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Conclusion

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Citation

Pee, R., & Schmidli, W. M. (2019). Conclusion. In *The Reagan administration, the Cold War, and the transition to democracy promotion* (pp. 277-301). Palgrave Macmillan.
doi:10.1007/978-3-319-96382-2

Version: Publisher's Version

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Downloaded from: <https://hdl.handle.net/1887/3304612>

Note: To cite this publication please use the final published version (if applicable).



Conclusion

Robert Pee and William Michael Schmidli

In early October 2005, President George W. Bush gave a special address to the National Endowment for Democracy (NED). It was an inauspicious moment for the Bush White House. The euphoria accompanying the military success of the 2003 US invasion of Iraq had long since evaporated as American soldiers confronted a deadly mix of sectarian violence, anti-American Iraqi insurgents, and foreign *jihadi* fighters. With rising American casualties and the approaching mid-term elections weighing heavily on the administration, Bush claimed the mantle of Reagan's democracy promotion initiative. "Since the day President Ronald Reagan set out the vision for this endowment, the world has seen the swiftest advance of democratic institutions in history. And Americans are proud to have played our role in this great story," Bush declared.¹

¹George W. Bush, 'Remarks to the National Endowment for Democracy,' October 6, 2005. *Public Papers of the Presidents*. <https://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/PPP-2005-book2/pdf/PPP-2005-book2-doc-pg1520-2.pdf>

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R. Pee, W. M. Schmidli (eds.), *The Reagan Administration, the Cold War, and the Transition to Democracy Promotion*, Security, Conflict and Cooperation in the Contemporary World, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-96382-2_13

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As Bush's comments to the NED made clear, Reagan's democracy initiative had a powerful impact on American foreign policy. Indeed, one recent study estimates that US spending for democracy assistance jumped from US\$100 million in the late 1980s to US\$2.5 billion in 2011.² Rising US expenditures on democracy promotion in the 1990s and early 2000s reflected an increasingly widely held assumption among American policy-makers that democracy abroad was desirable, and by taking an active role in exporting democracy, the US could both meet security goals and assuage moral concerns. Capturing this duality in his speech to the NED, after emphasizing the illiberal goals of radical Islamic terrorists George W. Bush paraphrased a line from Reagan's 1982 speech at Westminster: "It is true that the seeds of freedom have only recently been planted in Iraq, but democracy, when it grows, is not a fragile flower; it is a healthy sturdy tree."³

The chapters in this volume have examined the Reagan administration as a critical moment in American history when the promotion of democracy emerged as a defining foreign policy goal, through the analysis of concepts, tactics, and specific cases in the Soviet Empire and the Third World. This conclusion brings together key themes from the chapters to consider the Reagan administration's democracy initiative in terms of strategy, organization and tactics, impacts and outcomes, and its long-term influence on US foreign policy in the post-Cold War world.

US DEMOCRACY PROMOTION STRATEGY DURING THE 1980s

The Reagan administration's democracy promotion policies did not constitute a normatively driven area of policy separate from mainstream national security and Cold War concerns. Instead, US democracy promotion mapped onto the Cold War in three main areas: transformation, roll-back, and containment. These three approaches were increasingly subsumed in the administration's public and private rhetoric into a global campaign for democracy. The injection of democracy promotion into US policy toward the Soviet Union and its Eastern European clients posited

²Henry Nau, 'Ronald Reagan,' in *US Foreign Policy and Democracy Promotion: From Theodore Roosevelt to Barack Obama*, eds. Michael Cox, Timothy J. Lynch, and Nicolas Bouchet (New York: Routledge, 2013), 150.

³George W. Bush, 'Remarks to the National Endowment for Democracy.'

the possibility of democratic transformation in these states, altering American conceptions of what victory in the Cold War might look like. At the onset of the Cold War, George Kennan had viewed a US victory as the outcome of “the breakup or the gradual mellowing of Soviet power,” rather than a transformation of the Soviet system.⁴ By contrast, the hard-line “Reaganite” faction in the administration’s first term went beyond Kennan’s original strategy of containment by establishing the goals of encouraging “long-term liberalizing and nationalist tendencies within the Soviet Union and allied countries” and promoting “the process of change in the Soviet Union toward a more pluralistic political and economic system in which the power of the privileged ruling elite is gradually reduced.”⁵ For the Reagan administration, to borrow from Carl von Clausewitz, democracy promotion was a continuation of the Cold War by other means.

The novelty of this shift in US Cold War objectives was recognized by administration officials at the time.⁶ The democratizing policy toward the Soviet Union was conceptualized as a long-term aspiration and was paired with a campaign of economic warfare to weaken the USSR and its alliance system.⁷ As John Lewis Gaddis writes, “Reagan’s objective was straightforward, if daunting: to prepare the way for a new kind of Soviet leader by pushing the old Soviet system to the breaking point.”⁸ However, the Reagan administration’s failure to agree on the objectives and parameters of an economic warfare campaign, either internally or with its NATO allies,⁹ plus the advent of greater US-Soviet engagement and negotiations under Gorbachev increased the importance of the US’ political objectives.

⁴ George F. Kennan, ‘The Sources of Soviet Conduct,’ *Foreign Affairs* 25, no. 4 (1947), reprinted in *Foreign Affairs* 65, no. 4 (1987): 868.

⁵ White House, ‘National Security Decision Directive 32: U.S. National Security Strategy,’ May 20, 1982, National Security Decision Directives – Reagan Administration, *Federation of American Scientists*, <https://fas.org/irp/offdocs/nsdd/nsdd-32.pdf>, 2 and White House, ‘National Security Decision Directive 75: US Relations with the USSR,’ January 17, 1983, National Security Decision Directives – Reagan Administration, *Federation of American Scientists*, <https://fas.org/irp/offdocs/nsdd/nsdd-75.pdf>, 1.

⁶ Robert Pee, *Democracy Promotion, National Security and Strategy: Foreign Policy under the Reagan Administration* (Abingdon, Oxon. and New York: Routledge, 2016), 109.

⁷ White House, NSDD 32, 1.

⁸ John Lewis Gaddis, *Strategies of Containment: A Critical Appraisal of American National Security Policy during the Cold War*, Rev. and exp. ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 354.

⁹ Alan P. Dobson, ‘The Reagan Administration, Economic Warfare, and Starting to Close Down the Cold War,’ *Diplomatic History* 3, no. 3 (2005): 531–556.

As Peterson and Domber document in this volume, US policy-makers, organizations such as the NED, and US citizen groups came to see fostering democratic reform in the Soviet Union and its Eastern European dependencies as a path to victory in the Cold War.

The second main area where democracy initiatives had an impact was on rollback. This involved the so-called “Reagan Doctrine” policy of providing weapons to anti-communist guerrillas operating in Third World states which had experienced radical revolutions and joined the Soviet bloc during the 1970s, such as Angola and Nicaragua, and states which had been occupied by Soviet bloc armed forces, such as Afghanistan and Cambodia. The “Reagan Doctrine” was a policy of limited rollback which aimed to push Soviet influence back to Europe, eliminating the gains the USSR had made during the 1970s, without committing US ground forces.¹⁰ Administration policy documents spoke of “encourag[ing] democratic movements and forces to bring about political change in [Soviet Third World allies],”¹¹ and administration officials frequently juxtaposed Soviet “totalitarianism” with praise of anti-communist “freedom fighters,” across the Third World. As Reagan intoned in March 1983, “To watch the courageous Afghan freedom fighters battle modern arsenals with simple hand-held weapons is an inspiration to those who love freedom.”¹²

However, the insurgent forces which the administration supported—the mujahideen in Afghanistan, the contras in Nicaragua, the National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA) in Angola, and the Coalition Government of Democratic Kampuchea—while determinedly anti-communist had no credible commitment to democracy.¹³ Neither did the Reagan administration pair its military support to these groups with programs designed to foster emergence of democratic political organizations within them or to train members in constructing democratic institutions in the event of an insurgent victory. Thus, the language of democracy promotion was used in these cases to make a policy of support-

¹⁰ Fareed Zakaria, ‘The Reagan Strategy of Containment.’ *Political Science Quarterly* 105, no. 3 (1990): 390.

¹¹ White House, NSDD 75, 5.

¹² Reagan, Ronald, ‘Message on the Observance of Afghanistan Day,’ March 21, 1983, *The American Presidency Project*. <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=41078>

¹³ The Coalition Government of Democratic Kampuchea (CGDK) was composed of three factions: the Armée Nationale Sihanoukiste (ANS), which supported Prince Sihanouk; the Khmer People’s National Liberation Front (KPNLF), headed by democratic Cambodian politician Son Sann; and the Khmer Rouge, headed by Cambodia’s former communist ruler, Pol Pot. Only Son Sann’s faction had a clear commitment to democracy, and the Khmer Rouge constituted the coalition’s largest and most effective guerrilla force.

ing non- or anti-democratic forces appear legitimate to Congress and the American people. If this was mostly anti-Soviet political theater, democracy promotion *did* emerge as a significant element of the broader US rollback strategy toward Nicaragua. As Schmidli shows in his chapter, throughout the 1980s, the Reagan administration's overt and covert efforts to orchestrate a regime change in Managua were consistently imbedded in democracy promotion rhetoric, depicting the leftist Sandinistas as a retrograde dictatorship in a hemisphere that was rapidly experiencing the democratic wave of the future.

The third area in which democracy promotion mapped onto the Cold War was as a tool of containment in the Third World. Throughout the Cold War, US policy-makers had faced decisions over whether the support of authoritarian regimes or the encouragement of transitions to democracy in non-communist Third World states would be more effective in preventing the spread of communism. The cases of El Salvador, Uruguay, the Philippines, South Korea, and Chile discussed in this volume show that the Reagan administration operationalized a strategy of containment through democratization, seeking to build more stable and legitimate allied governments through political reform. Support for centrist political parties and civil society groups and pressure for electoral reforms and transitions in these states helped to solidify containment by replacing faltering and unpopular dictatorial US clients with elected leaders who would protect US interests. In this process, excluding the far Left—reformers and revolutionaries alike—was a central US preoccupation. As US Ambassador Harry Barnes bluntly informed Chilean center-right politicians in 1986, “U.S. pressure on Pinochet is contingent on their responsible behavior, i.e. no flirtation with the communists.”¹⁴ The creation of democratic institutions headed by centrist civilian politicians in these states increased the popular legitimacy of governing groups, draining local support for the Left and thus decreasing the possibility of political transitions—whether by ballots or bullets—that would lead to deepening ties to the Soviet Union. It also warded off the danger that the US would embroil itself in further Vietnams, as this strategy of defeating or pre-empting the growth of insurgencies through political methods reduced the possibility that US combat forces would be committed to states such as the Philippines at

¹⁴Quoted in Morris Morley and Chris McGillion, ‘Soldiering On: The Reagan Administration and Redemocratisation in Chile, 1983–1986,’ *Bulletin of Latin American Research* 25, no. 1 (2006): 16.

some future date to rescue an unpopular authoritarian state on the verge of defeat by guerrillas hostile to the US.

Democracy promotion served as a tool of domestic containment as well. Top Reagan administration officials were acutely aware that convincing the American people and their elected representatives on Capitol Hill to support aggressive Cold War policies would require containing the McGovernite wing of the Democratic Party. The Reagan administration used democracy promotion rhetoric to claim the moral high ground. By emphasizing, in the words of George P. Shultz, that “we have always believed that freedom is the birthright of all peoples and that we could not be true to ourselves or our principles unless we stood for freedom and democracy not only for ourselves but for others,”¹⁵ the administration changed the terms of the debate, forcing critics onto the defensive and making significant strides in the effort to recreate the bipartisan Cold War consensus that had run aground during the Vietnam War.

The language of “democracy promotion” allowed the incorporation of an offensive approach to the East and defensive approach to the “Free World” under one banner. The policy of transformation aimed at gradually altering the Soviet Union’s totalitarian political system, which administration officials believed to be a key factor in producing its aggressive behavior in international relations. The policy of rollback, legitimated through democratic rhetoric, aimed at reducing the sway of this system in the Third World. The use of democracy promotion as a vehicle of containment aimed at preventing what officials perceived as the spread of the Soviet system into new areas, which could produce further damage to US national security interests and enhance the legitimacy of the embattled Soviet system through demonstrating its capacity to secure further victories for communism. In each case, the Reagan administration’s aim was to fight the Cold War by reducing the sources of Soviet power.

The strategic basis of the Reagan administration’s rising emphasis on democracy promotion meant that it was not pursued uniformly throughout the globe, however. Under Reagan the US government resisted democratic transitions in Sudan and Pakistan¹⁶ and continued to back

¹⁵ George P. Shultz, ‘America and the Struggle for Freedom,’ address to the Commonwealth Club of California, February 22, 1985, Washington, D.C. Department of State Bureau of Public Affairs: February 1985.

¹⁶ Michael K. McKoy and Michael K. Miller, ‘The Patron’s Dilemma: The Dynamics of Foreign-Supported Democratization,’ *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 56, no. 5 (2012): 917.

anti-communist dictatorships in Somalia and Zaire, along with authoritarian strongmen such as President Suharto of Indonesia.¹⁷ In Liberia, the US supported dictator Samuel Doe in 1985 when he imprisoned the opposition and fixed elections designed to initiate a transition to democracy in order to maintain himself in power.¹⁸ This marked a sharp contrast to the Philippines, where the US reacted to similar vote-rigging accusations the following year by removing its support for Marcos. In the Middle East, the US conducted virtually no democracy promotion activities. While organizations such as the NED did conduct democracy promotion programs in some of these states, these were unlikely to result in large changes in the political system over the short term without diplomatic support and pressure on the existing authoritarian regimes from the Reagan administration.

US democracy promotion in the allied authoritarian states in the Third World, therefore, was based on the US' reading of local political and military conditions. In states where the dictatorship was seen to be failing, a threat of insurgency supported by the Soviet Union or political instability existed or was projected to materialize, and an alternative ruling elite acceptable to US interests existed, the Reagan administration was prepared to back democratic change. In contrast, dictatorships which maintained control and did not appear to be in danger of falling to inimical forces continued to receive US support. In both types of states, the geopolitical goal of containing Soviet or perceived Soviet influence remained the same, but the decision of whether to achieve this through continued support for existing regimes or fostering political change depended on the local correlation of political forces. However, the existence of democracy promotion as a goal in relation to US-allied states, even on a case-by-case basis, was a result of a shift in the perceptions of US policy-makers from seeing democratic reform as an inherently destabilizing factor to a tool for creating stability.

In addition to advancing US Cold War goals, the Reagan administration's embrace of democracy promotion also served to fashion new forms of American hegemony in the face of restive Third World nationalism. By

¹⁷ Jerome J. Shestack, 'Human Rights, the National Interest and U.S. Foreign Policy,' *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 506, no. 1 (1989): 24 and David P. Forsythe, 'Human Rights in U.S. Foreign Policy: Retrospect and Prospect,' *Political Science Quarterly* 105, no. 3 (1990): 447.

¹⁸ Michael Massing, 'How Liberia Held "Free" Elections.' *The Nation*, October 13, 2005. <https://www.thenation.com/article/how-liberia-held-free-elections/>

the 1970s the Non-Aligned Nations Movement (NAM) had emerged as a sharp critic of US-led Western alliance. A heterogeneous bloc of nearly 100 states, NAM utilized the United Nations General Assembly as a sounding board to advocate Third World solidarity and a political path independent of either the First or Second World; in practice, NAM's opposition to imperialism, colonialism, apartheid, and Zionism frequently brought it into alignment with the socialist world. Algerian President Houari Boumedienne's 1974 declaration of a New International Economic Order was a defining moment in the movement's evolution. Denouncing the divide between rich and poor nations and the unequal terms of exchange that hindered Third World development, Boumedienne offered a blueprint for a statist, anti-Western approach to development predicated on state expropriation of natural resources and the creation of new international mechanisms to support Third World development.¹⁹ By the end of the decade, with US credibility battered by defeat in Vietnam and the American economy sick with stagflation, Third World demands for economic justice posed a distinct challenge to US global leadership.

From the moment Reagan entered the Oval Office, the administration confronted hostile Third World nationalists head-on. Rejecting social and economic rights claims as a fig leaf for totalitarianism, the administration championed the free market and electoral democracy as guarantors of individual liberty and prosperity. The debt crisis of 1981–1982, with its epicenter in Latin America and shock waves across the developing world, provided the Reagan administration with an opportunity to implement neoliberal economic ideas on a global scale. Reagan administration officials recognized that the power to offer the lifeline of debt restructuring to drowning Third World states was also leverage to secure transformative economic, political, and social reforms.

The structural adjustment policies demanded by the Washington Consensus propelled Third World states into a rapidly globalizing economy where capital moved with blistering speed across national borders, comparative advantage offered the allure of export-led growth as well as the risk of an economic race to the bottom, and a transnational class of nouveau riche capitalists emerged amid rising global inequality. In this context, the Reagan administration's democracy initiative reflected a

¹⁹Daniel J. Sargent, *A Superpower Transformed: The Remaking of American Foreign Relations in the 1970s* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015), 176–7.

growing US recognition that a combination of debt and democracy in the developing world would better serve US interests than debt and dictatorships. Particularly in South America, as the democracy initiative gained momentum over the course of the 1980s, American diplomats were increasingly outspoken in their support of electoral transitions and NED-funded projects proliferated. Career Foreign Service Officer Theodore E. Gildred, for example, described his posting in Buenos Aires as, “Basically, my mission was to help the Argentine government consolidate its democracy and to help the institutions that needed to become more democratic continue on that path.”²⁰ Without question, this marked a significant shift from previous decades of US support for right-wing dictatorships and was grist for the mill for partisan advocates of the administration. The Reagan administration, Elliott Abrams boldly asserted in 1988, had been “a more effective advocate and supporter of democracy in the region than any of its predecessors.”²¹

The actual US contribution to democratization in South America was more limited. As Thomas Carothers writes, it was largely “democracy by applause.”²² Indeed, in a 1988 meeting among South American heads of state, none of the leaders mentioned the US role in supporting democracy. To the contrary, there was general agreement that meeting debt servicing demands—over the previous six years the region had paid US\$160 billion to service a US\$420 billion foreign debt—was deepening inequality, accelerating instability, and *eroding* popular support for democracy.²³ Yet from a US policy perspective, the situation had dramatically improved since the late 1970s: global economic changes associated with neoliberalism, combined with the declining appeal of socialism and Gorbachev’s perestroika, had sucked the wind out of the Third World nationalists’ sails and breathed new life into the US hegemonic project.

²⁰ Gildred, Theodore E. Interviewed by Hank Zivetz. April 26, 1990. Transcript. The Foreign Affairs Oral History Collection of the Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training, Oral History Collection, https://www.adst.org/OH%20TOCs/Gildred,%20Theodore%20M.toc.pdf?_ga=2.211850388.1491710752.1528692966-1130200362.1522950675

²¹ Elliot Abrams, ‘Latin America in the Time of Reagan: The U.S. has led a Historic Expansion of Democracy.’ *New York Times*, July 27, 1988: A25.

²² Thomas Carothers, *In the Name of Democracy: U.S. Policy toward Latin America In the Reagan Years* (Berkeley and Oxford: University of California Press, 1991), 132.

²³ Alan Riding, ‘Democracy and Debt: U.S. Policy on Latin America is Well Received—In Washington,’ *New York Times*, October 30, 1988: E2.

DEMOCRACY PROMOTION ORGANIZATION AND TACTICS

The ultimate objective of US democracy promotion activities within states was not simply to replace a problematic leader with a more congenial successor, but to create a political system which would be stable and legitimate, open to the global economy, and could continue to function without the need for ongoing US support and direction. The strictures of the Cold War competition and balance of forces, combined with domestic political constraints, limited the US ability to construct such systems by using force or through occupation. These factors made the promotion of democracy under Reagan a complex endeavor which required the generation of new tactics of exercising US influence over other states and their civil and political societies, and new organizational structures to implement these tactics.

Tactics and an effective organizational infrastructure to promote democracy did not emerge fully formed in 1981. Instead, they developed through a process of trial and error. As the case studies in this volume illustrate, throughout the decade the Reagan administration developed a “democracy promotion toolkit” consisting of three key tactics. The first was diplomatic pressure on or engagement with foreign states to encourage reform, as in South Korea and the Soviet Union. The second was technical elections assistance to guarantee procedurally clean elections during transitions to democracy, as in El Salvador. The third was support for opposition political movements and civil society groups, as in Poland, the Philippines, and Chile. Finally, in extreme cases such as Nicaragua, the administration combined the first three tactics with support for counter-revolutionary forces seeking to destabilize the government.

The use of diplomatic pressure to encourage other governments to reform was not wholly new: as MacDonald shows, the US had deployed similar approaches during the late 1940s, 1950s, and 1960s in states such as Nationalist China and South Vietnam, often with little effect.²⁴ In contrast, the Reagan administration’s deployment of this tool was far more effective. However, the wide deployment of technical elections assistance and political aid programs to impact on local political processes and the balance of political forces *within* states represented an innovation in American practice.

²⁴ Douglas J. MacDonald, *Adventures in Chaos: American Intervention for Reform in the Third World* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1992).

This intervention in the political and civil society of target states was enabled by the creation of new capabilities inside the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and the foundation of hybrid public-private organizations such as the National Endowment for Democracy. The technical elections assistance conducted by USAID in El Salvador, as documented by McCormick in this volume, and then in other states such as Honduras, Guatemala, and Chile,²⁵ represented attempts to guarantee the legitimacy of the elections and secure buy-in from key local elites. Often these electoral programs were conducted with the consent of the existing government, which had decided to launch a democratic transition; sometimes, they were enabled due to a combination of popular and US government pressure on dictators such as Marcos and Pinochet.

The NED, in contrast, provided aid and training to parties and democratic groups aimed at the creation of initial democratic governments acceptable to the US. These political aid grants helped to strengthen the organization of non-governmental organizations such as political parties and unions and to increase their ability to communicate their political messages to the population. As Geoghagen's chapter shows, both the NED and USAID also played a key role in empowering business groups to organize and more effectively spread neoliberal economic ideas and practices in foreign societies. The NED's legal status as a non-governmental organization was of key importance in allowing the Endowment to conduct its programs while largely avoiding the problems channeling these activities through a government department might have provoked, such as a nationalistic backlash from indigenous democrats or diplomatic friction between the sitting dictatorship and the US government.

This method of intervention in the political and civil society of target states rested on interests and ideas shared by the US government, the Endowment, and foreign democratic groups. US government funding for the NED did not translate into total US government control of the Endowment's actions: as documented by Pee, the Endowment's democracy promotion agenda was always wider than that of the Reagan administration, and administration officials spoke of requesting and

²⁵Thomas Carothers, 'The Resurgence of United States Political Development Assistance to Latin America in the 1980s,' in *The International Dimensions of Democratization: Europe and the Americas*, ed. Laurence Whitehead (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 131–3.

encouraging NED involvement, rather than demanding it. However, a common world view based on a shared understanding of the connection between promoting democracy and US national security interests, the battle against communism, and the expansion of free markets eased cooperation between government and Endowment officials. Similarly, the provision of political aid by the NED to foreign democratic groups did not make these groups the puppets of either the Endowment or the US government. Instead, the interests of political forces overseas, US non-state democracy promoters, and the US state converged. As Robinson notes, US intervention and internal political processes in these states became interwoven in highly complex ways.²⁶

These tools of democracy promotion played an important role in accomplishing the regime transformations the US wanted to achieve. Diplomatic pressure on governments provided political space for opposition forces to organize and recruit. Building up the strength of opposition groups acceptable to US interests provided a high probability that the increased political space and electoral processes the Reagan administration supported would benefit forces capable of generating political stability and friendly to the US, rather than already-discredited dictatorial leaders or groups seen as radical or pro-Soviet such as the Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front (FMLN) in El Salvador or the New People's Army (NPA) in the Philippines. Technical elections assistance, by guaranteeing against electoral fraud, helped to produce non-violent transitions which could be accepted as legitimate by the elites and populations of a target state. During the 1980s the US used a different mix of these tools depending on local factors such as how much political space was already available in states where the administration wanted to foster political change and the strength of pro- and anti-US political forces.

US practice evolved over the decade as the use of these three tools became more integrated. In 1988, diplomatic pressure from the Reagan administration, USAID technical elections assistance, and National Endowment for Democracy programs operated together to replace the Pinochet dictatorship in Chile with a political coalition acceptable to American interests. Diplomatic pressure from the US government pushed Pinochet to hold a comparatively free and fair referendum on his rule, USAID implemented programs to monitor the voting to ensure against fraud, and programs run by the NED ensured that the political benefits

²⁶William I. Robinson, *Promoting Polyarchy: Globalization, US Intervention, and Hegemony* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 109–110.

would accrue to a Christian Democrat-dominated opposition coalition compatible with US interests.²⁷

The new democracy promotion techniques generated under Reagan also became more institutionalized within the US national security bureaucracy over the course of the 1980s. Elections assistance had begun as an ad hoc measure in El Salvador in the preparatory period for the 1982 and 1984 elections; by 1987 USAID leaders had created a permanent capability to conduct these programs—the International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES)—which was to operate on a global basis, beyond the traditional zones of US influence in Latin America and East Asia. IFES was set up as a private organization to avoid provoking the sensitivities of local populations to political interference by the US, much as the NED had been.²⁸ By 1990 democracy promotion programs had become priorities for USAID itself, as the Agency began to plan its own “Democracy Initiative” focused not only on widening elections assistance but also on building democratic institutions and supporting political parties overseas: the last activity had previously been the preserve of the NED. This initiative aimed to “establish the promotion of democracy as a strategic goal over the broad range of A.I.D. programs.”²⁹

By the end of Reagan’s second term, the democracy initiative had thus evolved significantly, and the US had begun to combine state-executed diplomatic strategies and sub-state political strategies successfully. As Reagan left office, the US was poised to aid Polish and Nicaraguan opposition forces in transitional elections in 1989 and 1990.³⁰ More broadly, the growing institutionalization of electoral assistance and political aid programs within the US state provided a foundation for US presidents in the post-Cold War era to build upon.

²⁷ Morris Morley and Chris McGillion, *Reagan and Pinochet: The Struggle over US Policy toward Chile* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2015) and Robinson, *Promoting Polyarchy*, 175–193.

²⁸ Eddie Mahe, Jr., & Associates Inc., ‘Democracy Program Election Assistance Project: Phase I,’ May 1986 *USAID Development Experience Clearinghouse (DEC)*, http://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/pdabd700.pdf and Eddie Mahe, Jr., & Associates Inc., ‘Democracy Program Election Assistance Project: Phase II.’ September 10, 1987, *USAID DEC*, http://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/pdaaw739.pdf

²⁹ USAID, ‘An Initiative by A.I.D. to Support the Evolution of Stable, Democratic Societies: The Democracy Initiative,’ December 1990, *USAID DEC*, http://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/pdacq141.pdf, 1.

³⁰ William I. Robinson, *A Faustian Bargain: U.S. Intervention in the Nicaraguan Elections and American Foreign Policy in the post-Cold War era* (London and Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1992).

THE IMPACTS AND OUTCOMES OF DEMOCRACY PROMOTION UNDER THE REAGAN ADMINISTRATION

The Reagan administration's democracy promotion initiative was a defining development in US foreign policy during the 1980s. The program was central in the institutionalization of human rights in US foreign policy. By recasting human rights as anti-communism, neoliberal economic policies, and democracy promotion, the Reagan administration deftly shifted from its initial rejection of human rights—as part of a broader rejection of Jimmy Carter's perceived policy failures—to championing them as a natural extension of America's moral commitment to advancing rights and liberties at home and abroad. As Secretary of State James Baker asserted during his confirmation hearing in January 1989, human rights “is one of the very basic foundations of our foreign policy, and for that matter, our national security policy.”³¹ By the end of the decade, the administration had thus moved away from the Kirkpatrick Doctrine's support for authoritarian allies in the fight against totalitarianism, and human rights was widely accepted as legitimate US foreign policy concern—a development even sharp critics of Reagan were forced to admit. “In accepting, at least rhetorically, that efforts to promote human rights are central to U.S. foreign policy and that such efforts should proceed evenhandedly, the Reagan administration effectively ended debate over these issues,” noted Human Rights Watch Executive Director Aryeh Neier. “These propositions are now taken for granted.”³²

Yet the Reagan administration's redefinition of human rights also narrowed the playing field. Social and economic rights, which had been championed throughout the Cold War by the communist world, and, in the 1960s and 1970s by many Third World nationalists, were intentionally excluded from the Reagan administration's human rights framework. “I remain skeptical about the idea that food, jobs, housing, medical care and the many other relevant economic and social questions belong on the human rights agenda,” noted Richard Schifter, who served as Assistant Secretary of State for Human Rights and Humanitarian Affairs from 1985 to 1992.³³ In particular, the administration's democracy promotion initia-

³¹ Quoted in Aryeh Neier, ‘Human Rights in the Reagan Era: Acceptance in Principle,’ *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 506 (1989): 31.

³² Neier, ‘Human Rights in the Reagan Era,’ 38.

³³ Richard Schifter, ‘Building Firm Foundations: The Institutionalization of United States Human Rights Policy in the Reagan Years.’ *Harvard Human Rights Journal* 2 (Spring 1989): 16.

tive was rooted in a belief that a free-market economy was an essential ingredient for a functioning democracy. This model of democracy deemphasized questions of social and economic inequality and emphasized a direct relationship between market logic and democratic process. “Individual liberty, economic freedom, and anti-communitarianism stood at the heart of this agenda,” writes international relations theorist Milja Kurki, “which put procedural democratization at the center ground of activity.”³⁴

These elements shaped how the US democracy promotion initiative influenced political developments abroad. The project did not generate political transitions where none would have occurred, but it did channel these transitions into political and electoral avenues consonant with American interests. To be sure, the countries of the Soviet Empire and the Third World in which the US contributed to successful democratic transitions experienced greater political freedom. At the same time, the model of democracy which the Reagan administration left key problems unresolved and fostered new ones.

First, democratic transitions often left powerful institutions outside democratic control. This was particularly true of Latin American states where the US supported or encouraged democratic transitions. In states such as El Salvador, Guatemala, the Philippines, and Chile, the military maintained a high degree of institutional independence. This could extend as far as guaranteed representation in Congress, the ability for military chiefs to set their own budgets, and control of continued counterinsurgency warfare without civilian oversight.³⁵

Second, while political space was opened up, the experience of democratization in Latin America and East Asia only partially proved the Reagan administration’s contention, as outlined by Søndergaard in this volume, that democratization would provide an overarching solution to the problem of human rights abuses through systemic change. Sharnak’s discussion of Reagan administration policy toward Uruguay shows that the

³⁴Milja Kurki, *Democratic Futures: Revisioning Democracy Promotion* (New York: Routledge, 2013), 124.

³⁵For examples, see Brian Loveman, ‘¿Misión Cumplida? Civil Military Relations and the Chilean Political Transition.’ *Journal of Interamerican Studies and World Affairs* 33, no. 3 (1991): 36, 46; Richard Wilson, ‘Continued Counterinsurgency: Civilian Rule in Guatemala,’ in *Low Intensity Democracy: Political Power in the New World Order*, eds. Barry Gills, Joel Rocamora and Richard Wilson (London and Boulder, CO: Pluto Press, 1993), 136–8; and James Petras and Steve Vieux, ‘The Transition to Authoritarian Electoral Regimes in Latin America,’ *Latin American Perspectives* 21, no. 4 (1994): 10.

administration pushed for democratic institutions and procedures to be created but did not attempt to halt continuing human rights abuses by the military. In El Salvador, although the number of state killings of civilians fell from its peak of 16,000 in 1981, in 1986 there were still 100 extrajudicial killings per month.³⁶ These figures show the situation two years after José Napoleón Duarte's election victory and signaled a shift to more selective repression by the military and death squads, but not its abandonment as a tactic. In the Philippines, Ivan Molloy has documented the "privatizing" and "civilianizing" of the counterinsurgency campaigns previously carried out against the NPA by the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) through the creation of private anti-communist paramilitary organizations which continued to conduct extrajudicial executions of human rights workers, trade unionists, and clergy. While Aquino attempted to claim these groups for her revolution by initially describing them as a result of the "people power" demonstrated in the anti-Marcos protests which brought her to power, in fact, they were outside of her control, receiving direction and aid from the AFP and the US.³⁷ In South Korea, where the conservative former General Roh Tae Woo was the victor in the transitional elections, there was a degree of liberalization in subsequent years and the National Security Law—the legal basis of most previous dictatorial repression in South Korea—was revised. However, this law remained in force and continued to be used to repress organized labor into the 1990s.³⁸

Third, the degree of socioeconomic reform which accompanied democratization was limited, and the newly elected governments lost control of key economic levers and sectors. In states confronting deep structural inequalities, neoliberal policies that accompanied US democracy promotion had a punishing effect on non-elites. Washington Consensus policies, Nobel laureate and former World Bank chief economist and senior vice

³⁶William Deane Stanley, 'El Salvador: State-Building before and after Democratization, 1980–95,' *Third World Quarterly* 27, No. 1, From Nation-Building to State-Building (2006): 105.

³⁷Ivan Molloy, *Rolling Back Revolution: The Emergence of Low Intensity Conflict* (London: Pluto Press, 2001), 135–63.

³⁸See Barry Gills, 'Korean Capitalism and Democracy,' in *Low Intensity Democracy: Political Power in the New World Order*, edited by Barry Gills, Joel Rocamora and Richard Wilson (London and Boulder, CO: Pluto Press), 226–258 and Carl J. Saxer, *From Transition to Power Alternation: Democracy in South Korea 1987–1997* (London and New York: Routledge, 2002), 224.

president Joseph Stiglitz concludes, “vigorously pursued privatization and liberalization at a pace and in a manner that often imposed very real costs on countries ill-equipped to incur them.”³⁹ Particularly in Latin America, the standard of living during the “lost decade” of the 1980s declined significantly. In a pattern that would be repeated in the former Soviet Union and much of Eastern Europe in the 1990s, elections proved a weak palliative against poverty, while the imperatives of structural adjustment and new opportunities for cronyism impelled elected officials to seek to prevent the emergence of bottom-up strains of participatory and radical democratic activism. Widespread poverty and rising inequality would continue to plague both the Third World and the former Second World in the post-Cold War era. “Slums, however deadly and insecure,” Mike Davis concludes, “have a brilliant future.”⁴⁰

To be sure, some of these difficulties can be traced to local conditions and the actions of local forces. However, they were also connected to the type of democratization the US sponsored. Although democrats replaced dictators, the “managed transitions” favored by the Reagan administration left authoritarian state structures such as the military intact; US aid to militaries waging counterinsurgency campaigns safeguarded US national security interests but enabled some forms of repression to continue; and the neoliberal economic policies which the US saw as integral to creating liberal democratic states and to building a world order which favored its interests resulted in growing economic inequality.

THE REAGAN ADMINISTRATION’S DEMOCRACY PROMOTION AND POST-COLD WAR US FOREIGN POLICY

The Reagan administration’s democracy promotion initiative established a blueprint for US foreign policy in the post-Cold War era. The administration left a legacy consisting of a nexus of ideas on the interconnection of democracy promotion with US security and economic interests and a new toolkit for promoting democracy consisting of US government diplomatic initiatives and aid programs to strengthen electoral processes and political forces inside foreign states. Unfettered by the restrictions of the Cold War, the post-Cold war administrations built on and expanded this legacy to attempt to create a world order in line with US interests.

³⁹ Joseph E. Stiglitz, *Globalization and Its Discontents* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2003), 54.

⁴⁰ Mike Davis, *Planet of Slums* (New York: Verso, 2007), 150.

Presidents George H.W. Bush, Clinton, George W. Bush, and Barack Obama integrated democracy promotion into their foreign policies at the level of rhetoric and strategy. In April 1990, with communist rule in Eastern Europe collapsing and the Soviet Union tottering, Secretary of State James Baker declared, “Beyond containment lies democracy,” and defined America’s mission in the post-Cold War world as the “promotion and consolidation of democracy.”⁴¹ The Clinton administration declared its national security strategy to be “Engagement and Enlargement” of the world’s community of democratic states.⁴² George W. Bush spoke of basing US security policy on a “forward strategy of freedom” and “building the infrastructure of democracy” in terms that closely echoed the language of the Reagan administration.⁴³

These administrations also tied democracy promotion to US security and economic interests within the framework propounded by the Reagan administration. The bipartisan appeal of democracy promotion was evident in the Bill Clinton administration’s effort to generate a post-Cold War grand strategy to replace containment—a process White House insiders dubbed the “Kennan Sweepstakes.”⁴⁴ Sounding a theme that was unmistakably rooted in the Reagan era, Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs Tony Lake articulated a reverse domino theory. “During the Cold War, even children understood America’s security mission; as they looked at those maps on their schoolroom walls, they knew we were trying to contain the creeping expansion of that big, red blob,” Lake argued. “Today, at great risk of oversimplification, we might visualize our security mission as promoting the enlargement of the ‘blue areas’ of market democracies.”⁴⁵

⁴¹ Quoted in Samuel P. Huntington, *The Third Wave: Democratization in the Late Twentieth Century* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1993), 285.

⁴² See Douglas Brinkley, ‘Democratic Enlargement: The Clinton Doctrine,’ *Foreign Policy*, no. 106 (Spring 1997): 110–127 and White House, *A National Security Strategy of Engagement and Enlargement*, 1994, National Security Strategy Archive, <http://nssarchive.us/national-security-strategy-1994/>

⁴³ Dona Stewart, ‘The Greater Middle East and Reform in the Bush Administration’s Ideological Imagination,’ *Geographical Review* 97, no. 3 (2005): 410 and White House, *The National Security Strategy of the United States of America*, 2006, US Department of State, <https://www.state.gov/documents/organization/64884.pdf>

⁴⁴ John Dumbrell, *Clinton’s Foreign Policy: Between the Bushes, 1992–2000* (New York: Routledge, 2009), 41–50.

⁴⁵ Tony Lake, ‘From Containment to Enlargement,’ September 21, 1993, John Hopkins University School of Advanced International Studies, Washington, D.C., <https://www.mtholyoke.edu/acad/intrel/lakedoc.html>

To be sure, the Clinton administration's support for "market democracies"—as the core of its human rights policy—was tempered by the political fragmentation and ethnic violence that flared in the 1990s. As the domestic backlash following the death in 1993 of 18 US soldiers in Mogadishu made clear, the American public had little stomach for humanitarian missions in seeming intractable crises in the Third World. It was a lesson the Clinton administration took to heart; the following year, as the Rwandan genocide raged, human rights activist Monique Mujawamariya found little support in Washington for an American intervention to stop the killing. "Listen, Monique, the United States has no friends," one congressional official told her. "The United States has interests. And in the United States, there is no interest in Rwanda."⁴⁶

Yet democracy promotion in the Clinton era also served to facilitate US interventionism. The Clinton administration justified US interventions in Kosovo and Haiti by framing Democratic Enlargement in security terms. "By securitizing democracy," Rasmus Søndergaard writes, "the Clinton Administration sought to legitimize the use of force to defend democracy with or without the support of the international community."⁴⁷

If Clinton's emphasis on promoting market democracies reflected a striking continuity with the Reagan era, the interventionism that had underpinned American democracy promotion since the 1980s reached its ascendancy following the 9/11 terror attacks. To be sure, in many ways the Bush administration's response to the attacks reflected change, rather than continuity, in relation to US foreign policy over previous decades. As historian George Herring writes, "The principles of military preeminence, unilateralism, and preemptive war departed sharply from the realism of the first Bush administration and the basic principles that had guided Cold War strategies."⁴⁸ Yet as he waged the "War on Terror" George W. Bush was influenced by the belief of the Reagan administration—and associated forces such as the NED and neoconservatives—that the advance of democracy would defuse specific security threats. The contention that transitions to democracy in oppressive societies could defuse the growth of hostile

⁴⁶ See Paul Carlin, Dan Jones, Will Lyman, and Greg Barker, *Ghosts of Rwanda*, 2004, Alexandria, VA. Public Broadcasting Service. <https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/ghosts/etc/script.html> and Brinkley, 'Democratic Enlargement,' 119.

⁴⁷ Rasmus Sinding Søndergaard, 'Bill Clinton's "Democratic Enlargement" and the Securitisation of Democracy Promotion.' *Diplomacy & Statecraft* 26, no. 3 (2015): 547.

⁴⁸ George C. Herring, *From Colony to Superpower: U.S. Foreign Relations Since 1776* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 944.

radical movements had played a key role in Reagan administration policy toward El Salvador, the Philippines, and Chile. Bush's policy toward US-occupied Afghanistan, his decision to invade Iraq, and the administration's efforts to spark political reform in Arab dictatorships allied to America such as Egypt and Bahrain—policies lumped together as the “Middle East Freedom Agenda”—were based on a similar belief that US support for political reform in dictatorial Arab and Muslim states would produce legitimate regimes and provide alternatives to terrorism for disaffected Arab populations.⁴⁹

Both the Clinton and George W. Bush administrations also connected free-market economics and democracy. The Clinton administration's embrace of globalization meant, in practice, promoting economic policies that were largely consonant with the neoliberalism of the Reagan era. Describing the US as a “big corporation competing in the global marketplace,” Clinton argued that open markets were a necessary precondition both for transitions to democracy and for continued US economic growth. The administration merged neoliberal economics and democracy together in its use of the term “market democracies” and successfully convinced congressional lawmakers to approve a wave of trade deals, including the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) and the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT).⁵⁰

Critics found Clinton's rhetoric hard to square with reality. Indeed, for much of the Third World and the former Second World, Clinton's vision of expanding democratic freedoms and a prosperity born out of liberalizing markets bore little relation to reality. Forty-six nations, according to the United Nations *Human Development Report 2004*, entered the twenty-first century poorer than in 1990.⁵¹ And it was no coincidence that on the day NAFTA went into effect, the Zapatista National Liberation Army declared war on the Mexican state, demanding “work, land, housing, food, health care, education, independence,

⁴⁹ George W. Bush, 2003. ‘President Bush Discusses Freedom in Iraq and Middle East: Remarks by the President at the 20th Anniversary of the National Endowment for Democracy,’ *The White House*, November 6, 2003, <https://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/news/releases/2003/11/20031106-2.html> and ‘The Struggle for Iraq: Bush's Words to Britons: “Both our nations serve the cause of freedom.”’ *New York Times*, November 20, 1983, <https://www.nytimes.com/2003/11/20/world/struggle-for-iraq-bush-s-words-britons-both-our-nations-serve-cause-freedom.html>

⁵⁰ See White House, *National Security Strategy*, 1994; Søndergaard, ‘Bill Clinton's “Democratic Enlargement”,’ 541; and Brinkley, ‘Democratic Enlargement,’ 121.

⁵¹ Davis, *Planet of Slums*, 163.

freedom, democracy, justice and peace.” In a clear rebuke to the neoliberal imperatives of the Clinton era, the Zapatistas offered a radical democratic alternative. “We declare that we will not stop fighting until the basic demands of our people have been met by forming a government of our country that is free and democratic.”⁵²

The neoliberalism underpinning American democracy promotion intensified during the George W. Bush administration. Echoing Reagan, Bush declared there was “a single sustainable model for national success: freedom, democracy, and free enterprise.”⁵³ Following the rapid US military victory over Saddam Hussein’s armed forces, the US initiated an ambitious program to transform the Iraqi economy. Top Bush administration officials “regarded wholesale economic change in Iraq as an integral part of the American mission to remake the country,” writes journalist Rajiv Chandrasekaran. “To them, a free economy and a free society went hand in hand.”⁵⁴ Accordingly, the newly formed Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA) set out to privatize nearly 200 state-run industries, create a modern stock exchange, and restructure the tax code. Although the plan was ultimately shelved in the face of Iraqi resistance, crumbling infrastructure, and crippling unemployment, the privatization agenda—combined with the CPA’s de-Baathification decree and disbanding of the Iraqi military—contributed to widespread hardship, fueling disaffection with the US occupation and contributing to the emergence of a broad-based insurgency in 2004.⁵⁵

These linkages between democracy promotion, US national security, and neoliberal economics represented a continuation and development of ideas which had informed US strategy in the 1980s. The Reagan administration also left behind it a specific mode of promoting democracy through interfacing with and strengthening foreign political parties and civil society groups, and the beginnings of a US infrastructure for implementing this component of democracy promotion through the quasi-private National Endowment for Democracy and the elections assistance programs carried out by USAID. The Clinton and George W. Bush

⁵² ‘Declaración de la Selva Lacondona,’ reprinted in *Rebellion in Chiapas: An Historical Reader*, ed. John Womack, Jr. (New York: The New Press, 1994) 247–249.

⁵³ White House, *The National Security Strategy of the United States of America*, 2002, US Department of State, <https://www.state.gov/documents/organization/63562.pdf>, i.

⁵⁴ Rajiv Chandrasekaran, *Imperial Life in the Emerald City: Inside Iraq’s Green Zone* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2006), 115.

⁵⁵ Terry R. Anderson, *Bush’s Wars* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011).

administrations considerably enlarged the US national security bureaucracy's capability to intervene in the political and civil societies of other states and strengthen chosen democratic groups. The Clinton administration converted the State Department's Bureau of Human Rights and Humanitarian Affairs into the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, placing democracy promotion at the center of its mission, and created a Human Rights and Democracy Fund to be used by the Bureau to support political and civil society groups overseas.⁵⁶ It also increased the provision of elections assistance and political party aid through USAID, building on the organization's 1990 Democracy Initiative. The US government's democracy promotion spending rose from US\$100 million in 1990 to US\$700 million in 2000. Thomas Carothers writes that this constituted "the most extensive, systematic effort the United States has ever undertaken to foster democracy around the world."⁵⁷

The George W. Bush administration further built on this infrastructure during the War on Terror, creating the Middle East Partnership Initiative (MEPI) to support political parties, civil society groups and education in the region, and the Millennium Challenge Corporation, which provides incentives for developing countries to undertake democratic reforms by offering economic aid.⁵⁸ Under Bush, US government democracy spending as a component of the foreign aid budget reached over US\$2 billion.⁵⁹ The NED also continued to operate throughout this period, with a budget that reached US\$80 million per year under Bush—quadruple its typical allocation under Reagan.⁶⁰ This expansion developed the infrastructure created under Reagan and was aimed at continuing the strategy of supporting elections, political parties, and civil society groups to spark bottom-up democratic reforms in non-democratic states.

The post-Cold War administrations also deployed these political aid organizations, alongside US diplomatic initiatives, in both hostile and

⁵⁶ James D. Boys, *Clinton's Grand Strategy: US Foreign Policy in a Post-Cold War World* (London and New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2015), 218 and Thomas O. Melia, 'The Democracy Bureaucracy: The Infrastructure of American Democracy Promotion,' *Princeton Project on National Security*, 2005, https://www.princeton.edu/~ppns/papers/democracy_bureaucracy.pdf, 49.

⁵⁷ Carothers, 1991, 331.

⁵⁸ Melia, 2005, 46, 49.

⁵⁹ Nicole Bibbins Sedaca and Nicholas Bouchet, 'Holding Steady: US Democracy Promotion in a Changing World,' Chatham House Americas PP 2014/01. <https://www.chathamhouse.org/publications/papers/view/197475#>, 16.

⁶⁰ Dona Stewart, 'The Greater Middle East and Reform...', 407.

friendly dictatorships to encourage the creation of forms of political stability which favored US interests, as the Reagan administration had done in Poland, the Philippines, and Chile. From 1999 to 2000 the Clinton administration working through USAID, and the NED, in coalition with German, Dutch, and British democracy foundations, provided political aid to Serbian opposition parties and election monitoring assistance which led to the removal of Serb dictator Slobodan Milosevic in the wake of the Kosovo War.⁶¹ The George W. Bush administration, along with the NED and US civil society groups, implemented similar political aid programs in Middle Eastern states such as Egypt and Bahrain focused on observing elections and strengthening political and civil society groups.⁶² As with the Reagan administration programs, these political interventions were focused on aiding opposition forces which were acceptable to the US, not those which policy-makers conceived as radical and thus a danger to US interests. For example, in 2005 the Bush administration strongly protested the Egyptian government's arrest of liberal political leader Ayman Nour but did not make similar protests about the incarceration of figures from the Muslim Brotherhood.⁶³

The Reagan administration thus constituted a key bridge between US foreign policy during the Cold War and post-Cold War US strategy. The administration generated a strategy which aligned democracy promotion with US national security in the East and the West and an infrastructure for promoting political reform abroad. In sum, Reagan left a powerful legacy for US foreign policy in the post-Cold War era, providing both an influential narrative of the relationship between democracy, economics, and national security and a toolkit for intervening in the political society of foreign states.

THE FUTURE OF AMERICAN DEMOCRACY PROMOTION

The position which democracy promotion will occupy in US foreign policy in the future is unclear. The priority accorded to democracy promotion eroded under the Obama administration, linked to a reduced US

⁶¹ Marlene Spoorri, *Engineering Revolution: The Paradox of Democracy Promotion in Serbia* (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2015).

⁶² Bruce Gilley, 'Did Bush Democratize the Middle East? The Effects of External-Internal Linkages,' *Political Science Quarterly* 128, no. 4 (2013): 653–685.

⁶³ Katerina Dalacoura, 'US Democracy Promotion in the Arab Middle East since 11 September 2001: A Critique,' *International Affairs* 81, no. 5 (2005): 973.

commitment to democracy promotion due to its association with the Iraq War and failures of US policy in the Middle East more generally. Correspondingly, the rising power of Russia and China as non-democratic countervailing powers to the US can offer alternative sponsorship to less powerful dictatorships resisting US pressure to democratize. Unlike during the Cold War, when the world was divided roughly into capitalist and communist spheres, a shift of sponsor would not entail an ideological or systemic shift on the part of a government searching for alternative support.

At the same time, the Donald J. Trump administration marks a potential turning point in modern American history. Trump's "evolution from a buffoonish fringe candidate taken seriously by no one" to the President of the United States, lamented Francis Fukuyama shortly before the 2017 presidential inauguration, "is one of the most unexpected and traumatic events in recent U.S. history." Fukuyama, whose "end of history" thesis captured the zeitgeist underpinning US democracy promotion in the 1990s, offered an equally sweeping view of the Age of Trump—and one deeply pessimistic about the continuation of the US hegemony which democracy promotion initiatives had helped to construct. "The effects are uncertain, but in the worst case they could lead to the U.S. giving up entirely on global leadership, and the unravelling of the liberal world order it has done much to build since the 1950s."⁶⁴ Indeed, since entering the Oval Office, Trump has continued a trend of turning away from democracy promotion as an all-purpose legitimator of US foreign policy which began under the Obama administration. Correspondingly, Trump is weaponizing democracy promotion as a tool for criticizing US enemies such as Cuba and Iran, in a manner reminiscent of Ronald Reagan's initial use of democratic rhetoric as a tool for criticizing repression only in the Soviet Empire in the early years of his presidency.

The Trump administration has also set its sights on the democracy promotion infrastructure located in USAID, the State Department, the NED, and in other agencies. While Obama may have toned down his democracy promotion rhetoric, he maintained funding for the democracy promotion infrastructure.⁶⁵ In contrast, Trump's 2019 budget plan would enact a 40 percent cut on funding for the democracy infrastructure across the board,

⁶⁴ Francis Fukuyama, 'America: Failed State.' *Prospect*, no. 250, January 2017. <https://www.prospectmagazine.co.uk/magazine/america-the-failed-state-donald-trump>

⁶⁵ Sedaca and Bouchet, 'Holding Steady,' 16.

from US\$2.3 billion in 2016/2017 to US\$1.4 billion. NED funding is to be cut 60 percent, from US\$170 million in 2016/2017 to US\$67.2 million.⁶⁶ Such dramatic reductions would clearly impact the ability of the US democracy promotion infrastructure to execute programs and disburse funding to foreign political groups.

The Reagan administration's democracy initiative was born in a context of increasing globalization and US military power and was deployed to manage negative trends such as a decrease in the political stability of authoritarian states and to capitalize on positive ones such as growing economic problems and disaffection in the Soviet Empire in ways that favored US interests. The initiative partially rested on and partially strengthened a domestic ideological consensus in the US in favor of supporting democracy and human rights—albeit narrowly defined—and the presence in foreign states of liberal opposition movements and business factions whose programs were compatible with American interests. While predicting the future in the Trump era is a risky business, changes in these conditions will likely reduce the role and global character of democracy promotion as a strategy for constructing and assuring US hegemony in the future.

⁶⁶Freedom House, 'United States: Cuts to Democracy Funds Reduce U.S. Security,' February 12, 2018. <https://freedomhouse.org/article/united-states-cuts-democracy-funds-reduce-us-security>