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Democracy Promotion as a World Value

Since the September 11 attacks, President George W. Bush has rhetorically pledged to make the promotion of democracy abroad a primary objective of U.S. foreign policy, emphasizing the moral and strategic imperatives for advancing freedom around the world. At the same time, the United States has become both less liked and less admired by governments and societies around the world. Although its roots are deep, this latest spike in anti-Americanism comes largely as the result of Bush's most significant foreign policy initiative, the invasion of Iraq, which has been extremely unpopular both in democratic and nondemocratic states. In its history, the United States has probably never before suffered such a low international standing.

The correlation between Bush's rhetoric about democracy promotion and the U.S. fall from favor within the international community has created the false impression that other governments and peoples do not support democratic ideals or the foreign policies that seek to advance them. Europe's foreign policy elites consider Bush's presidential statements about democracy and human rights proof of a new virulent form of U.S. imperialism. Iranian officials argue that Bush's rhetoric about democracy camouflages an ulterior U.S. motive of seizing Iraqi oil. China's government leaders cite U.S. unilateralism and inattention to world public opinion as evidence of a lack of a real U.S. commitment to the advancement of democratic practices.[1]

Animated by this link between democracy promotion rhetoric and growing U.S. unpopularity, many U.S. commentators have reached a similar conclusion about the perils of democracy promotion for the United States and

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the world. These critics argue that the United States must abandon the ideological mission of democracy promotion, both in Iraq and throughout the world, and instead follow a more pragmatic, realist foreign policy if it is to regain its respect abroad and more effectively defend U.S. national interests. As the president of the Nixon Center, Dimitri Simes has argued, "Pursuit of a universal utopia is damaging American interests."[2]

Yet, this interpretation of the relationship between U.S. foreign policy and American popularity on the one hand and the status of democratic values in the international community on the other is misleading. First, 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 group, every religion, and every region of the world.

Second, democracy promotion as a foreign policy goal has become increasingly acceptable throughout most of the international community. Norms protecting the sovereignty of states still trump norms protecting the rights of individuals, but the balance is shifting. The United States, especially in the last century, has played a pivotal role in making the advancement of democratic values a legitimate foreign policy objective. Today, however, the United States no longer holds a monopoly on the business of democracy promotion. That development is a sign that such policy is not just a U.S. national interest (or camouflage for other U.S. national interests), but an international norm embraced by other states, transnational organizations, and international networks.

The existence of norms does not mean that they are always followed. Nonetheless, the violation of norms does not prove that normative frameworks have no meaning or influence. Furthermore, although many around the world loathe U.S. power and preaching, the norm of democracy has achieved striking universality in the current international system. The promotion of democracy, even when embraced and, according to many, tainted by the most powerful country in the international system, has also become an international norm.

Democracy's Rise to Prominence

In *On Democracy*, Robert Dahl succinctly summarizes the advantages of democracy as a system of government.[3] According to Dahl, democracy helps prevent rule by cruel and vicious autocrats, guarantees citizens a set of fundamental rights, ensures a broader range of personal freedoms, helps people protect their own fundamental interests, provides the maximum opportunity for self-determination—the freedom to live under laws of one's own choos-

ing—provides the maximum opportunity for the exercise of moral responsibility, encourages human development, fosters a relatively high degree of political equality, promotes peace—as modern representative democracies do not fight one another—and generates prosperity. Throughout most of modern history, Dahl's claims would have invoked heated debate. For millennia, monarchs, emperors, mullahs, and kings ruled and based their legitimacy on the claim of authority from God. In pockets of the world, these kinds of autocrats still remain, but divine right alone is no longer a sufficient justification for their power. These rulers must now also present other cultural or developmental arguments to explain why implementing democracy would be inappropriate or premature.

Democracy as an international norm is stronger today than ever before.

In the last century, fascist and Communist ideologues crafted new, alternative political models to democracy. When they seized control of powerful states, such as Germany and Russia, a normative debate about democracy and its alternatives accompanied the ensuing global power struggle. The ideological contest between communism and democracy was especially competitive because the Soviet Union's economic model of state ownership and fixed prices produced growth rates on par with or higher than capitalist economies for several decades. Eventually, however, command economies faltered, opponents to Communist dictatorship strengthened, and the Soviet empire collapsed. Since then, new variants of autocracy have rooted in several states that emerged from the USSR's dissolution, while autocrats still calling their regimes Communist remain in power in China and Vietnam. Yet, in all of these dictatorships, rulers no longer champion an alternative form of government to democracy. Rather, they either claim that their regimes are already democratic even if they are not (Russia) or that their political leaders are moving their countries "step by step" toward democracy (China). For the vast majority of the world, then, democracy is either the practice or the stated goal.

Another twentieth-century competitor to democracy as the most effective system of government was the modernizing autocrat who managed exceptional growth rates in newly industrializing economies. In the 1960s and 1970s, authoritarian regimes in Asia's tigers—Hong Kong, Taiwan, Singapore, and South Korea—all sustained annual growth rates of 9 percent. For a time, the model of East Asian exceptionalism challenged the democratic model as the better performing alternative in the developing world. Students of development posited a trade-off between democracy and development and therefore advocated a sequenced approach to governance: development first, democracy second.

Today, China's leaders still champion a variant of this model. Only one of the original tigers—Singapore—still clings to this form of government, however, and even there the normative debate about regime type has changed dramatically: democracy is now the goal, however distant. Nor have the practices of East Asia transferred very effectively to other regions. For every China, there is an Angola; for every Singapore, a Burma; for every South Korea, a North Korea. Although recent aggregate worldwide data indicates that dictatorships and democracies grow at roughly the same pace,[4] in some regions, such as post-Communist Europe, the relationship between democracy and economic growth is clearly positive: the fastest democratizers were the first to regenerate economic growth after communism's collapse.[5] Indeed, the oldest democracies in the world are also the richest countries in the world.

The United States no longer holds a monopoly on the business of democracy promotion.

Pockets of illiberal creeds, racist norms, patrimonial rituals, and antidemocratic ideologies exist throughout the world, but only Osama bin Laden–ism and its variants constitute a serious transnational alternative to liberal democracy today. Bin Laden is the most successful propagandist of a set of illiberal, antimodern, antidemocratic, quasi-religious ideas commonly referred to as Islamic fundamentalism. This reference, however, is misleading; many Muslims around the world practice a form of Islamic fundamentalism but in no way endorse, much less pursue, bin Laden's antisystemic objectives and violent means. Bin Laden and the more serious thinkers who preceded him—if bin Laden is the Lenin of this antisystematic movement, the Egyptian Islamist, Qutb, was the Marx—have developed a comprehensive set of beliefs. According to their worldview, the central conflict in international affairs is not between states seeking to maximize their power. Rather, it is a normative, Manichean struggle between the forces of good and evil. This ideological movement currently spearheaded by bin Laden not only rejects democracy as the best system of government but recommends an alternative, values-based polity, which it submits is both better than any Western model and also essential to living a proper Muslim life.

After decades of decline, Bin Laden–ism and its ideological soul mates gained new vibrancy after the September 11 attacks and the U.S.-led invasion of Iraq. Yet, even in these perilous times, this ideological alternative cannot challenge democracy's position as the world's most valued political system. Terrorist organizations can attack democratic regimes, but they have yet actually to threaten any democratic regime's hold on power or the terri-

torial integrity of a democratic state. The Taliban regime in Afghanistan is now out of power. The ideological energy of the Islamic Republic of Iran has also been extinguished, although the mullah's dictatorship lingers, and Iranian government officials claim to be practicing democracy or, more minimally, introducing changes to make the regime more democratic.[6] Bin Laden and his ideological mentors would never make such claims.

However paradoxically, greater discussion about democracy in the wider Middle East has been provoked in part in response to bin Laden's resurgence after September 11. Arab intellectuals who contributed to the UN *Arab Human Development Report* propelled the issue of democracy to the forefront by stating boldly that the "freedom deficit [in the Arab region] undermines human development and is one of the most painful manifestations of lagging political development."[7] In the last three years, Arab civil leaders and intellectuals have convened several international conferences to discuss and promote democracy's development. In Doha on June 3–4, 2004, Arab intellectuals explicitly stated that political reform must proceed irrespective of progress in resolving other regional problems, such as the Arab-Israeli conflict. These advocates of democracy are a minority in their societies, but they have already changed the terms of debate about politics in the region. Thus, even as disdain for U.S. power in the region skyrockets, debate about democratic values and democratic reforms has never been more serious.

Beginning with the collapse of dictatorship in Portugal in 1974, the consolidation of democratic regimes has increased dramatically. In 1972, Freedom House classified 43 countries in the world as free (their equivalent of "full democracy"), 38 as partly free, and 69 as not free. Thirty years later, it classified more than twice as many—89—as free, 56 as partly free, and 47 as not free.[8] Despite impressive gains, these rough estimates of democracy's advancement show that many populations of the world still live under dictatorship. The democracy deficit remains greatest in the Middle East. Autocrats in Morocco, Jordan, and Bahrain have recently introduced minor political reforms, however, in the long run these partial reforms may delay, rather than spur, genuine democratization.[9]

Equally worrisome is the growing gap between liberal democracies and electoral democracies, as well as the consolidation of façade democracies in many recent transitions from authoritarian rule.[10] That few state leaders in the world today openly embrace an antidemocratic regime type does not mean that all or even most leaders in the world actually practice democracy. Indeed, most tyrants and pseudo-democrats would claim that they either practice democracy or are trying to chart an evolutionary transition to democracy, not that they are advocating an alternative to democracy. In fact, elections even occur in most dictatorships around the world and sometimes, such as in Serbia in 2000, Kenya in 2002, or Georgia in 2003, they even play

an instrumental role in toppling an entrenched autocrat.[11] To undertake such risky actions willfully, leaders in authoritarian regimes must feel some normative and exogenous pressure to hold elections. For the time being, serious debate around the world about the best system of government appears to be over.

Of course, the statement "American democracy is the best system of government" still provokes argument, if not anger and resentment. Indeed, the U.S. practice of democracy is itself flawed, tainted by antiquated practices such as the use of the electoral college, serious charges of disenfranchisement during the 2000 presidential election, and seemingly illiberal policies including the continued use of the death penalty. For many around the world, several democracies have become strong alternative and more attractive models to the U.S. practice of democracy. These multiple models, however, are a positive development for democracy's international advance. Ironically, international resentment of U.S. power and policies may in fact have liberated the democratic norm from its close association with the United States, particularly during the Cold War. Being both pro-democracy and anti-American is no longer a contradiction.

The existence of norms does not mean that they are always followed.

Throughout the world, people are embracing democracy not only as a system of government, but also as a value.[12] Leaders in some autocratic regimes try to defend their go-slow approach to political liberalization by arguing that their citizenry is not ready for democracy. Their people, so the argument goes, are either not wealthy enough to afford the luxury of democracy or not Western enough to desire democracy.

Wealthier countries do have a greater prospect of sustaining democratic regimes than poorer countries.[13] Yet, little evidence suggests that only wealthy people desire democracy, nor do cultural and religious differences vary support for democracy as a value.[14] Instead, survey data suggest that support for democracy is robust and at relatively similar levels in every region of the world.[15] Furthermore, in the Arab world, surveys suggest that a strong commitment to Islamic ideas does not hinder the embrace of democratic principles.[16] The real values gap between the Arab world and the West does not concern the general concept of democracy as a system of rule but is rather found in men's attitudes toward the rights of women.[17] Polls conducted by the World Values Survey team show that support for antidemocratic ideologies varies throughout the world, with respondents in some countries ready to trade some democracy for more order. In no country surveyed, however, does support for dictatorship exceed support for democracy.[18]

The Erosion of the State Sovereignty Norm

Since the 1648 Treaty of Westphalia, state leaders have long recognized the legitimacy of state sovereignty as one of the most important international norms. Although states, especially powerful states, have violated this norm for hundreds of years,[19] the norm has endured and continues to influence the conduct of international affairs.[20]

After the end of World War II and with the creation of the United Nations, the norm of state sovereignty obtained a new institutional ally and emerged as a powerful battering ram for destroying empires and undermining the legitimacy of colonization. Eventually, empire became an illegitimate and near-extinct form of government. During this period, many hoped that acquiring state sovereignty would be the first step toward democracy. People living in colonies could choose their rulers only after shedding their colonial masters. Decolonization, self-determination, and democratization were to go hand in hand. They did not. Instead, new leaders in many decolonized regions trumpeted the importance of state sovereignty as an international norm to excuse their denial of popular sovereignty to their citizens. During the Cold War, the specter of Soviet and U.S. neo-imperialism, both alleged and actual, armed these autocrats with additional arguments in favor of recognizing and defending state sovereignty. In their respective orbits, both the United States and the USSR also invoked state sovereignty to legitimize the suppression of internal agents of regime change, be they "socialists" in Chile or "anti-Communists" in Czechoslovakia, and their external allies.

Nevertheless, during the last several decades, as new international norms protecting the human rights of individuals have gained strength, the sanctity of state sovereignty as an international norm has eroded. When first penned, international agreements about human rights, such as the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the 1975 Helsinki Final Act, or the 1993 World Conference on Human Rights, seemed to hold little weight; they sounded nice, but what would they actually accomplish? Those living under tyranny, however, assigned real meaning to these normative statements. Perhaps most famously, East European dissidents invoked the Helsinki Final Act to demand the recognition of their human rights, and eventually they succeeded.[21]

The strengthening of norms defending the individual and the weakening of norms safeguarding the state have continued since the collapse of communism in Europe. UN secretary general Kofi Annan underscored this change in his acceptance speech for the Nobel peace prize in 2001, stating, "Today's real borders are not between states, but between powerful and powerless, free and fettered, privileged and humiliated." This statement is significant

and remarkable, coming from the head of the United Nations—the international body constituted in large measure to defend and advance the norm of state sovereignty. Annan continued, "In the twenty-first century I believe the mission of the United Nations will be defined by a new, more profound awareness of the sanctity and dignity of every human life, regardless of race or religion. This will require us to look beyond the framework of States, and beneath the surface of nations or communities."[22]

In fact, international treaties and laws crafted to protect the human rights of all individuals have already expanded dramatically in reach and scope. With sovereignty comes the responsibility to protect basic human rights. When a ruler fails to meet this obligation, external actors can now assume the right and, indeed, may even have the responsibility to step in according to the new norms at play in today's international system.[23] Under the doctrine of universal jurisdiction, domestic courts can try foreign defendants accused of slavery, genocide, torture, and war crimes. Spain's recent attempt to extradite and try Chilean dictator Augusto Pinochet for human rights crimes committed during his 17-year rule decades earlier is perhaps the most dramatic refutation of the sovereignty norm, but it is far from the only example. The practice now occurs throughout the world.[24]

During the last several decades, state sovereignty has eroded as an international norm.

The courts and other legal bodies involved in enforcing universal jurisdiction do not claim to violate the norm of sovereignty. Rather, they challenge the legitimacy of the norm. The International Court of Justice, the International Criminal Tribunal, and especially the newly formed International Criminal Court (ICC) represent institutions designed to centralize and further legitimate the exercise of universal jurisdiction. International nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) such as Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International, working closely with local human rights groups, have dramatically increased their documentation of human rights abuses as a strategy to compel the abusive regimes to institute reforms. Domestic democratic groups have also invoked international treaties and norms to pressure their own governments to change.

Most boldly, a majority of states and people around the world consider military intervention for the defense of individual human rights legitimate. Countries act on that belief even if debate still remains over who has the right to authorize such humanitarian missions. Although the United States has initiated or led most of these interventions, humanitarian interven-

tions have been undertaken without U.S. participation by other regional actors and their armed forces, such as Australia in East Timor, the Military Observer Group of the Economic Community of West Africa States and its UN reincarnation in Sierra Leone, or the European Union in eastern Congo. The democratic members of the Organization of American States (OAS) even helped prod the U.S. intervention in Haiti in 1994.[25] In all of these cases, the promotion of democracy and the protection of human rights featured prominently in the justification of military action. Two hundred years ago, democracy would not have been part of intervening powers' lexicon.

Power, as always, can still trump ideas. Powerful states, including first and foremost the United States, have not yet felt the pinch of this growing challenge to the sovereignty norm. Moreover, the methods deployed for protecting individual human rights are still highly contentious and at times contradict other normative goals held in higher regard by other actors in the international community. The U.S.-led invasion of Iraq is an obvious example; Annan called this war "illegal." So too was the NATO war against Serbia because the campaign was not sanctioned by the United Nations and violated the principle of nonintervention. More generally, the application of universal jurisdiction by different national courts has not always been uniform or consistent with other normative goals such as national reconciliation in war-torn states.[26] In addition, U.S. reluctance to recognize the ICC is not only an expression of U.S. power, but also a reflection of the flaws in this international regime that countries must address in order for the court to function more effectively. Nonetheless, the radical idea that individuals have rights, no matter where they live, and that rulers face constraints, no matter what challenges they face, is growing.

Democracy Promotion as an International Norm

External actors have intervened more often and aggressively to enforce human rights norms in other states than they have to promote democratic regime change. Although Western democracies historically have a mixed record of exporting various forms of democracy, the legitimacy and practice of external actors promoting democracy—be they states, NGOs, or international institutions—has grown in the last two decades as the idea that people have a right to democracy has gained support.[27]

In the United States, the creation of the National Endowment for Democracy (NED) in 1983 marked a new stage of providing direct, public support for human rights activists and democratic organizations abroad. At the time of its creation, critics denounced the NED as a tool of U.S. imperial-

ism. Two decades later, though many still make that claim, the NED's practices have become remarkably legitimate, common, and internationalized. Groups such as the International Republican Institute, the National Democratic Institute, the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), and the Carter Center regularly send monitors to oversee elections in other countries. Even many autocratic states now feel compelled to invite international monitors to observe their elections, a normative pressure that did not exist just a few decades ago.

Many of these same organizations also began in the late 1980s and early 1990s to offer technical assistance to new democracies, providing blueprints, sharing experiences, and giving advice on a range of institutional design and organizational questions.[28] External actors provide direct material support and technical assistance to electoral commissions, parliaments, courts, human rights monitors, political parties, trade unions, and business associations. Also in the last two decades, foundations—some supported by government money and others by private sources—routinely have given grants to NGOs in other countries dedicated to the advancement and consolidation of democracy. By supporting NGOs committed to democratic norms, these foreign donors help to change the balance of power within domestic politics in favor of democrats.[29] Not all of these exporters of democratic values are U.S.-based. They also include the EU's TACIS (Technical Assistance to the Commonwealth of Independent States [CIS]) program for Russia and the other CIS states, the EU's PHARE (Poland and Hungary Action for Restructuring of the Economy) program for eastern Europe, the party institutes in Germany, the Westminster Foundation in the United Kingdom, the Institute for Democracy in eastern Europe, and dozens of other European and Asian foundations. Total European resources devoted to democracy promotion exceed U.S. budgets.[30] In the business of election monitoring, the OSCE—a European organization—is the major world player, not the U.S. groups. In 1998, many of these transnational actors came together to form the World Movement for Democracy, reflecting the truly global character of the present community of democracy advocates.

Democracy and good governance have also emerged as a new priority of aid organizations traditionally focused solely on economic development. Both the World Bank and the UN Development Fund have made good governance a larger component of their work. The U.S. Agency for International Development codified the promotion of democracy as a principal objective in its most recent strategy statement.[31] The Bush administration's new Millennium Challenge Account includes a few good governance variables in assessing a country's eligibility to receive aid funds.

In addition to direct aid and economic assistance tied to progress in political reforms, membership in multilateral institutions has also become a new and effective tool for promoting the consolidation and preventing the erosion of democracy. The OAS, for example, takes action on behalf of members not only to "promote and consolidate representative democracy" but also to help sustain fragile democracies in the region.[32] In Europe, the allure of EU or NATO membership did not start transitions from authoritarian rule in the south or east of Europe, but after initial democratic breakthroughs, the EU played a pivotal role in anchoring democracy in Portugal, Spain, and Greece. The promise of NATO and EU membership helped to spur the process of democratic consolidation in eastern central Europe and provided real incentives for the democratic laggards in the region, Bulgaria and Romania, to speed the process of political reform. Integration is an especially benign yet effective tool of democracy promotion because the mechanism provides incentives for the leadership of a democratizing country to pursue internal change. Through treaties such as the Lome IV agreement of 1989, the European Initiative for Development and Human in Rights in 1999, and the European Neighborhood Policy in 2003, the EU has made the promotion of democratic values a core policy objective of its external relations.

The legitimacy and practice of external actors promoting democracy has grown.

Although increasing numbers of governments and people around the world now endorse the norm of democracy promotion, even democratic states disagree about how to do it. Few believe, for example, that military force is justified to advance democratization. The slogan "you cannot force them to be free" still resonates with many champions of democracy. Military intervention's mixed record of success in promoting democracy only strengthens the moral argument against the use of force. Democratic states have also disagreed about the morality and utility of using economic sanctions as a method for promoting democratic regime change. Proponents cite South Africa as the great success story; opponents cite Cuba as the great failure.

More specific disagreements about how to promote democracy also exist. Should external actors press first for elections or for the adoption of a constitution? Should they push for presidential or parliamentary systems, federal or unitary states, proportional representation in parliament or majoritarian electoral systems? Should outsiders work with the state or society to press for change? No blueprint is universally recognized as the most effective way to promote democracy, and in fact, many even reject the idea that there can be a blueprint.

Disputes about the morality and effectiveness of the means, however, do not signal divergence on the ultimate objective. The community of democratic states has accepted the legitimacy of democracy promotion. In fact, within this community, the normative burden has shifted to those not interested in advocating democracy promotion; they are the state leaders who must explain why they are not doing more to advance democracy's cause worldwide. Obviously, the norm of democracy promotion is not universal because autocrats still control major chunks of the world. Few of these dictators would argue against democracy as a value or system of government, but they do rail against exporters of democracy as illegitimate, illegal, and imperial. Their shield is always state sovereignty, but, even though it still works as a normative defense, it is much less persuasive than it was 50 years ago.

Disaggregating Democracy Promotion from U.S. Foreign Policy

There is a genuine correlation between the advance of democracy as well as democratic norms worldwide and the growth of U.S. power. No country has done more to strengthen the norms and practices of democracy around the world than the United States. If Adolf Hitler had prevailed in World War II, democratic values would have survived, but few democratic regimes would have remained. Similarly, if the Cold War had ended with U.S. disintegration, rather than Soviet dissolution, command economies run by one-party dictatorships would be the norm and democracy the exception. Thus, even good ideas need powerful actors to defend and advance them.

At the same time, only the most arrogant or naïve trace the ebb and flow of democracy's advancement in the world by the successes and failures of U.S. foreign policy. Most U.S. presidents have defined democracy promotion as a strategic interest, but it is often not the most important or immediate objective. Furthermore, despite the fact that, in the long run, the growth of democracy around the world has made the United States more secure,[33] presidents in power rarely consider long-term gains. They frequently sacrifice strategic objectives such as democracy promotion for security or economic interests perceived to be more immediate and consequential. They have also been selective about when and where to promote democracy. Franklin Roosevelt was more interested in securing a democratic France than in supporting democracy in Poland. Ronald Reagan pushed for democratization more forcefully in the Communist world than in Africa. Bush seems passionate about supporting democrats in Iraq but indifferent to the struggles of democrats fighting authoritarian drift in Pakistan and Russia.

Moreover, even when U.S. presidents claim to be promoting democracy, the gap between rhetoric and action is sometimes so glaring that observers question the depth of the U.S. normative commitment to the democratic cause. Bush's postwar strategy for Iraq is a tragic example.[34] Especially when compared to the planning and resources devoted to ousting Saddam Hussein, the poor articulation and frequent alteration of the blueprint for regime reconstruction in Iraq, as well as the scarcity and slow delivery of resources for rebuilding, have compelled even the most fervent supporters of democratic regime change in Iraq to question the president's genuine commitment to the project. Within the wider region, Bush's policies to date have resulted in a net loss of freedom. Authoritarian leaders in Egypt, Iran, Uzbekistan, and Pakistan are stronger today than they were two years ago, while antidemocratic ideologues such as bin Laden also enjoy more support today than before Bush came to power.

Few believe that military force is justified to advance democratization.

Yet, the failure or even absence of U.S. foreign policy efforts to promote democracy cannot necessarily or automatically be equated with the undesirability of democracy as an objective in a given country or an indictment of the norm of democracy promotion in international affairs more generally. The United States is still the most powerful actor in the international system and therefore has more power than any other state or nonstate actor to promote or impede democratic development. At the same time, the United States is no longer the only force in the world pushing for democracy or helping to legitimize the promotion of democracy as an international norm.

Although the norm of democracy promotion may have originally risen in prominence because of U.S. hegemony, today the norm exhibits influence beyond and autonomy from the reach of U.S. power. This means that European leaders can criticize U.S. international actions but still remain committed to their own policies of democracy promotion. Most Arab intellectuals fervently denounce the U.S. occupation of Iraq and continued U.S. support for Israel and more generally would welcome a weaker U.S. presence in the Middle East. Some of these same critics of U.S. foreign policy, however, also applaud (privately, if not publicly) Bush's statements about the need for more democracy in their region. Turkish and Persian intellectuals can resist American cultural encroachments but still believe in competitive elections. Polls suggest that some of those Iraqis who detest the U.S. military presence in their country also embrace democracy. Majorities of Iraqi respondents both support democracy and did not support the U.S.-led war against

Saddam's regime.[35] The same was true of Serbian democratic opposition leaders who virulently denounced the U.S.-led bombing campaign against Slobodan Milosevic in the spring of 1999 but then accepted grants from U.S. democracy assistance organizations just a few months later in the effort to make Serbian presidential elections in the fall of 2000 free and fair. This is a positive sign for democracy's advancement worldwide: the "United States" and "democracy" are no longer synonymous.

Does the Norm of Promoting Democracy Matter?

A norm can long exist, perhaps even indefinitely, while being violated. In international affairs, antislavery norms enjoyed widespread recognition hundreds of years before the practice of slavery finally ended. Likewise, norms on self-determination and decolonization garnered international legitimacy well before the last great empire collapsed. Even though slavery and colonization have not been fully eradicated today, the emergence of norms against slavery and decolonization nonetheless has played a pivotal role in changing actual practices.

No blueprint to promote democracy exists.

Might dictatorship as a system of government follow the same path of near extinction as slavery and empire? Discerning a definitive answer to this question is not yet possible. Clearly, however, the normative basis for pushing history in this direction already exists, and democrats around the world have invoked this normative framework to strengthen their political power at home and legitimacy abroad. In the last two decades, democrats fighting apartheid in South Africa, communism in Poland, and dictatorship in the Philippines have invoked this international normative framework as a means to access resources and garner legitimacy while at the same time weaken the power and prestige of their autocratic enemies.

Influenced by this same set of values, governments in democratic states in turn have come to the aid of these democratic forces. Often, debate rages internally within democracies about the priority that these norms should play in the definition of national interests. The norms have become so powerful, however, that even elected head of states must sometimes execute foreign policies that they themselves would not advocate. For example, Reagan was compelled to introduce sanctions against apartheid South Africa in 1986 and the Bush administration had to cut assistance to Uzbekistan in 2004 because of its human rights abuses, documented by the Department of State with assistance from human rights NGOs.[36]

The democratic criteria for membership in the EU have become so institutionalized that individual leaders of states already in the EU now have limited power to impede the process of accession for aspiring states if certain standards are met.[37] Even Turkish membership in the EU—the prospect of which most current EU members find unsettling—now has momentum because Turkey has made enormous progress in meeting the EU's own normative standards on democracy and market reforms.[38] Thus, norms on democratic practices now permeate international affairs. At times, they can even influence the course of international politics in ways both independent of and unexpected by powerful states once thought to be the only actors of consequence on the world stage.

Notes

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9. Daniel Brumberg, "Beyond Liberalization?" *Wilson Quarterly* 28, no. 2 (Spring 2004): 47–56.
10. On the differences between electoral and liberal democracy, see Larry Diamond, *Developing Democracy: Toward Consolidation* (Baltimore, Md.: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999). On the gray zone between democracy and dictatorship, see

Thomas Carothers, "The End of the Transition Paradigm," *Journal of Democracy* 13, no. 1 (January 2002): 5–21.

11. Nikolay Marinov, "The Emergence and Survival of Competitive Elections Around the World 1977–2002: The International Dimension" (unpublished manuscript, Stanford University, Stanford, Calif., 2004).
12. For elaboration as to why, see Amartya Sen, "Democracy as a Universal Value," *Journal of Democracy* 10, no. 3 (July 1999): 3–17.
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