neighbors asserted that the voters had spoken, and there was nothing to justify further international involvement. The United States, on the other hand, concerned with the growing concentration of power and Chávez's increasingly vociferous foreign policy, engaged in a rhetorical war with Chávez. The State Department tried to isolate Venezuela in international forums, entering into a 21st-century version of a Cold War competition. Becoming almost a personal contest between George Bush and Hugo Chávez, the two countries supported opposing candidates in the election of a new Secretary-General for the OAS (Venezuela's candidate won), the race for the UN Security Council seat (Venezuela lost), and political endorsements of presidential candidates in several countries (with mixed results). Europe, on the other hand, primarily followed a policy of cautious engagement.

U.S. democracy promotion funds continued. USAID's Office of Transition Initiatives budgeted \$6 million in 2004 and \$4.5 million in 2005 to assist primarily opposition civil society groups. The NED provided another \$1.7 million in 2004-2005. Venezuela, on the other hand, began an aggressive program of petro-diplomacy, offering preferential terms for oil purchases to Caribbean, Central American and Andean countries, and buying Argentine bonds.

Internally, a series of laws curbing political dissent, free speech and the independence of NGOs raised alarms among international human rights groups, and criticism from the U.S. government, but little else. Multilateral international engagement essentially returned to the traditional practice of international election observation, with the European Union and the OAS monitoring the 2005 National Assembly elections (with a last-minute boycott by the opposition) and the 2006 Presidential elections.

Lessons Learned

Those engaged in democracy promotion efforts should first recognize different conceptualizations of democracy. In Latin America, with historic social exclusion, income inequality, and poor government

services, conceptualizations of democracy include governments providing basic welfare. In addition to civil and political rights (liberties), economic and social justice are part of many Latins' concept of democracy.¹⁶

In Venezuela, despite the erosion of procedural democracy, satisfaction with democracy is the second highest in Latin America, after Uruguay, according to the 2005 *Latinobarometro* report. In fact, despite defining democracy primarily in terms of liberty, Venezuelans gave a higher ranking of the "democraticness" of their country than any other country in the region (*Latinobarometro* 2005). The perceptions of inclusion, representation and hope provided by Hugo Chávez to the majority impoverished citizens are a powerful factor often ignored in external evaluations of Venezuelan democracy.

Secondly, in cases of high polarization with new sectors gaining political representation through democratic means, democracy promotion efforts should be all-inclusive, striving to increase the democratic capacities of newly-emerging power centers rather than simply aiding traditional ones. Assisting multiplural groups seeking to open political space and increase tolerance can also help to reduce political polarization.

Third, the case of Venezuela demonstrates that external leverage over a resource-rich state is very limited. Political conditionality of loans and aid is unavailable as a foreign policy tool. U.S. efforts to isolate Venezuela diplomatically have been counterproductive, as Latin neighbors have refused to be forced into a situation of choosing between the U.S. and Venezuela. The initial glee of the U.S. at the coup against Chávez damaged its reputation as a democracy defender, especially when contrasted with the Rio Group condemnation.

Use of "soft power," modelling desirable behavior, is the major foreign policy tool available. In this case, demonstrating to Venezuelans as well as to the rest of Latin America that the U.S. is engaged with their agenda of jobs and personal security, rather asserting a unilateral U.S. agenda, would go much further in building the relationships necessary to have a positive influence.

¹⁶ *Latinobarometro Report 2005* reports that the three primary meanings of democracy for Latin Americas are liberty, elections, and an economic system that provides a dignified income, though the relative weight of each of these factors varies by country. For example, in Brazil, a dignified income ranks the highest, while in Venezuela liberties ranks the highest followed by elections. Available at: www.latinobarometro.org.

Appendix

Defending the Gains? Conference Agenda

Paul H. Nitze School of Advanced International Studies
The Johns Hopkins University

Centre Thucydide
Université Paris II
(Panthéon)

European Studies Centre
St Antony's College
University of Oxford

Defending the Gains?
Transatlantic Responses When Democracy is Under Threat

Agenda

Kenney Auditorium
Paul H. Nitze School of Advanced International Studies
The Johns Hopkins University
1740 Massachusetts Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C.

Monday, September 25, 2006

9:00am-9:30am *Conference Welcome and Introduction*

Dr. Esther Brimmer
Center for Transatlantic Relations
Paul H. Nitze School of Advanced International Studies
The Johns Hopkins University

Professor Timothy Garton Ash
Director, European Studies Centre
Gerd Bucerius Senior Research Fellow in Contemporary History
St Antony's College, University of Oxford

Professor Serge Sur
Director, Centre Thucydide
Université Paris II (Panthéon-Assas)

9:30am-11:00am *Session One: The United States and the European Union and Democracy Promotion*

Divergent Interpretations of Democracy in U.S. and EU Policies
Dr. Jeffrey Kopstein
Director, Centre for European, Russian, and Eurasian Studies,
Munk Centre for International Studies, and professor of political
science, University of Toronto

The conference is funded with the generous support of the German Marshall Fund of the United States

The United States, the European Union and the Consolidation of Democracy in Eastern Europe

Dr. Jan Zielonka
Ralf Dahrendorf Fellow in European Politics,
St Antony's, Oxford

The United States and the European Union and Democracy in West Africa

Mr. Yann Bedzigui
Centre Thucydide
Université Paris II (Panthéon)

The United States and the European Union and Democracy in the Middle East

Dr. Nada Mourtada Sabbah
Associate Professor of Political Science and
Chair of the Department of International Studies
American University of Sharjah (UAE)

Moderator: Dr. Esther Brimmer
Center for Transatlantic Relations, Johns Hopkins University SAIS

11:00am-11:30am *Coffee/Tea*

11:30am-1:15pm ***Session Two: Democracy Promotion and the International Community***

The Role of the International Community in Sustaining Democracy

Mr. Theodore Piccone
Executive Director
Democracy Coalition Project

The United Nations and Sustaining Democracy

Mr. Magdy Martinez-Soliman
Executive Head a.i.
United Nations Democracy Fund
United Nations

European Approaches to Supporting Democracy in Eastern Europe

The Honorable Janusz Reiter
Ambassador of the Republic of Poland to the United States

International Norms and Sustaining Democracy

Mr. Thomas O. Melia
Deputy Executive Director
Freedom House

Preventing the Erosion of Democracy

Dr. Esther Brimmer
Center for Transatlantic Relations
Johns Hopkins University SAIS

Moderator: Dr. David Yang, Senior Advisor, UNDP Washington Office

1:15pm-2:00pm ***Buffet Lunch (Herter Room)***

2:00pm-3:45pm ***Session Three: Case Studies***

Russia

Dr. Celeste A. Wallander
Professor, School of Foreign Service
Georgetown University

Côte d'Ivoire

Dr. Jeanne Maddox Toungara
Professor
Howard University

Zimbabwe

Mr. David Monyae
School of Social Sciences
University of Witwatersrand

Venezuela

Dr. Jennifer McCoy
Director Americas Program, the Carter Center and
Professor of Political Science, Georgia State University

Moderator: Dr. I. William Zartman
Jacob Blaustein Professor of International Organizations and
Conflict Resolution, Johns Hopkins University SAIS

3:45pm-4:00pm *Coffee/Tea*

4:00pm-5:30pm *Session Four: A Debate about What to Do About Democratic Backsliding*

Professor Timothy Garton Ash
Director, European Studies Centre
Gerd Bucerius Senior Research Fellow in Contemporary History
St. Antony's College, University of Oxford

Mr. Carl Gershman
President, National Endowment for Democracy

Dr. Marina S. Ottaway
Senior Associate
Democracy and Rule of Law Project
Carnegie Endowment for International Peace

Moderator: Mr. Fred Hiatt, *The Washington Post*

5:30pm-5:45pm *Session Five: Conclusions*

Dr. Esther Brimmer
Center for Transatlantic Relations
The Johns Hopkins University

About the Authors

Yann Bedzigui is a research scholar at Centre Thucydide, a center of analysis and research on international affairs in Paris. He completed his M.A. in History from Université Paris IV-Sorbonne writing a thesis on the topic “African Policy of United States under the first George W. Bush administration.” Currently, he is pursuing his Ph.D. at University Paris II (Pantheon-Assas), working on a thesis entitled “Europe Union and Africa since the Maastricht Treaty: From a development perspective to a security one?” He has published chapters: “Chronique bibliographique de l’année 2005,” *Annuaire Français des Relations Internationales* (2006), and “Chronologie internationale de l’année 2004,” *Annuaire Français des Relations Internationales* (2004).

Esther Brimmer is Deputy Director and Director of Research at the Center for Transatlantic Relations at the Paul H. Nitze School of Advanced International Studies at The Johns Hopkins University. From 1999-2001 she was a Member of the Office of Policy Planning at the U.S. Department of State. She has also served as a Senior Associate at the Carnegie Commission on Preventing Deadly Conflict and as a Special Assistant to the Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs. She wrote a monograph on “The United States, the European Union and International Human Rights Issues” as well as numerous other articles and book chapters on international security issues. Her edited volumes for the Center include *Transforming Homeland Security: U.S. and European Approaches* (editor, 2006), *The Strategic Implications of European Union Enlargement* (co-editor, 2005), *The European Union Constitutional Treaty: A Guide for Americans* (editor, 2004), and *The EU’s Search for a Strategic Role: ESDP and Its Implications for Transatlantic Relations* (editor, 2002). She received her D.Phil. (Ph.D.) and master’s degrees in international relations from the University of Oxford. She comments on international affairs for broadcast and print media.

Jeffrey Kopstein is Professor in the Department of Political Science and Director of European Studies at the University of Toronto. He represents the Center for European, Russian and Eurasian Studies at the University of Toronto on the Ethnic and Pluralism Studies collaborative program committee. Before moving to Toronto in 2002, he taught at Dartmouth College, the University of California at Berkeley,

and the University of Colorado at Boulder, where he was Director of Central and East European Studies. He has held fellowships at Harvard University, Princeton University, and in 2001 was an Alexander von Humboldt Fellow at the University of Munich. Kopstein is currently completing a new book, *Crossing the Divide: European Politics between East and West*. He has published *The Politics of Economic Decline in East Germany, 1945-1989* (1997), and *Comparative Politics: Identities, Institutions, and Interests in a Changing Global Order*, ed. with Mark Lichbach (2000). Kopstein received his Ph.D. and M.A. in Political Science from University of California at Berkley.

Magdy Martinez-Soliman is Executive Head at the United Nations Democracy Fund. He is a lawyer by training, a former practicing barrister and assistant professor of international law. His expertise expands to political systems and to legal counseling in constitutional law. He has been State Secretary for Youth in the Spanish National Government. Martinez-Soliman was also Deputy Minister of the Prime Minister's Office, in charge of the relations with Parliament of Andalusia and elected member of the Municipal Council of his hometown Malaga where he was in charge of Budget and Finance. He has been working for UNDP in the past eight years, focusing on Institutional Development of Legislatures, the Judiciary, Electoral Legislation, Anti-corruption strategies, Accountability in Public Financial Management and Democratic Transitions & National Dialogue. He was posted in Burundi, Togo, Bangladesh and Senegal. Martinez-Soliman was UN's Development Programme Governance's Senior Advisor for the 18 West African countries from 2000 to 2003 and for the past three years, he has been the Deputy Director and Practice Manager for UNDP's Democratic Governance Division. In this capacity, he is a one of eight member of the recently established UN Democracy Fund's Programme Consultative Group. He is currently the first Executive Head of the newly established UN Democracy Fund.

Jennifer McCoy is Professor of Political Science at Georgia State University where she has taught since 1984, and has been Director of the Americas Program at The Carter Center in Atlanta since 1998. From 1988-1998, McCoy also served as a consultant and Senior Associate of The Carter Center and from 1994 as Senior Associate of the Policy Research Center at GSU. Specializing in international and comparative politics, McCoy's professional work applies insights

gained through academic research to real-world problems through the projects she directs at the action-oriented non-governmental organization of The Carter Center. Her areas of expertise include democratization in Latin America, the role of international actors in mediating processes of democratization, and the emergence of global electoral rights and anti-corruption norms. McCoy was editor and contributor to *The Unraveling of Representative Democracy in Venezuela* (2004), *Political Learning and Redemocratization in Latin America: Do Political Leaders Learn from Political Crises?* (2000), and *Venezuelan Democracy Under Stress* (1995). McCoy received her Ph.D. in Political Science from the University of Minnesota, her B.A. in Political Science and Spanish from Oklahoma State University. She was awarded a Fulbright Fellowship to teach and conduct research in Uruguay during the fall of 1991 and 1992.

David Monyae is a lecturer and Ph.D. candidate at the School of Social Sciences, University of Witwatersrand. He completed an Advanced Course in Modern Peacekeeping at Lester B. Person's Peacekeeping Centre in Halifax, Canada. He has received a Fulbright Fellowship to study American Foreign Policy in the U.S. and several academic merit awards from University of Witwatersrand. Before starting his Ph.D., he worked for the African Broadcasting Corporation and taught at National University of Rwanda. He is an expert of South African international relations with other African countries and writes op-ed and newspaper articles including "Mbeki's Crucial Intervention in Cote d'Ivoire" (2004), *Africa Week Magazine*.

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