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Making the World Safe for Democracy?

Peter J. Schraeder

On April 2, 1917, President Woodrow Wilson argued before an extraordinary session of the United States Congress that “making the world safe for democracy” should serve as the guiding principle for U.S. involvement in World War I (Wilson, 1917). Although many of his detractors, who also favored U.S. entry into the conflict, criticized Wilson’s tendency to focus on a normative global good as opposed to a more realist analysis of U.S. national security interests, nearly one hundred years later democracy has emerged as the predominant form of political governance within the international system. This development has been strengthened by the emergence of an international norm that considers democracy promotion to be an accepted and necessary component of international behavior. The primary purpose of this chapter is to set out some general concluding trends and future prospects associated with what Wilson referred to as making the world safe for democracy. An initial section details four key debates that continue to set the parameters of contemporary democracy promotion efforts. The analysis subsequently focuses on the variety of constraints that potentially impede the success of such efforts.

Evolving Debates over Democracy Promotion

Several debates continue to characterize the general field of international democracy promotion. The most fundamental revolves around the normative issue of whether the international community should be actively involved in democracy promotion efforts. According to its most erstwhile proponents, democracy promotion should serve as the guiding foreign policy principle of the northern industrialized democracies (e.g., Diamond, 1995). Some even go so far as to argue that “exporting democracy” will allow the northern industrial democracies to “fulfill their destinies” within
the international system (e.g., Muravchik, 1992). Yet, even more sanguine observers, who recognize that it is neither very likely nor necessarily desirable that democracy promotion will override other foreign policy goals, cautiously argue that it should serve as a foreign policy priority of the northern industrialized democracies (e.g., Carothers, 1999: 16).

The opposition to democracy promotion is equally varied (for an overview, see Robinson, 1996). Arguments range from the isolationist perspective that the northern industrialized democracies should focus on their own affairs, including a recognition that other foreign priorities (e.g., economic self-interest and national security) should predominate, to the belief that the ability to influence the democratic character of other countries is in fact extremely limited. Others are more concerned with the negative consequences of democracy promotion programs, regardless of how well intentioned their proponents may be in the northern industrialized democracies. A corollary to this argument is that democracy promotion serves as a rhetorical veneer for the pursuit of economic self-interest on the part of the international system's most economically powerful countries, which also happen to be democracies. Some add a cultural dimension to this debate in denouncing democracy promotion as the attempted Westernization of non-Western peoples. In the extreme, these critics argue that democracy promotion essentially amounts to a form of "neo-colonialism" within the international system (Shaw, 1991).

The advocates of democracy promotion clearly have the edge in the normative debate. In its broadest sense, democracy promotion is perceived by policymakers within the northern industrialized democracies as a normative good that is worth pursuing (see Chapters 4 to 7). It is precisely for this reason that the last quarter of the twentieth century witnessed the emergence of a virtual "democracy promotion industry," the hallmark of which has been the willingness of governments from the northern industrialized democracies to channel vast amounts of democracy assistance to the various regions of the developing world. In the case of the United States, for example, it has been estimated that more than a half-billion dollars was devoted annually throughout the 1990s to some form of democracy promotion by the various agencies of the U.S. government (Carothers, 1999: 53).

An equally important component of the democracy promotion industry has been the growing involvement of a wide array of intergovernmental organizations (IGOs) and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs). The United Nations and its affiliated organs have progressively sought to codify democratic values and expand opportunities for democratic government throughout the world (see Chapter 9). As a result, international law has undergone a gradual transformation in favor of recognizing democracy as an "entitlement" to be both defended and promoted (Franck, 1994). The European Union should perhaps rethink their condition for membership to regionally binding (NAFTA), and political fora for the democracies' governments (see Chapter 10). This is not to link the civil society of intermediary to most coercive international relations. The European Union should consider the role of these fora for the democracies' governments (see Chapter 10). This is not to link the civil society of intermediary to most coercive international relations.
Europeans provide a powerful incentive for aspiring members to rethink their domestic political arrangements by making democracy a precondition for membership (see Chapter 8; see also Rupnik, 2000). Other regionally based IGOs, such as the North American Free Trade Association (NAFTA), appear to be following suit. A wide array of quasi-governmental political foundations and think tanks within the northern industrialized democracies both set the democracy promotion agendas of their respective governments and serve as important conduits for official government aid (see Chapter 11). These politically based foundations and think tanks, of course, are but one component of a larger network of NGOs that seeks to link the civil societies of the northern industrialized democracies with those of the developing world (Ottaway and Carothers, 2000).

The emergence of what constitutes essentially a global consensus in favor of democracy promotion has prompted a second debate among its proponents that revolves around the question: What forms of intervention should constitute part of the global arsenal in seeking democracy's spread? Toward this end, one can speak of a "spectrum of violence" in which a variety of interventionist tools have been employed in democracy's name. The most prominent of these interventionist tools, listed in order from the least to most coercive, are the following:

- The pursuit of *classic diplomacy*, ranging from a leader's use of the executive office as a "bully pulpit" for promoting democratic values abroad, to the dispatch of observer teams to oversee elections (Beigbeder, 1995; Kumar, 1998);
- The provision of *foreign aid* to fund activities ranging from the holding of democratic elections to the strengthening of civil society (Moore and Robinson, 1994; Crawford, 1997; Hook, 1998; Carothers, 1999; Ottaway and Carothers, 2000);
- The attachment of *political conditionalities* to various dimensions of the foreign policy relationship, as in the case of the EU making democracy a precondition for membership (Crawford, 1997; Rupnik, 2000);
- The adoption of *economic sanctions* to punish the undemocratic acts of authoritarian regimes and promote transitions to democracy, especially in countries where previously democratic governments have been illegally turned out of office (Elliott, 1992; Hendrickson, 1994–1995);
- The pursuit of *covert intervention* against authoritarian regimes, including assassination plots, coups d'état, election intervention, and propaganda and psychological warfare (Forsythe, 1992; James and Mitchell, 1995).
Conclusion

- The launching of paramilitary intervention, in which the fostering of a guerrilla insurgency is designed to overthrow an authoritarian regime through the proxy use of force (Schaedler, 1992);
- The use of military intervention to directly overthrow an authoritarian regime and install a democratic regime in its place (Meernik, 1996; Kegley and Hermann, 1997; Hermann and Kegley, 1998b; Peceny, 1999a, 1999b).

The least coercive end of the interventionist spectrum not surprisingly includes the least controversial and most widely adopted forms of international democracy promotion: the pursuit of classic diplomacy and the provision of foreign aid. Foreign aid in particular has emerged as the “most common and often most significant tool” in the realm of international democracy promotion (Burnell, 2000: 1; Carothers, 1999: 6). As one proceeds along the interventionist spectrum, questions increasingly are raised as to whether specific interventionist tools are both proper and effective in securing democratic norms. Many who question whether democracy should or can be forced upon another country not surprisingly are critical of the middle tier of the interventionist spectrum, in which political conditionality and economic sanctions are imposed on another country in the name of democratic values. This middle tier nonetheless enjoys widespread support, particularly within the policymaking establishments of the northern industrialized democracies, as a useful “middle road” in between the two coercive ends of the interventionist spectrum. The most coercive end of the interventionist spectrum, which includes the use of covert, paramilitary, and military force, not surprisingly generates the greatest level of concern among many supporters of democracy promotion. For these individuals, the use of force is simply antithetical to the democratic ideal.

A third debate focuses on what should constitute the proper guidelines for democracy promotion. Several questions are important in this regard. Are unilateral interventions more effective, or should attempts be made to foster multilateral initiatives? Although the last quarter of the twentieth century clearly demonstrated that the vast majority of democracy promotion efforts have constituted unilateral interventions, recent scholarship has underscored the promise associated with multilateral efforts (e.g., see Carothers, 1999; Burnell, 2000). How important is the degree of support for such actions within the general population of the target country? If such support is lacking, how justified is foreign action regardless of the undemocratic nature of the regime in question? What about the regional dimension? Should democracy promotion policies be pursued in the absence of support among the regional neighbors of the target country? Finally, what should be the roles of international law and support for democracy promotion efforts within the wider international community? In short, the challenge for the international community will be both legitimate and moves to the more potent cases of U.S. administration du Afghanistan, who and the withdrawal in Nicaragua, a revolutionary Sandinista conflict. The contras was couchers,” leading many U.S. support for the 146; see also Wha observed as a democ were principally doing world during Washington’s expe provide some clues as they conten motion:

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leng for the international community revolves around determining those circumstances under which intervention in favor of democracy promotion will be both legitimate and effective, an increasingly difficult task as one moves to the more coercive end of the interventionist spectrum.

Some potential guidelines emerge from a brief comparison of two cases of U.S. paramilitary intervention that were launched by the Reagan administration during the 1980s: support for the mujahedin guerrillas in Afghanistan, who sought the overthrow of a Soviet-installed dictatorship and the withdrawal of occupying Soviet troops; and support for the contras in Nicaragua, a coalition of guerrilla groups that sought to overthrow a revolutionary Sandinista regime that had achieved power after an extended civil conflict. The Reagan administration’s aid to the mujahedin and the contras was couched in the rhetoric of providing support to “freedom fighters,” leading many to label these paramilitary interventions as examples of U.S. support for democracy promotion (e.g., see Muravchik, 1992: 144–146; see also Whitehead, 1996: 8–9). Although this rhetoric in reality served as a democratic veneer for a wide variety of paramilitary efforts that were principally designed to overthrow pro-Soviet regimes in the developing world during the last decade of the Cold War (Schraeder, 1992), Washington’s experiences with the mujahedin and the contras nonetheless provide some clues as to what guidelines should be followed by policymakers as they contemplate intervention abroad, inclusive of democracy promotion:

- **Determining whether a policy enjoys popular support within the target country.** The popular or unpopular nature of the target regime is especially crucial to successful intervention. In Afghanistan, popular feelings were almost unanimous in desiring a Soviet withdrawal from their country, and traditional Afghani nationalism ensured a steady stream of recruits to carry out a jihad (holy war) against what were perceived as “infidel” invaders (i.e., nonbelievers of Islam). In Nicaragua, however, the Sandinistas were ushered into power on the back of a popularly based revolutionary movement, whereas the contras, primarily because of the great number of sympathizers with the former ruling (Somoza) family dynasty, were rejected by the majority of the population as an artificial creation of Washington.

- **Building on a coalition of regional and international support.** A second gauge of the legitimacy and the probability of success of an interventionist policy is its level of regional and international support. In Afghanistan, the mujahedin enjoyed overwhelming regional and international support. U.S. efforts not only were supported by traditional regional allies, such as Pakistan and Saudi Arabia, but also by communist China and revolutionary Iran. Moreover, a 1987
vote in the UN General Assembly that overwhelmingly called for a Soviet withdrawal (123 voted in favor, 19 were opposed, and 11 abstained) clearly indicated the substantial level of support enjoyed by the mujahedin. U.S. efforts in Nicaragua, on the contrary, were opposed by the majority of nations within the region as well as within the international system, most notably U.S. allies in Europe. Most significant were Latin American denunciations of U.S. paramilitary efforts to overthrow the Sandinistas. Indeed, the Contadora group, led by Mexico, and several Central American countries, led by President Oscar Arias of Costa Rica, preferred diplomatic initiatives in seeking an accommodation with the Sandinista regime.

Constructing policy within the framework of international law. Although international law prohibiting intervention may be ignored with relative impunity by countries pursuing self-interested policies, there is no denying its importance as a legitimizing factor, as to what goals and actions are acceptable within the consensual framework of international law. In the case of Afghanistan, accepted precepts of international law clearly branded as illegal the Soviet invasion and occupation of that country, legitimizing aid to guerrillas seeking to force a Soviet withdrawal. In the case of Nicaragua, however, the International Court of Justice (ICJ) ruled that U.S. support of the contras violated international norms and subsequently ordered the immediate cessation of such activities—an edict the Reagan administration chose to ignore by claiming that the court had no jurisdiction to rule in the matter. “When seen retrospectively,” explains Christopher Joyner (1989: 203), “it becomes clear that by turning away from the court, the United States lost legal credibility, appeared diplomatically disingenuous, and allowed Nicaragua to gain a propaganda advantage in view of its lawful appeal to the international legal forum.”

Although the combination of these three guidelines cannot, of course, guarantee a successful interventionist episode, they at least enhance the possibility for success and most certainly ensure that any democracy promotion effort will enjoy a high degree of legitimacy at the local, regional, and international levels. If we apply these three guidelines to the international community’s response to the authoritarian apartheid regime that ruled South Africa from 1948 to 1994, for example, it becomes clear why the international community’s imposition of a vast array of cultural, economic, political, and military sanctions was both successful and legitimate: (1) According to accepted precepts of international law, the apartheid regime was in violation of numerous international conventions and treaties concerning the treatment of its majority black population, the occupation of the territory (Namibia), and majority of the population desired an end to white minority rule. (2) The international community did its best to bring about a more inclusive political system, albeit one that did not satisfy the preferences of all Africanists in the region. (3) Schraeder (2000) focused on the civil war, such as the liberation of Angola, and the growth of civil society, such as the growth of democratic institutions within the region.

As part of the process of democratization in the region, the process of democratization in Africa has been an important factor in the spread of democracy. However, it has been argued that democracy is not simply a matter of the third world early to offer evidence of change, but rather is a more complex process that takes into account the specific circumstances of each country. Still others have argued that democracy is a process that is more complex than simply providing a set of rules and structures for governance. The process of democratization in Africa is complex and varies greatly from country to country, and the process of democratization in Africa has been an important factor in the spread of democracy. However, it has been argued that democracy is not simply a matter of the third world early to offer evidence of change, but rather is a more complex process that takes into account the specific circumstances of each country. Still others have argued that democracy is a process that is more complex than simply providing a set of rules and structures for governance. The process of democratization in Africa is complex and varies greatly from country to country, and the process of democratization in Africa has been an important factor in the spread of democracy.
the territory of South West Africa (the current independent country of Namibia), and military intervention in neighboring countries; (2) the vast majority of the South African people, most notably its black majority, desired an end to the apartheid regime and its replacement with a more inclusive (albeit not necessarily democratic) regime; and (3) the imposition of comprehensive sanctions was overwhelmingly supported both regionally in Africa and throughout the international system. The key to the success of the international sanctions effort, which was one of many factors that contributed to South Africa's transition to democracy in 1994, was the emergence of a multilateral anti-apartheid coalition that transcended the specific ideological, religious, and security interests of individual countries (Klotz, 1995).

A final debate revolves around whether the third wave of democratization is and will continue to be marked by the further spread and consolidation of democratic regimes, or if setbacks in individual countries during the 1990s are indicative of democratic decay that will accelerate in the future. Africanists who are more optimistic, for example, often point to South Africa's transition to a multiparty democracy in 1994 as proof of the growing strength of a democratic "renaissance" on the African continent (e.g., Schraeder, 2000). Africanists who are more pessimistic, however, have focused on the rise of authoritarian warlords in African countries beset by civil war, such as Sierra Leone (e.g., see Reno, 1998). Such debates are fairly typical and in fact intensifying within the area-studies literatures in general, as regional specialists attempt to make sense of democracy trends within their specific regions.

As part of his elegant treatment of this question, Samuel Huntington notes that the first two waves of democratization within the international system were followed by "reverse waves" of democratic breakdown, and that democracy's third wave more likely than not will follow this same pattern (Huntington, 1991). Larry Diamond, the coeditor of the *Journal of Democracy* and one of the most noted American observers of democracy's spread, applies Huntington's concept of reverse waves to one case study—democratic breakdown in Pakistan in 1999—to provide a sobering analysis of the third wave's prospects. He concludes that, although it is still too early to offer either an optimistic or a pessimistic projection, Pakistan constitutes one of twenty strategic "swing" states whose evolution "will heavily determine the future of democracy in the world" (Diamond, 2000: 97).1 Still others have concentrated on undertaking statistical manipulations of democratic trends in all countries of the world. One of the most recent and thoughtful statistical analyses of this genre suggests that the metaphor of reverse waves itself needs to be reconsidered: "Many researchers simply expect a reverse wave in the near future and are waiting for it because they think that each wave is inevitably followed by a reverse wave," explains
Renske Doorenspleet (2000: 401). According to his statistical analysis, however, the answer to the question—"Are we on the edge of such a reverse wave?"—is no. The more likely short-term trend will be that of a "democratic equilibrium" in which the "overall number of democracies in the world neither increases or decreases" (Doorenspleet, 2000: 401).

The debate over democratic consolidation versus democratic decay at the bare minimum has fostered the sharpening of the analytical tools designed to understand the process of democratization. An ironic outcome of this debate is that both positions have been seized upon by democracy promoters to urge the northern industrialized democracies to take a more proactive role in fostering democracy throughout the world. Scholarly analyses citing the consolidation of democratic practices are heralded as proof of the need to continue and even intensify already successful democracy promotion efforts. Scholarly analyses citing the decay of democratic practices are equally brandished as demonstrative of the need for greater involvement on the part of the northern industrialized democracies, so as to prevent even further slippage in democratic gains. In short, democracy promoters simultaneously use both sides of the consolidation-decay debate to favor their position.

Constraints on Effective Democracy Promotion

The beginning of the twenty-first century has been marked by the strengthening of an international norm that favors intervention in the pursuit of democracy promotion on behalf of the international community. The widespread acceptance of this international norm is clearly demonstrated by its embodiment in the activities of the United Nations, the largest and most far-reaching international organization that enjoys almost universal membership of independent nation-states within the international system. As aptly demonstrated by Christopher C. Joyner in Chapter 9, the UN has served as the bellwether of an international norm that considers democracy promotion to be an accepted and necessary component of international behavior.

- As an institutional organization, the UN was conceived and constructed on fundamental democratic principles. The UN Charter is clearly grounded in democratic values and aspirations, and most UN organs, with the notable exception of the Security Council, operate mainly through democratic decisionmaking procedures and processes.
- The UN actively promotes democracy through its norm-creating ability. UN organs have promulgated considerable international law...
embodying cardinal principles and values of democracy, especially through human rights treaties and the progressive codification of democratic principles into international legal norms.

- The UN actively facilitates democratic principles and institutions internationally. It does so by promoting a democratic culture in states through electoral assistance (including monitoring and verifying national elections), holding referenda, and sponsoring plebiscites—all of which foster freer and fairer opportunities for the democratic process to work more openly and efficiently in newly emerging national societies.

The future success of global democracy is nonetheless potentially constrained by several realities of democracy promotion efforts to date. An important starting point is an examination of the assumptions that drive the democracy promotion efforts of state and non-state actors within the international system. Specifically, academics and policymakers typically link the emergence of democracy with other political-military and socioeconomic outcomes that subsequently become part of the so-called democratic environment presumably already achieved by the northern industrialized democracies and aspired to by the developing world. Among the major outcomes typically associated with the spread of democracy, which in turn have strengthened arguments in favor of democracy promotion, are the following:

- The emergence of a more stable international system—the so-called democratic-peace hypothesis—in which democracies do not go to war with each other;
- Greater levels of internal domestic political stability, in which potential and existing conflicts are resolved peacefully;
- The emergence of a more prosperous international system, due to the greater proclivity of democracies to engage in free trade;
- Rising levels of national economic growth, typically measured in terms of rising gross domestic product (GDP) or gross national product (GNP);
- The promotion of social development, typically measured in terms of a decline in social inequalities based on caste, ethnicity, race, religion, or gender;
- Greater protection for human rights, such that individuals and groups at the bare minimum are able to lead lives free from state coercion or persecution.

The empirical evidence linking the spread of democracy with these various outcomes is far from conclusive and, in some cases, suggests out-
comes contrary to the expectations of democracy promoters. The democratic-peace hypothesis, for example, which embodies the belief of northern policymakers that democracy promotion will lead to a more peaceful international system, is often characterized in the scholarly literature as the closest one can get to an "iron-clad" law in international relations theory (see Chapter 2). Although this hypothesis holds for the most part when one focuses on the most coercive form of intervention—the launching of direct military intervention by one democracy against another—it is empirically less sound as one descends the spectrum of interventionist tools available to democratic states. The historical record clearly demonstrates that the United States launched a wide number of covert interventions against democratically elected governments during the Cold War and in at least three cases—Iran (1953), Guatemala (1954), and Chile (1973)—played a key role in the overthrow of those governments (Forsythe, 1992; Russett, 1993: 120–124).

The often overly optimistic expectations associated with the other dimensions of the democratic environment must also be tempered by the historical record. As concerns the ability of democracies to quell domestic violence, extensive research has demonstrated that both consolidated democracies and extreme dictatorships exhibit low levels of domestic violence—the former due to peaceful avenues of conflict resolution and the latter due to strong state control—with the greatest level of internal conflict often found in countries making the transition from one form of governance to another (Taylor, forthcoming; see also Snyder, 2000). In the economic realm, recent research does suggest that democracies demonstrate a greater proclivity to engage in free trade, thereby potentially contributing to a more prosperous international system, but it refutes the claim that democracies do better than nondemocracies in terms of ensuring rising levels of national economic growth (see Chapter 3). Whether democracies do a better job of protecting human rights depends on how those rights are defined: the answer is yes when human rights are defined in terms of their civil and political components, including the right to free speech and the ability to vote in free and fair elections, but no when they are defined in terms of social and economic rights, including access to adequate housing, medical care, and economic security (Arat, 1991). Democracies typically have not fared well in reducing social inequalities, and in some cases—such as the transitions to democracy in Eastern Europe, in which female representation in national legislatures has actually declined—democraties have actually fared worse than their authoritarian predecessors (Saxonberg, 2000; see also Reynolds, 1999). In short, policymakers within the northern industrialized democracies would be well advised to engage in democracy promotion only if democracy is perceived to be a noble good in and of itself, rather than as a means to something else.

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Democracy promotion, however, has never served as the principal foreign policy interest of the northern industrialized democracies. In each of the four country studies examined in this book, democracy promotion has played at best a secondary role behind more self-interested foreign policy pursuits. U.S. foreign policy during the Cold War era was principally driven by strategic interests derived from an intense, ideologically based competition with the former Soviet Union. Although the pursuit of economic interests, most notably the expansion of U.S. trade and investment in all regions of the world, has gradually replaced fading ideological interests during the post–Cold War era, the Bush administration’s antiterrorism campaign in the aftermath of the September 11, 2001, terrorist acts clearly demonstrates the continued salience of strategic interests in U.S. foreign policy. Japanese and German foreign policies are similar in that both have been clearly dominated by the pursuit of economic self-interest. As rising economic superpowers with the world’s second and third largest GNPs, Japan and Germany have pursued neomercantilist foreign policies in their quest for global economic supremacy. In the case of the Nordic countries, largely progressive Nordic political cultures have fostered the centrality of humanitarian-based foreign policies highly infused with ideological values. Specifically, the Nordics have demonstrated an overriding foreign policy predilection to support progressive, socialist-oriented regimes in the developing world (see Schraeder, Hook, and Taylor, 1998).

The secondary status of democracy promotion in the foreign policy hierarchies of the northern industrialized democracies has ensured that whenever democracy clashes with more central foreign policy interests, democracy promotion is compromised. Whenever the ideal of democracy clashed with the U.S. national security objective of containing communism during the Cold War, for example, both Democratic and Republican administrations were willing to downplay the authoritarian shortcomings of a variety of U.S. allies, such as Ferdinand Marcos of the Philippines, Haile Selassie of Ethiopia, and Shah Mohammad Reza Pahlavi of Iran, in favor of their strong support for U.S. anticommunist policies. This trend continued during the post–Cold War era, as witnessed by the tendency of Democratic and Republican administrations alike to emphasize U.S. strategic and especially economic interests over democracy promotion in the U.S.-Chinese foreign policy relationship (see Chapter 7).

The case of China is equally illuminating as concerns Japanese and German foreign policy priorities. Germany was the first European country to make an official break with European Union-sponsored sanctions imposed in the aftermath of the Tiananmen Square massacre. This break was signaled by President Helmut Kohl’s official head-of-state visit to China in 1996—including a much criticized visit to a garrison of the People’s Liberation Army (PLA) in the Chinese town of Tianjin (see
Chapter 5). For its part, Japan remained unwilling to publicly criticize, let alone join in any sanctions campaign against the Chinese government after Tiananmen, a reflection of the determination of Japanese leaders to scrupulously avoid any actions that could threaten Japan's lucrative trading relationships in Asia and other parts of the developing world (see Chapter 6).

Contradictions have also emerged in Nordic democracy promotion policies. Especially during the Cold War, when the normative goal of promoting democracy clashed with the Nordic ideological imperative of supporting progressive regimes, Nordic governments were willing to downplay the authoritarian shortcomings of a variety of Nordic aid recipients, such as Julius Nyerere of Tanzania, Mengistu Haile Mariam of Ethiopia, and Robert Mugabe of Zimbabwe, in favor of their strong support for progressive national policies. The case of Sweden is particularly illuminating. A foreign policy approach known as "assist rather than abandon" often characterized Sweden's unwillingness to terminate foreign aid relationships even in cases of severe human rights violations. As aptly demonstrated by Liisa Laakso in Chapter 4, this was particularly true when aid recipients had established progressive socialist or marxist regimes.

The interaction between the foreign policy interests of the northern industrialized democracies and how their policymakers perceive the nature of the democratic environment is critical to understanding the nature of the democracy promotion policies enacted by each of the four case studies of this book (see Table 12.1). In the case of the United States, an overriding focus on security interests and ensuring both domestic and international stability has fostered an approach that emphasizes the political liberalization of developing countries. U.S. policymakers generally agree that stability is best served by fostering a regularized political process that has as its basis the holding of free and fair elections, as well as the nurturing of effective state institutions, most notably an independent legislature and judiciary and a civilian-controlled military. One result of this approach is that U.S. policymakers are often prone to portray even significantly flawed election results, especially in countries closely allied to the United States, as nonetheless constituting "important starting points" in the transition to democracy, which can be improved in later rounds of more-democratic elections. It is precisely for this reason that critics have often criticized U.S. democracy promotion as placing too much faith in the election process, as well as favoring a "top-down" approach to democratization that is too elite-centered (Carothers, 1999: 136–140).

German and especially Japanese policymakers remain hesitant to stress the political dimensions of democracy promotion (see Chapters 5 and 6). An overriding focus on economic interests and the need to ensure both national economic growth and a prosperous international system has
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<th>Principal Foreign Policy Thrust</th>
<th>Principal Assumptions Associated with the Democratic Environment</th>
<th>Principal Targets of Democracy Promotion Programs</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>SECURITY INTERESTS</strong></td>
<td><strong>STABLE INTERNATIONAL SYSTEM</strong> (democratic peace hypothesis)</td>
<td><strong>EMPHASIS ON POLITICAL LIBERALIZATION</strong> (opening up the political system)</td>
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<td>(political-military stability)</td>
<td><strong>INTERNAL DOMESTIC POLITICAL STABILITY</strong> (peaceful resolution of conflicts)</td>
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<td>• <strong>EFFECTIVE AND INDEPENDENT STATE INSTITUTIONS</strong> (legislature, judiciary, and civilian-controlled military)</td>
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**KEY EXAMPLE: UNITED STATES**

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<th>Economic Interests (trade and investment)</th>
<th>Prosperous International System (free trade)</th>
<th>Emphasis on Economic Liberalization (opening up the economic system)</th>
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<td><strong>NATIONAL ECONOMIC GROWTH</strong> (rising GDP and GNP)</td>
<td>• <strong>FREE MARKET ECONOMY</strong> (reduced barriers to free trade and privatization of parastatals)</td>
<td>• <strong>GOOD GOVERNANCE ON THE PART OF &quot;DEVELOPMENTAL STATES&quot;</strong> (transparency, accountability, and efficiency)</td>
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**KEY EXAMPLE: GERMANY AND JAPAN**

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<th>Humanitarian Interests (social welfare)</th>
<th>Social Development (reducing levels of socioeconomic inequalities)</th>
<th>Emphasis on Social Liberalization (opening up the social system)</th>
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<td><strong>PROTECTION FOR HUMAN RIGHTS</strong> (especially social rights)</td>
<td>• <strong>STRENGTHENING CIVIL SOCIETY</strong> (popular participation in decisionmaking)</td>
<td>• <strong>SOCIAL WELFARE PROGRAMS</strong> (e.g., gender equality)</td>
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**KEY EXAMPLE: NORDIC COUNTRIES**
instead prompted these policymakers to approach democracy promotion from the vantage point of economic liberalization. Developing countries are encouraged to embrace a free-market economy that is based on reducing barriers to free trade and selling off failing and inefficient parastatals. Toward this end, democracy aid should be targeted toward fostering “good governance” (transparency, accountability, and efficiency) within “developmental states” (strong, unitarian, centralizing, and often authoritarian states perceived as important precursors to economic development and subsequent political liberalization). This approach has been criticized as placing too much stock in the ability of the free market to lead enlightened despots to transform their authoritarian societies. As is the case with the U.S. approach to democracy promotion, those of the Germans and the Japanese have also been criticized as being too elite-centered.

In the case of the Nordic countries, an ideologically infused focus on humanitarian interests (including a more recent focus on the protection of human rights) has fostered an approach to democratization that emphasizes the social liberalization of developing countries. The Nordic vision of democracy promotion, unlike the top-down approaches of the Americans, Germans, and Japanese, is based on a bottom-up, popular approach that traditionally has favored the strengthening of civil society. In this regard, Nordic policymakers are strongly committed to making social welfare programs intent on reducing socioeconomic inequalities the centerpiece of democracy promotion. Given the prominent role of women at all levels of political power within Nordic political systems, it should come as no surprise that programs devoted to reducing gender inequalities are especially prominent in Nordic democracy promotion. Indeed, as Laakso notes in Chapter 4, “gender analysis is mandated in every development project or program at the earliest possible point.”

Despite the divergent nature of national interests, a certain degree of convergence has occurred in democracy promotion efforts. The Nordic countries and especially the United States have increasingly recognized the importance of paying attention to the economic dimension of the democratization process. Japanese policymakers have committed Japan to playing an enhanced role in the security dimension, most notably through involvement in a variety of conflict resolution and peacekeeping missions under the auspices of the UN Security Council. And Germany and the United States have significantly strengthened their democracy promotion portfolios in a wide range of activities designed to strengthen civil societies in developing countries. These changes notwithstanding, the essential thrust of democracy promotion policies undertaken individually by each of our four country studies basically remains the same: a U.S. emphasis on political liberalization in the pursuit of security interests; a German and Japanese focus on economic liberalization as reflective of economic interests; and a Nordic emphasis fare dimension of.

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The principal dilemma for policymakers revolves around the degree to which the policies of the northern industrialized democracies can be coordinated. Increasingly heralded among many within both the academic and policymaking worlds as the key to consolidating the gains associated with the third wave of democratization, policy coordination remains elusive at best (e.g., see Carothers, 1999; Burnell, 2000). Unlike their U.S. and to a lesser degree Nordic counterparts, German and Japanese policymakers are extremely reluctant to impose economic sanctions to punish recalcitrant regimes. German, Japanese, and Nordic policymakers similarly have been highly critical of the U.S. willingness to use even more coercive measures, including covert, paramilitary, and military intervention, in the name of democracy promotion.

Even something seemingly as simple as systematically assessing the human rights record of a developing country as the means for coordinating policy is fraught with obstacles. In the case of the United States, for example, the State Department compiles an annual assessment of human rights practices (Country Reports on Human Rights Practices) that is submitted to and jointly published with the Committee on International Relations in the U.S. House of Representatives and the Committee on Foreign Relations in the U.S. Senate; these reports emphasize assessment of political rights and civil liberties. In sharp contrast, the Japanese government neither compiles nor publishes any such list, an indication of their rejection in principle of attaching political conditions to foreign aid. Although the Nordics jointly publish an annual assessment of human rights practices (Yearbook on Human Rights in Development), Nordic policymakers are quick to note important differences and therefore perceived problems with the U.S. approach. The most notable is that the Nordic assessment is compiled by independent research institutes to avoid the perceived inherent bias in government-prepared reports (as in the U.S. case). The German government initially disagreed with the qualitative nature of both the U.S. and Nordic approaches, attempting at first to compile a statistical checklist that would facilitate an unbiased ranking of human rights abusers. This approach was ultimately dropped in favor of a largely disregarded assessment that simply focuses on very general political trends. In short, if agreement is unlikely in terms of classifying all but perhaps the most egregious violators of human rights (e.g., clear-cut cases of government-sponsored genocide), how difficult will it be to formulate common policies?

A further area of convergence within many northern industrialized democracies has been the creation of quasi-government institutes often referred to as political foundations. As James M. Scott notes in Chapter 11, such government-funded foundations, although technically independent,
often play an important role in advancing the democracy promotion agendas of their respective governments. From the perspectives of the governments that created them, the political foundations allow for the pursuit of democracy promotion efforts that otherwise might not be possible. Specifically, governments often turn to these foundations in three sets of circumstances: when time is of the essence and a reliance on official channels would require lengthy bureaucratic debates and reviews; when a recipient country desires democracy aid but wishes to avoid the stigma and domestic political ramifications of receiving such aid from a particular donor government; and when a donor government wishes to undertake a democracy promotion initiative but for whatever reason seeks to avoid the legal and political ramifications of direct intervention in the target country (see Chapter 11). The desire to ensure political flexibility on the part of donor governments is particularly demonstrated by the German model of politische stiftungen (political foundations), which in turn inspired the creation of a similar model in the United States. “In those cases where, due to strategic, economic, or diplomatic concerns, the ‘official’ hands of the German government are tied, political foundations serve as the ideal vehicles for democracy promotion,” explain Jürgen Rüland and Nikolaus Werz in Chapter 5. “Moreover, in case the political foundations go too far and their programs collide with the host government, the German government can reject responsibility for their activities and therefore avoid any rupture in official relations.”

The political foundations and a wide variety of northern-based NGOs and civil society groups nonetheless constitute part of a growing web of international interaction—what Scott refers to in Chapter 11 as a “transnational democracy issue network”—that informs, guides, and in some cases structures the democracy promotion efforts of the northern industrialized democracies. In this regard, their most important function is the generation of new ideas and approaches that otherwise would not have emerged from a solely state-centric approach to democracy promotion. “This contribution, which includes policy recommendations and technical advice, continues to expand our knowledge base about the techniques, procedures, and problems of democracy promotion,” explains Scott. “In effect, these actors behave much like an epistemic community in the issue area of democracy promotion, developing specialized knowledge, expertise, and policy preferences and disseminating them through various national and international channels.” The activities of these groups are ultimately hindered, however, by their lack of an independent financial base capable of funding large-scale democratization programs. At least for the near future, democracy promotion efforts that require substantial infusions of external financial support invariably will remain dependent on the interests and generosity of governments within the northern industrialized democracies.
The continued centrality of states in international democracy promotion is clearly demonstrated by their impact on the policies of regional organizations in this realm. The most noteworthy case in this regard is the European Union, which has made democracy a precondition of future membership. As aptly noted by Gorm Rye Olsen in Chapter 8, the democracy promotion activities of the EU and other regional organizations are significantly constrained by the interests and concerns of their individual members. The requirement of achieving consensus prior to taking action has ensured that recent policies have been representative of the lowest common denominator of the extremely varied foreign policy interests of the EU’s fifteen member states. Equally important, there is a tendency for EU democracy promotion policies to follow the foreign policy lead of one of its members, if that member “demonstrates a special interest or historical involvement in a particular country” (see Chapter 8). It is precisely for this reason that the EU response to the derailment of democracy in Algeria during the 1990s, which included strong support for rather than criticism of the military regime led by General Lamine Zeroual, essentially reflected the foreign policy interests of France, the former colonial power. Indeed, the tainted national elections of 1997, not surprisingly won by Zeroual, ultimately were characterized and legitimized by an EU election observer group as a “milestone in Algerian political history” (see Chapter 8).

The continued centrality of state interests in international democracy promotion is also demonstrated by the role of international financial institutions in this realm. As demonstrated by Béatrice Hibou’s examination of the World Bank in Chapter 10, the democracy promotion policies of international financial institutions are clearly reflective of the capitalist norms promoted by the major northern industrialized democracies, which also happen to be the international system’s leading capitalist powers. These institutions, however, are predominately focused on the economic dimensions of the democratization process, as witnessed by the imposition of a wide array of structural adjustment programs designed to promote liberal, free-market economies in which the state plays a limited role. Despite rhetoric to the contrary, there exists a clear tendency for these institutions to “circumscribe” (i.e., downplay) the political dimensions of the democratization process. In the case of the World Bank, for example, such an approach is theoretically mandated by its founding charter, which prohibits interference in the internal politics of member states. The “unintended” impacts of World Bank policies on the political systems of developing countries are nonetheless substantial, most notably in terms of the tendency of liberalization reforms often to reinforce existing power structures in favor of incumbent (and often less-than-democratic) elites and governing coalitions (see Chapter 10).
Conclusion

The political contours of the contemporary international system in many respects reflect President Wilson's liberal democratic vision of making the world safe for democracy. The global spread of democratic forms of governance has reached levels unparalleled in global history. This development has been strengthened by the rise of a far-reaching democracy promotion industry that is equally unparalleled in global history. State and non-state actors alike have vigorously contributed to the emergence of a new international norm that considers democracy promotion to be an accepted and necessary component of international behavior. As a result, debates within both the academic and the policymaking worlds have gradually shifted from a cold-war focus on whether democracy constitutes the best form of governance, to whether and to what degree state and non-state actors should be actively involved in democracy promotion efforts. Although a wide number of debates, such as those dealing with the precise forms of intervention that should constitute part of the global democratic arsenal, continue to divide the northern industrialized democracies, the advocates of democracy promotion clearly have the edge in both the academic and policymaking worlds.

A second important conclusion of this study is that the future success of global democracy is nonetheless potentially constrained by several realities of democracy promotion efforts to date. In addition to the fact that democracy promoters often maintain overly optimistic assumptions concerning the linkages between the emergence of democracy and other politico-military and socioeconomic outcomes associated with the so-called democratic environment, democracy promotion on the part of the northern industrialized countries is often compromised when the normative goal of democracy clashes with other foreign policy interests. Competing foreign policy interests among the northern industrialized democracies has also affected democracy promotion efforts, most notably in terms of hindering effective cooperation. Such differences have carried over into a wide number of non-state actors, such as the EU, where democracy promotion policies are representative of the least-common denominator of the varied interests of its fifteen member states. Indeed, despite the rise of an international democracy network among a wide variety of NGOs and IGOs presumably beyond the reach of individual state interests, democracy promotion efforts at the beginning of the twenty-first century largely remain dominated by northern industrialized states. In short, states remain the key actors in democracy promotion.

One simple fact, however, provides the basis for optimism as concerns the future of democracy promotion efforts, even in the absence of enhanced cooperation either among the northern industrialized democracies or...
between state and non-state actors. Each wave of democratization—regardless of whether one counts three, four, or even more waves that have occurred in the last two hundred years—has contributed to the further strengthening of the international democratic context within which individual democracy promotion policies are pursued. Specifically, the international democratic environment at the beginning of the twenty-first century is much stronger and more nurturing and protective of existing democratic practices than was the case at the beginning of either the nineteenth or twentieth centuries. Democratic reversals and thus the decline of democracy promotion efforts are much more unlikely in today’s international system.

Note

1. The “swing” states, divided by region, are: Africa (Nigeria, South Africa); Asia (Bangladesh, China, India, Indonesia, Singapore, South Korea, Taiwan, Thailand); Eastern Europe (Poland, Russia); Middle East (Iran, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Turkey); Oceania (none); Western Europe (none); Western Hemisphere (Argentina, Brazil, Colombia).