
DEMOCRACY AND WORLD ORDER

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Architects of a post-cold war world order would do well to reflect on the precarious tilt of the *campanile* of the cathedral in Pisa, Italy: whatever the merits of structural integrity and aesthetic appeal, a durable construct must rest on a stable foundation. Speculation about the emerging post-cold war world order tends to focus on the redistribution of military and economic power in an international system wrought by an ascendant Germany and Japan, a descendant Soviet Union, and a United States showing signs of both. Too little attention has been paid to the foundations of this emerging structure—those factors of politics and values that determine to a significant degree the parameters of statecraft. The collapse of totalitarianism and the reinvigoration of the liberal ideal in the 1990s mark the end of a century-long competition between two opposing views of economics, politics, and humanity. Democracy's resurgence is profound. This trend will help determine the limits and extend the possibilities of the post-cold war era.

A Democratic Revolution

For most observers, the fall of the Berlin Wall in November 1989 symbolized the democratic renewal. It brought unity to a democratic Germany, set in motion a chain of events that helped Central Europe escape its authoritarian and totalitarian straitjacket, and met Ronald Reagan's key test of Mikhail Gorbachev's sincerity as a reformer. But the collapse of communism in Europe and the gripping rollercoaster of reform in the Soviet Union have distracted observers from what is in fact a much broader trend. In 1989 alone, democracy enjoyed remarkable successes. Countries as diverse as Taiwan, Nicaragua, and Namibia underwent significant political openings that year, while the two largest democracies in the world—India and Brazil—conducted sharply contested elections that resulted in the peaceful transfer of power to new civilian governments.

But 1989 was only the most dramatic year in a decade of rapid, broad-based movement toward democracy. Outside Europe, this movement was perhaps most dramatic in Latin America, where country after country cast out dictatorships of the right (and later of the left) in favor of elected leaders. In

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Asia, the decade brought significant democratic successes in Korea, Pakistan, and the Philippines, among others. Even in Africa, the authoritarian alternative and single-party politics seemed to play themselves out, with 1990 bringing widespread expectations of democracy's rebirth from Algeria to South Africa. In broader historical terms, these transitions should be seen as part of a series of events that began on the Iberian peninsula in the mid-1970s, when authoritarian rulers were swept out of Portugal and Spain by broad-based social movements.

This quick survey suggests that the democratic movement of recent years has been a movement of governments and states. In fact, it is both broader and deeper. It is broader in the sense that the process of democratization means different things in different societies. In some, such as former East Germany or Nicaragua, it means decisive rejection of an anti-democratic state and its replacement by a wholly different system. In others, such as South Africa and Mexico, it means a partial opening of the system. In yet others, such as the Soviet Union and China, democratization may occur fundamentally as a social factor, but not (yet) as a matter of state structure.

The democratic movement is deeper in that it touches on more than questions of political organization. Underlying the regime transitions is a social revolution of values and expectations with as yet incomplete political implications. The losers of the last decade were not merely isolated dictators, but also the totalitarian and authoritarian ideal itself. As an ideal embodying high human aspirations and an inherent skepticism of state power, democracy has an appeal across divisions of culture and history that could hardly have been anticipated as recently as the 1970s, when it seemed an isolated notion in a beleaguered set of industrial states. This is genuinely a revolution in both form and substance.

There are of course many factors driving political change around the world, and it is difficult to generalize about democratic transitions or openings when each is obviously rooted in the history of discrete societies. But there are several factors that seem to coalesce in one way or another in most cases.

One is the failure of communism. Lauded by some as a totalitarian solution to problems of development and justice, communism's failure has accelerated the delegitimization of nondemocratic forms of government of both left and right. The abject state of the Soviet Union and China has revealed just how far-reaching is the collapse of communism. Indeed, these societies are in crisis, not just of governance and prosperity, but of health, environment, and moral fabric as well.

A second factor is the success of the democracies in competing with totalitarian and authoritarian states. That competition is in part economic: democracies by and large have provided an environment for growth that is both stable and relatively equitable. But it is also much more than economic: democracies provide other basic social goods, principal among them domestic justice and individual liberty, in greater proportion than nondemocracies.

A third factor is the success of democrats in founding their movements on indigenous philosophies, histories, institutions, and aspirations. Democracy

previously made false starts in many countries where it has made a new start in recent years. Those earlier attempts often failed because of the lack of legitimate local roots of democratization. Throughout the post-colonial world in the 1960s and 1970s, the facade of democracy collapsed because democratic institutions were the vestiges of a political life imposed from the outside. In the 1980s and 1990s, democratic movements seem to have reconnected themselves to long-standing domestic social forces. Democracy is no longer rejected by intellectuals in non-western countries as something narrowly western or modern; instead, it is accepted by many as something relevant to human communities everywhere. In the words of the Senegalese scholar Jacques Mariel Nzouankeu, "Human rights have no frontiers and are indivisible; there is no liberty that is good for the West and bad for Africa."¹

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A fourth factor in the democratic transition is the communications revolution. So far, at least, it appears that George Orwell's apocalyptic view of the human future spelled out in *1984* had it completely wrong—modern technology has been used in the service of the individual, not the state. Television, telephones, photocopy machines, personal computers, and now fax machines and data links have worked to pry loose the grip of the state on the individual.² The communications revolution has empowered ordinary people as consumers and distributors of information, encouraging them to take control of their own lives. It has propelled economic integration on an unprecedented scale while raising expectations about the right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.

A fifth major factor is the collapse of ideology as a dominating political force and the concomitant prominence of pragmatism. Ideology's moment has passed as a force able to command broad public activism on questions of national organization. Political communities around the world are today struggling to cope with the demands of political and economic empowerment.

1. See Jacques Mariel Nzouankeu, "African Democracy," *Vision* 2:3 (December 1990), newsletter of the Center for Strategic and International Studies, Washington, D.C. See also his journal, *Alternative Démocratique dans le Tiers Monde*, published by the Centre d'Etudes et de Recherches sur la Démocratie Pluraliste dans le Tiers Monde, Dakar, Senegal, especially Vol. 1, No. 1 (January-June 1990).

2. See Gladys D. Ganley, "Power to the People via Personal Electronic Media," *The Washington Quarterly* 14 (Spring 1991): 5-22.

Democracy is defended by many in these communities as the best tool available to meet this pragmatic need.

A sixth factor is an international environment decidedly conducive to democratization. Dictators have been unable to argue that the tide of history is moving with them. Democrats have taken courage and ideas from the successes of like-minded individuals in other societies. Moreover, the dominant events of early 1991—war in the Persian Gulf and retrenchment in the Soviet Union—seem not to have dampened the expectation that democratization will continue to be a fundamental international political force in the decade ahead.

To be sure, these factors have not operated equally in every society. Communism's collapse is not complete in the Soviet Union and China. The established democracies are not universally admired, especially in some parts of the Muslim world. In places like Latin America, democracy has emerged more by default than design, and the collapse of old anti-democratic regimes cannot universally be seen as a triumph of indigenous democratic forces. The communications revolution has reached more people in the developed world than in the developing one. Anti-democratic ideologies remain relevant, especially among elites who still command the instruments of state repression in closed societies such as Iran or China. And external factors that were so important to democratization in Eastern Europe have so far had considerably less impact in Africa.

Moreover, democracy is not, of course, uncontested. Some democratic transitions will fail, while others will no doubt suffer setbacks. In countries such as the Soviet Union there has been a reassertion of the old authority as the reform effort has ground to a halt. But even in the Soviet Union a return to rigid totalitarianism seems less likely than a blend of authoritarianism, limited political expression, and anarchy in the coming years. Elsewhere, such as in some countries in Latin America, democratization may proceed only on the surface and not in the distribution of power and participation in political life. In quite a few places, fragile new democracies must contend with destabilizing social forces. The Soviet Union provides the most powerful example of what is in fact a quite common problem: social chaos arising from resurgent ethnic divisions and a general rising tide of expectations. And in quite a few states of the developing world, thuggery still passes for governance.

Given the numerous challenges confronting societies navigating democratic transitions, it is prudent to expect that the immediate future may breed less optimism about the prospects for democracy than the recent past. It is possible that, like the pendulum of a clock, societies will swing back from opening to closure. Indeed, this is likely in some. But a wholesale reversal of the democratic openings of recent years appears unlikely. Eastern Europe will not quickly return to totalitarian rule. The authoritarian alternative in Latin America is discredited as never before. Rising prosperity in Asia has brought with it the new political demands of emerging middle classes. In short, analysts should be careful not to dismiss too quickly the power of the pro-democracy forces described above.

Most skeptics of the democratic prospect point to economic performance as the basic determinant of the sustainability of new democracies. Noting fascism's emergence from the decay of weak capitalist democracies in the 1920s, they assert that economic decay spells political instability. But this gives undue emphasis to economic performance. As argued above, it is not economic factors alone that have contributed to democracy's resurgence. In fact, history includes many examples of even fragile democracies surviving economic turmoil because of public commitment to democratic values and institutions, such as Israel, India, and Costa Rica. The priority accorded economic performance undoubtedly varies from society to society, but even in those countries where it is accorded a high priority, voter dissatisfaction may prove more costly to specific governments than to democratic instruments and institutions. Poland's democratic credentials remain intact even after continuing economic turmoil caused the voters to cast out a government widely admired internationally.

To be sure, democracy is no guarantee of economic prosperity. Nondemocracies have sometimes outperformed democracies in generating increases in gross national product. In Korea and Taiwan, for example, economic growth occurred in societies with a narrowly constrained political life. In general, however, democracies seem to make possible stable, long-term, and broad-based growth, as demonstrated by members of the Organization of Economic Cooperation and Development and many of the newly industrializing countries. They do this by making possible the improvement of market efficiency. Nondemocratic governments have on the whole shown themselves incapable of providing the framework necessary for economic adaptation to changing domestic and international circumstances. Providing a possibility does not ensure a result, however, and democracy certainly is not an economic panacea. But in that possibility is the superiority of the democratic alternative.

The central challenge confronting the new democracies is not economic performance but the broader issue of governance. Most new democracies face a crisis of governance much deeper and broader than is understood in the United States. While few societies today seem willing to choose the route backward to nondemocracy, few seem to know the way ahead clearly either. They look to the established democracies for valuable experience and lessons, but recognize that the leisurely development of democracy in the transatlantic community over the last three centuries stands in sharp contrast to their own urgency. They must compress in time what the developed democracies took centuries to learn in building the cultural, ethical, educational, and legal infrastructures of democracy. Moreover, they must do so against a rising tide of demographic and environmental constraints. Because these are societies in crisis, their leaders are hungry for ideas that work. This helps the door stay firmly shut on the discredited ideologies of the nineteenth century. The world of the next century will put demands on the state that would have been unimaginable in the last; this helps concentrate the public and political mind on democracy's strengths in meeting the crisis of governance.

One of the basic determinants of the new democracies' ability to navigate the crisis of governance and secure their transition to stable democracy is the weight of the past. This is measured in terms of the inheritance of institutions, values, and expectations. Each new democracy is located at a different point along a continuum, stretching at one extreme from states where democratic rule had been interrupted only temporarily, to those roughly in the middle with some, but limited, democratic experience, to the other extreme where the detritus of non-democratic government litters a political, social, and economic wasteland. For example, Turkey has quickly regained relatively stable democracy after a period of authoritarian rule in the 1970s and 1980s. The middle of the continuum is perhaps best demonstrated in Central Europe, where many countries bring to their democratic transitions the vestiges of civil society and a democratic tradition carefully nurtured under the shadow of totalitarianism. The struggling Soviet Union and China perhaps best exemplify the other extreme, confronting the challenges of democratization across a yawning abyss.

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This historical legacy is important because it conditions the capacity of a society to undertake the tasks of democratization. These extend well beyond the construction of a democratic state, as defined in terms of a competitive electoral system and institutions of government operating according to democratic norms, to include the creation of a democratic society. In the absence of a democratic society, a democratic state will not long survive. But building a democratic society is a daunting, long-term challenge. It is also a responsibility that extends well beyond the state and political leaders. Czechoslovak President Vaclav Havel has spoken persuasively of the challenge of nurturing citizenship: imbuing an electorate with a commitment to both freedom *and* responsibility. A democratic society entails some appreciation of the virtue of compromise, protection of minority as well as individual rights, and a military establishment committed to democratic norms.

The capacity of societies to democratize seems to be a function of the extent to which the state has historically dominated society. In those countries where a private sector has been permitted to exist, where myriad private associations have come into existence that compete with the state for allegiance and public energy, and where religious conviction and worship are tolerated, the prospects for successful democratization appear decidedly bright. Countries lacking these

assets will measure progress toward a democratic society only in their piecemeal accumulation. In societies where old totalitarian structures were not brought down in war or revolution, reformers have found it easier to dismantle the old than to start with the new. But even in these societies, hope can be found in the rapid expansion of the independent sector. In the Soviet Union, for example, there are many thousands of new institutions and associations, to say nothing of a sizable religious revival, that constitute the hope for a brighter future.

If each society brings a different capacity to the challenges of democratization, the leaders they choose are similarly varied. The best will work wonders in the face of seemingly insoluble problems, while the worst will squander what opportunities come their way. Leadership is measured not just by commitment to democratic processes and nonviolence, but also in terms of the ability to generate public consensus and understanding, and (as Solidarity leaders in Poland have often put it) to use the power of the truth to confront the challenges of governance. The best leaders will recognize and avoid steps leading to populist or majoritarian democracy. They will also educate elites enjoying inherited roles in society to be more open to change and to learn to see politics in a democracy as more than zero-sum. The salience of skillful democratic leadership has been well demonstrated in the USSR, where many democratic politicians have learned how to score points with constituents and how to say "no," but have not learned those other skills expected of democratic leaders: the ability to compromise, build consensus, and achieve governmental results.

It follows that similar leadership should also be expected of political figures in opposition. The fragile democracies of countries such as Pakistan have foundered in part because of the willingness of the leaders of political parties in opposition to join with anti-democratic forces to bring down governments led by their political competitors. Also, since democratization is a process extending well beyond the state, leadership is something society needs not only in politics but in the intellectual, media, religious, business, labor, and military communities. Political leaders who encourage and accommodate the emergence of leaders in other sectors of society are contributing to the health of new democracies.

World Order Politics in a Democratic Era

What are the implications of the democratic revolution for the way the world works and for the kind of world order emerging in the post-cold war era? Will increased democratization ease chronic international conflict or will international security grow more precarious because of the fragility of the new democracies?

Democratization is not a panacea for the problem of international conflict. The view that it might be has enjoyed growing currency of late, with proponents arguing that history shows that democracies are less warlike than

nondemocracies. In fact, the empirical evidence in support of this proposition is murky.³ Although one could debate definitions of democracy and war endlessly, the historical record does seem to indicate that democracies have gone to war just about as frequently as nondemocracies. But the historical record is unequivocal that democracies do not war with one another.

What is it about democracy that accounts for its pacific orientation if not predilection? Because they depend on popular consent for their legitimacy, democracies can only make wars that are perceived by the public as just. Wars of aggression or punitive wars waged by or among democracies are rarities in the modern era. Similarly, given that democracies are based on the domestic exercise of public principle, their leaders are less apt to look at the world in Machiavellian terms than the leaders of states whose primary domestic concern is the use of coercive power. And by permitting free inquiry and a reasoned consideration of the costs and benefits of national actions, democracies are also less likely than nondemocracies to stumble into war unwittingly.

Moreover, democracies lend themselves to the evolution of a community of like-minded neighbors. As Immanuel Kant observed two centuries ago in his *Prolegomena to a Perpetual Peace*, there is something qualitatively different about an international system in which states share rather than compete over basic values. Kant argued that states disposed to respect the rights of individuals would respect the legitimacy of other countries similarly governed and would encourage rather than restrict mutually satisfying trade relations, leading to the gradual emergence of what he termed "zones of peace."

Even at this abstract level, however, some notes of caution are in order about the possible effects of democratization on international security. To begin with, democratic governance may have certain drawbacks with regard to foreign policy. As Alexis de Tocqueville argued,

Foreign politics demand scarcely any of those qualities which are peculiar to a democracy; they require, on the contrary, the perfect use of almost all those in which it is deficient. . . . [A] democracy can only with great difficulty regulate the details of an important undertaking, persevere in a fixed design, and work out its execution in spite of obstacles. It cannot combine its measures with secrecy or await their consequences with patience.⁴

Furthermore, democracies are prone to populist policies, bouts of nationalism, and demands for policy success in the short term. This calls into question their ability to consistently manage the demands of interdependence and complexity, challenges that are emerging as buzzwords in the post-cold war era.

3. For a thorough review of that empirical evidence and the debate about the relationship between democracy and peace see Robert Rothstein, *Conflict Resolution in the Post-Cold War Third World* (Washington, D.C.: United States Institute of Peace, forthcoming); and Rothstein, "Democracy, Conflict, and Development in the Third World," *The Washington Quarterly* 14 (Spring 1991): 43–63.

4. Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America* (New York: Vintage Books, 1945) Vol. 1, 243–244.

Second, the pacific orientation of democracies toward one another may have as much to do with their relative political stability and development as with their democratic character, meaning that the new, fragile, and unstable democracies may be less secure in their international relations. Weak democratic institutions will be slow to overcome the tradition of personalized politics in the developing world and may be exploited by outside powers. Incomplete democratization of society may exacerbate the problems of populism, nationalism, and emphasis on the short term. Many new democracies suffer from the hangover left by their predecessors, a hangover measured not just in economic collapse but social chaos.⁵

Third, the wave of democratization has brought a few international insecurities of its own. The power imbalance wrought by the Communist collapse in Europe has sown the seeds of instability. The power vacuum in the USSR is especially worrisome, raising the specter of the Union splintering into a plethora of weak, unstable, and perhaps nuclear-armed states; or, at the other extreme, of an attempt by a right-wing military government to resurrect Soviet state power through domestic repression and renewed claims to superpower status, based on its only remaining superpower credential—military power.

Lastly, the wave of democratization has not diminished the significance of remaining nondemocracies. If anything, the anti-democratic states of the developing world are growing more important to the future world order because of their steady accumulation of advanced military power, including sophisticated high-technology weapons and weapons of mass destruction. Heavily armed renegade states are multiplying in the developing world. Iraq has not been the only state interested in testing the international rules of the post-cold war era.

Despite these cautionary notes, if one probes beyond generalizations about democracy and peace to test specific hypotheses in specific conflicts, democracy emerges as centrally relevant to peace and world order. Retrospectively, the propensity of democracies to peace has been a significant factor in the post-World War II era. To be sure, there have been other factors: the geostrategic coincidence of western and Asian democracies mutually confronted by a powerful Soviet Union, technological change that has brought both the nuclear bomb and far-reaching economic interdependence, and shared transatlantic cultural traditions. But shared democratic values and shared interests emanating from extensive peaceful political and economic interaction have made war among the developed democracies obsolete. They also provided the foundations of a common response to the Soviet threat.

Looking to the world order challenges of the 1990s, how exactly are democracy and further democratization relevant?

In Europe, the establishment of democracy has helped to create considerable optimism about the durability of the new European peace order embodied in

5. See Rothstein as cited in note 3.

the historic agreements signed in Paris in November 1990.⁶ The sense of promise and expectation attached to a united Germany, an integrated European Community in 1992, and a security architecture designed around the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) has its foundation in the democratic character of the states involved.

In the Middle East, the movement toward more participatory forms of government is seen by many as critical to the achievement of a relatively durable peace. The absence of legitimate governments in some countries and the power of existing elites to block the negotiating process in others are stumbling blocks to the kinds of compromises and risks that will be necessary if negotiated security measures are to have any chance of succeeding. Also, the absence of democracy in Iraq helped precipitate the war in the Persian Gulf. Saddam Hussein's isolation from political debate contributed to his series of strategic miscalculations, and his capacity to repress popular dissent effectively robbed economic sanctions of any significant political effect. Some experts have advised that regional, cultural, and historical factors make full democratization unlikely or even unnecessary, and that instead local political communities may only grow more open and participatory in the coming years, but not truly democratic. Whether local publics will see it that way is another question. As experience in so many other parts of the world demonstrates, supposed cultural barriers to democracy are quickly swept aside by restive publics unhappy with the limits inherent in a participatory but only quasi-democratic regime.

In Asia as well, democratization is relevant to the major questions of peace. On the Korean peninsula, expectations about the achievement of a breakthrough are shaped fundamentally by the process of liberalization in the South and the anticipated decay of the autocratic regime in the North. Among the member nations of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, economic prosperity continues to create new demands for political participation. In Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Singapore, long-term prospects are directly tied to democracy's durability. Looked at in historical perspective, Japan's emergence as a stable democracy is a force for regional and international stability.

In Latin America, the challenge of (re)building democracy in Panama and Nicaragua and encouraging political openings in El Salvador and Mexico is the key to whether the region will return to endemic turmoil. Moreover, some regional leaders see the broadening of democratic institutions and rules as directly relevant to their ability to cope with the problems of insurgency, drugs, and immigration.

Conversely, the failure of democratization in China and to a lesser extent the Soviet Union underscores starkly the flip side of the issue. The pursuit of a global post-cold war agenda is held hostage to the faltering reform process in the USSR. The apparent collapse of the reform movement and its replace-

6. W.R. Smyser, "Vienna, Versailles, and Now Paris: Third Time Lucky?" *The Washington Quarterly* 14 (Summer 1991).

ment by hardline government has dampened hopes for further progress on the East-West arms control and diplomatic agendas and might spell the return of global ideological and possibly military competition.

Democratization also seems relevant to the kinds of international priorities emerging in the post-cold war era. That era is rich in opportunities presented by economic interdependence, but it is also burdened with problems compelling new forms of collective responses. These include the environment, where new regimes are under negotiation to limit pollution; collective security, where the principles and mechanisms embodied in the United Nations are enjoying a revival; multilateral arms control, where regional and global negotiations to reduce or eliminate armaments are gaining momentum; changing trade relations; and perhaps even drugs. To reap the benefits of interdependence and cope effectively with emerging problems requires above all a capacity for cooperation, which is more likely in a system dominated by states with shared values than in one dominated by ideological competition.

If democratization creates incentives for cooperation in the new era, it may also help diminish the domestic sources of international conflict. Democracy can help societies cope with the demands of change. It does this by providing mechanisms for articulating the necessity of change, establishing agreed rules to proceed with change, and legitimizing shared sacrifice. There is no guarantee that the new democracies will choose to employ these mechanisms or will succeed in doing so. But their success will be directly relevant to their ability to deal with structural economic adjustment, resource problems, and the social dislocations of modernizing societies.

The democratic revolution in world politics may have two additional virtues for international security. The first is that it may provide an anchor for the United States in global affairs at a time when the nation is trying to define its proper role post-cold war and post-Persian Gulf war. The success and further trial of democratic values abroad may serve as a useful corrective to the cynicism that periodically grips Americans about the world and to the isolationist impulse.

The second possible virtue stems from the fact that the support of democracy abroad is not a project for the United States alone. The democratic revolution holds the promise of a stronger sense of international community, a larger set of common projects, and a shared set of values that transcend realpolitik considerations of national interest and cold war ties. Democratization can help to provide a sense of direction and purpose in global affairs at a time when both are subject to international debate. The end of the cold war will have many implications—the passing of the superpower era, the advent of multipolarity, the growth of military power outside of the East-West framework, and possibly prolonged instability in the formerly Communist world. With the passing of the old structures, there is a distinct risk that anarchy and not order will emerge. The sense of direction and purpose afforded by democratization may provide just the boundary markers necessary to navigate the choices about foreign policy, trade, arms proliferation, and freedom that to a large extent will define the world order politics of the 1990s.

It is too early to predict with certainty whether either of these last two virtues will emerge as a cornerstone of the foundation of world order in the years ahead. But given the reaction of the United States and the world community to Iraq's annexation of Kuwait, and George Bush's active promulgation of a world order politics, there are reasons for optimism. In any case, these are but two parts of a much larger picture of a world order building on the benefits of democratization.

United States Policy Responses

What are the appropriate means and ends of US policy with regard to the democratic revolution, and where do they fit in the overall foreign policy priorities of the country in the years ahead?

At the height of euphoria about "the end of history" and the fall of the Berlin Wall, it was common to hear the argument that support for democracy abroad should be enshrined as the central pillar of a post-containment grand strategy for the United States. But the abrupt eruption of the war in the Gulf and the retreat of reform in the Soviet Union have provided a useful corrective to the notion that the United States could lead a kind of *jihad* for democracy and that this would be enough to define the full range of US global strategy.

To make the democracy revolution the centerpiece of US grand strategy in the post-cold war era is neither possible nor desirable. As Americans and their leaders search for an understanding of the world and their nation's place in it, the political orientation of states overseas is an important part of the overall picture. But it is only a part. The United States will be called upon to exercise leadership on many issues other than political development, including not least security, trade, and arms control, where US interests will sometimes compel diplomatic efforts to build coalitions among ideologically diverse states. This compulsion will cut directly across an effort to foster democracy in other states as our first priority.

Moreover, the US commitment to democracy abroad is hardly a novelty of the post-cold war era, something that the United States would do well to perceive and articulate. Although it has been implemented in different ways in different eras, that commitment predates the rather felicitous international environment of the 1990s and is evident throughout US history. American political, intellectual, and moral leaders have always spoken about American ideals as ideals for the world as a whole, even if they have been inconsistent in implementing that commitment. Cold war containment ought to be seen at least in part as one manifestation of that fundamental national orientation to the world.

The US commitment to democracy can take a variety of shapes in the 1990s. President Bush's commitment to a new world order based on the rule of law enforced by collective security represents one possible avenue. The use of US military power in Panama and the Persian Gulf suggests another potential role, that of global policeman. The historical predilection of the

American public for the more modest role of honest broker suggests a possible compromise route. Noteworthy for their relative isolation in the public debate so far are those pundits who have argued that democratization abroad is an excuse for the United States to pack its bags and come home to a more nationalist, isolationist set of policies.⁷

The key foreign policy question for the United States is not so much where America stands on democracy as what America can do to help. One focus might be proactive—to give priority in bilateral diplomacy to efforts to unseat remaining nondemocratic governments. With the passing of a bipolar world order the interest of the United States in promoting the democratic domestic order of other states need no longer be held hostage to strategic competition with the Soviet Union. Certainly, the United States has learned a great deal over the last decade about how to facilitate rather than obstruct democratic transitions in other countries. But the American public would not long support a foreign policy based on intervention to destabilize other countries. In any case, such a strategy ignores the fact that democracy must spring from indigenous roots if it is to survive, and democratic regimes installed under US pressure would likely be perceived as illegitimate and thus short-lived.

A second possible focus of US policy is human rights. The protection of human rights abroad has been a cornerstone of US foreign policy under the last three US presidents and remains a priority in a world where democratization is still incomplete. Diplomatic measures that give political power to that commitment, such as the CSCE, should be continued; indeed, their applicability to other regions of the world might be considered. But the traditional human rights agenda has been transformed by democratization. The selective defense of specific human rights must be implemented in a more comprehensive framework that recognizes the new, larger possibilities for a stable national politics based on democratic principles.

A third possible focus is consolidating transitions in the new democracies. This is the most all-encompassing option, and therefore probably also the most difficult. Responding to myriad political changes in scores of countries overseas will require of US diplomacy an unprecedented degree of flexibility, wisdom, and historical sensitivity. Moreover, although the United States has learned something in recent years about how to encourage transitions *from* authoritarianism and totalitarianism, it has learned less about how to complete the transition *to* democracy. This reflects in part an inability to discern and articulate the lessons of democracy-building in America's own society. It also reflects the fact that outside powers can play at best a limited, secondary role in assisting societies to democratize.

In fact, no single policy focus will suffice. American resources and power must be used judiciously at different times and in different ways to nudge

7. Alan Tonelson, "On Democrats," *The National Interest* 16 (Summer 1989). Patrick Buchanan, "Messianic Globaloney," *The Defense Democrat* (November 1989). See also George Weigel, "That New, Improved, Ready-for-Prime-Time Isolationism," *American Purpose* 3:8 (October 1989): 60–61.

closed societies toward political openings, to help new democracies to secure their transitions, and occasionally to cut deals with regimes whose principles it finds abhorrent. United States support may make a difference in those countries where its influence has historically been strong. Its ability to work collaboratively, especially in regions or countries where the US role has not been strong, will also be relevant to the course of democracy.

Damage to the democratic movement abroad can also result from US actions. A wavering American commitment to democracy abroad would undermine the democratic prospect both where US leverage might make a difference and where democrats take inspiration from principled US leadership. In fact, US policy has not been consistent in its support of democracy abroad. American diplomacy toward Angola and Zaire, for example, continues to be driven by old cold war priorities rather than democratic ones. Similarly, Latin America appears to have receded once again from the list of US policy priorities, with democracy in Nicaragua and Panama suffering the consequences. Only with improved consistency will US policy become more credible and effective.

Arguably, the most important thing that the United States can do for democracy abroad is to look after the health of its own democracy.

As usual in Washington, the debate about the commitment to democracy abroad turns into a debate about money, with critics of foreign assistance generally fearing that the democracy theme is little more than the latest gimmick to leverage a bit more money out of the US taxpayer. But the American proclivity for throwing money at problems obscures the fact that supporting democracy is not fundamentally a question of money. Democracy abroad will not rise or fall in direct relation to the spending abilities of the US federal budget. Western aid can facilitate but cannot itself ensure the restructuring of the societies or economies of fledgling or potential democracies.

This is not to argue that US aid is without consequence. On the contrary, the United States can do much to help new or emerging democracies. At a basic political level, American aid is important as a signal of the US intent to be a player in world affairs and promote those values that animate its domestic political life. Some second and third world democrats look at the United States and see a state intent on being the world's policeman and one often on the wrong side of questions of political reform; others see a country sympathetic to their cause but incapable of being anything more than an impotent bystander. Even if not effective at generating high economic growth

rates or dramatically opening closed societies abroad, a modicum of aid would earn the United States substantial political capital.

In implementing an aid strategy for democracy, the most decisive steps are probably those at the macroeconomic level. In Eastern Europe and Latin America particularly, the debt burden left by departed dictators poses a daunting impediment to fragile new governments seeking to jumpstart broken economies. Debt relief would provide a window of opportunity for these states to begin the business of rebuilding their economies. Toward this end, the commercial banks must go further in writing off their debt in these countries. Also, the failure to halt the slide toward a less open international trading system would have serious long-term ramifications for the governability of new democracies.

At the bilateral level, US aid can play a role in nurturing pluralistic institutions, encouraging economic empowerment, providing a safety net during periods of transition, and easing the burdens inherited from the past. Clearly, these roles are not for the United States alone; other prosperous democracies are playing an increasingly important part in this process. The coordination of aid efforts is important. This suggests the desirability of emphasizing multilateral rather than bilateral approaches in collecting and distributing resources to the new democracies.

Sometimes western and US aid may be critical in a society's movement to democracy. Aid that has focused on building institutions of pluralism—political parties, independent media, legalized opposition, human rights organizations, legal training programs, and so forth—has been important in countries as varied as Chile, Poland, and the Philippines. More money should be directed to projects that build the infrastructure of democracy (electoral materials and supervisors, for example) as well as projects to promote citizenship. This implies that more money should flow to the US National Endowment for Democracy and to the democracy initiatives of the Agency for International Development.

Where economic aid is employed, it must work not to prop up the old ways but to facilitate the transformation of economic structures and to address the rising political and economic aspirations of the electorate. In most weak democracies struggling with problems of governance, this means that aid should focus on undoing the dictatorship of the bureaucracy. These states struggle with huge and entrenched inherited bureaucracies that are accustomed to operating without the inhibiting forces of effective legislative, public, or even executive oversight. This is a problem shared by new democracies in both the developing and post-Communist worlds. Western aid can be used to encourage bureaucratic simplification and accountability, transparency, predictability, and the rule of law in government.⁸ Without such reform at the nexus of economic and political life, stagnation is likely to persist.

8. See Hernando de Soto, *The Other Path: The Invisible Revolution in the Third World* (New York: Harper and

Recognizing that US and western aid can be both carrot and stick, there is an important question about the extent to which such aid should be conditioned on democratic reforms of the political and economic structures. Donors should consider to what extent they would be willing to cut off aid to long-standing friends when democratization slows or halts. This proved easy for the United States in regard to Pakistan once the strategic rationale of the Afghan conflict passed, but has proven more difficult in the case of western aid to the Soviet Union or US aid to long-standing recipients in Africa. Conditionality poses tough choices for US policymakers, although at least a few of those trade-offs will have been made less difficult by the passing of the cold war.⁹ Moreover, the threat to cut off US aid may either be taken as hollow by the target regime, or as a price worth paying to achieve certain domestic objectives.

Aiding democracy abroad is not a task for government alone. The nongovernmental sector has an especially important and currently underutilized contribution to make to the consolidation of democratic transitions abroad. As argued above, the crisis of governance facing many newly democratic societies is largely intellectual—learning how to manage complex and rapidly changing societies without much room for trial and error. Private institutions and individuals are better suited than government to articulate the lessons of their experiences and help like-minded individuals abroad build and manage effective institutions. Self-help organizations, non-profit institutions, environmental protection groups, etc., all have a role to play in nurturing the emergence of civil society in new democracies. Defining the necessary and proper function of the state in a developing democratic society is a challenge underappreciated in the developed world.¹⁰

Arguably, the most important thing that the United States can do for democracy abroad is to look after the health of its own democracy. Foreign policy experts sometimes seem not to recognize that the debate between democratic and anti-democratic forces abroad is shaped to a significant degree by the successes and failures of American society. Perceptions of American democracy as successful, particularly in terms of its ability to manage with relative fairness the challenges of a multicultural society and to provide opportunity for all, pay significant international political dividends. Today, the continued success of that experiment is in some doubt overseas as US society confronts increasingly hostile race relations, worsening crime rates, a drug epidemic, a widening of income differentials, the emergence of a chronic underclass, and seeming federal paralysis on budgetary questions. If democracy in the United States is seen to weaken, democratic forces around the world will be weakened as well.

Row, 1989); and the regular newsletter of his Institute for Liberty and Democracy in Lima, Peru, for analysis and policy recommendations.

9. Carol Lancaster, "The New Politics of U.S. Aid to Africa," *CSIS Africa Notes* 120 (January 28, 1991).

10. The work of the institutions affiliated with the International Center for Economic Growth headquartered in Panama is a benchmark in this regard. See the article by its general director, Nicolas Ardito-Barleta, "Democracy and Development," *The Washington Quarterly* 13 (Summer 1990): 165–76.

Conclusion

Neither the United States nor the world is likely to come to terms quickly with the endings and beginnings of 1989-1991. Although dramatic events in the Persian Gulf and the Soviet Union punctuate the transition from the old era, what follows will emerge slowly from the cumulative actions and decisions of states and individuals. Policymakers should anticipate that the wave of democratization of recent years will continue to be a driving factor in international politics. The need to secure recent democratic transitions and encourage such transitions in as yet non-democratic states will remain a priority. US policy will ignore these trends at its own peril, but it will enshrine them as the centerpiece of US grand strategy only at some risk.

The broad global movement toward democracy does not eliminate the many problems of war and peace confronting the international community in the 1990s. But it does ameliorate some of them. And it creates the preconditions for a more cooperative approach to common international problems. This cooperation may well yet prove to be the foundation of a new world order politics.



