

External Promotion of Democracy in Fragile States

International Conference under the Auspices of the Heinrich Böll Foundation (hbf) and the German Institute for International and Security Affairs (SWP)

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External promotion of democracy is on the upswing throughout the world. Particularly in the wake of the attacks of September 11, 2001, promoting democracy, especially in the Middle East, has been aggressively portrayed as an integral part of United States foreign policy and security policy. The political goal of spreading democracy and freedom has been a recurrent theme in public statements by the Bush administration. While some regard the elections in Afghanistan (October 2004 and September 2005) and in Iraq (January 2005) as confirmation of this foreign policy course, debate about the limits of external promotion of democracy has intensified even within the United States. This is, in no small measure, due to the lack of progress that has been made in providing stability to the regions. However, it is undisputed that the United States acts as an important global "democratizer" - with both its foreign policy and its development policy.

The European Union has also declared the promotion of democracy and rule of law a top priority. The EU has achieved successes in its process of expansion: With its bargaining power, the EU has acted as a strong promoter of democracy among countries desiring to join it. However, with respect to its common foreign and security policy and its development policy, the EU has often been criticized as being too incoherent in promoting democracy; conflicting national interests of the member states and complication procedures limit the visibility and effectiveness of many programs. This also applies to bilateral relations. Germany is one example of how conflicting departmental jurisdiction and very different executive organizations make it difficult to achieve the goal of a common strategy in promoting democracy in the areas of foreign and development policy.

External promotion of democracy is also a high priority for many non-state actors, including many of the nongovernmental organizations (NGOs). Party-affiliated political foundations ("politische Stiftungen") in Germany have an explicit mandate to promote democracy at home and abroad.

The differences in the approaches of many national and multilateral democratizers (such as the UN, the World Bank, and NGOs) are attributable to an often fundamentally different understanding of the normative, ethical, and political implications of external promotion of democracy. Since the end of the cold war, democracy as an international norm is now more widely ac-

cepted than ever before, and most nation states accept its spread as a legitimate foreign policy goal. However, the procedures and methods of external promotion of democracy are the subject of controversy. This applies especially to post-conflict states in which security must be ensured at the same time as democratic structures are to be established.

Finally, there is usually a lack of agreement as to the form of democracy to be established. From "ethnic/regional democracies" to "delegative democracies," support has been provided to many regimes that, in the opinion of some critics, especially in those countries themselves, cannot rightly be termed "democratic." In the worst case, new political structures receiving foreign support can even exacerbate conflicts.

At a practical level, many external actors are also confronted with unintended side effects that may be associated with the process of democratizing or liberalizing what was once an autocratic regime. This may include the strengthening of nationalist groups or an increasing willingness on the part of socially or politically disadvantaged groups to resort to violence.

One topic to be discussed at the conference will be the recipients and target groups of external promotion of democracy. Here, opportunities for and limits of cooperation with traditional and/or religious actors will be explored. In light of the promotion practice of many external actors, the role and potential of local civil societies in the process of democratization shall be critically examined. Additionally, examples of post-conflict states that are highly fragmented along ethnic and regional lines will be analyzed to determine whether and under which conditions these societies might be able to achieve democratic consolidation.

The discussion of the various strategies, concepts, normative and ethical implications, and differing analyses of initial conditions "on the ground" will also feature prominently in the conference. Successes and "lessons learned" in each case will illustrate the chances and pitfalls facing external actors. The intent will be to exchange experience and to pass on knowledge of democratization processes and of approaches to promoting them externally, and to make this information available to a broader specialist audience.

As an actor in external promotion of democracy, the Heinrich Böll Foundation also hopes that this conference will aid in more precisely defining the Foundation's own task in this area, as well as exploring the opportunities and risks of this politically sensitive work.

The German Institute for International and Security Affairs has studied at length the challenges that fragile states and efforts at promoting democracy abroad pose to German foreign and security policy. The conference will offer an opportunity for a critical review of the Institute's analytical concepts in this field.

The following panel discussions are planned:

1. Stability vs. democracy? Fragile states in the context of military intervention, nation building, and democratization.

Key questions:

- What problems in democratization arise in the context of stability, nation building, and freedom and democracy?
- Can problems arise as a result of conflicting short-term and long-term interests of external and internal actors?
- Does the establishment or preservation of strong, efficient institutions conflict with the establishment of a pluralistic civil society?
- What are the difficulties when military intervention and civilian promotion of democracy are conducted simultaneously?
- What is the overall significance of sequencing? Which aspects are important in which phases?

2. External promotion of democracy in foreign and development policy: a realistic goal or utopia?

Key questions:

- Do the various actors have different strategies, concepts, or even goals?
- How do the goals and concepts of the state actors and non-state actors differ?
- To what extent does promotion of democracy as a "soft goal" conflict with concrete foreign policy interests? How can these conflicts be resolved?
- Are there "best practice" examples of successful external promotion of democracy (such as Kenya or Chile)? How can the success of external influence be verified?
- What are global factors in the "best practice"? What are the "lessons learned"?
- Under what conditions can external promotion of democracy succeed? How can it be brought into line with other foreign policy interests?

3. Democratization in ethnically or religiously fragmented societies: Challenges for external actors.

Key questions:

- What challenges must internal and external actors face in societies that are severely fragmented along ethnic/regional or religious lines?
- How can the danger of a rise of ethnic nationalist movements be countered in ethnically heterogeneous post-conflict states?
- What conditions are required to progress to a consolidated democracy? What can be learned from positive examples (such as India)?
- What can the role of external actors look like in such societies (for example in Bosnia or Ethiopia)?

4. Recipients and target groups: Where are the limits of external promotion of democracy?

Key questions:

- What opportunities and risks are involved in cooperating with special target groups of external promotion of democracy (civil society, parties, religious actors, traditional authorities)?
- What has been the experience with integrating religious, traditional, or formerly violent political actors?
- To what extent is it acceptable to support "undemocratic forces" in certain phases of a stabilization process? What risks does this pose for the democratization?
- Where are the "no go areas" and the limits of cooperation?

5. Final panel discussion: "Wrap-up" and "lessons learned": Conclusions regarding options for political action?

Key questions:

- What are the most important conclusions regarding options for political action?
- How can policy create an optimal framework for the external promotion of democracy?
- What conclusions can be drawn regarding non-state actors in promoting democracy?
- What specific conclusions and requirements may be defined for
 - a) German, European, and American policy?
 - b) international and national NGOs and foundations?