

# WORKING P A P E R S

The Clinton  
Record on  
Democracy  
Promotion

*Thomas Carothers*



CARNEGIE ENDOWMENT  
*for International Peace*

**Democracy and  
Rule of Law Project**

**GLOBAL POLICY  
PROGRAM**

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### About the Author

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MANY FOREIGN POLICY THEMES HAVE COME AND GONE in the Clinton years, from assertive multilateralism and humanitarian intervention to strategic partnerships and the indispensable nation. One theme, however, has stayed the course. As a presidential candidate in 1992, Bill Clinton made democracy promotion the organizing concept of his proposed foreign policy. Throughout his presidency he and his top advisers have returned to the theme again and again. They have sounded the Wilsonian trumpet on democracy, but also argued that it is rooted in *realpolitik*, that in the post-Cold War world American ideals and interests have fused. In nearly every major foreign policy address they cite a host of ways that the spread of democracy abroad advances “hard” U.S. security and economic interests, from reducing the chances of war to decreasing terrorism.

With the Clinton era nearly over, an assessment of the Clinton record on democracy promotion is due. It is obvious that the policy has not lived up to the expansive rhetoric—policy so rarely does—but the question remains as to the nature of the relationship between words and deeds in this domain. What role has democracy promotion actually played in Clinton’s foreign policy? Where has the administration pursued democracy and where has it not? And why? Though the issue may appear as just so much talk to some, it is widely present in U.S. policy. Just in the past six months, for example, the issue has cropped up in many places. In Peru, the administration has clashed sharply with President Alberto Fujimori over his manipulation of the presidential elections. Administration officials, U.S. legislators, and policy pundits argued earlier this year over how extending permanent normal trading status to China would affect that country’s democratic prospects. The election of Vladimir Putin to the Russian presidency prompted some analysts to question whether U.S. democracy promotion efforts had failed in Russia and whether those efforts should be continued. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright declared her desire to see Serbian President Slobodan Milosevic out of power before the end of the year and, in the name of democracy, has upped U.S. support to the Serbian opposition. When President Clinton went to South Asia in the spring, the wisdom of a presidential stopover in Pakistan was debated in terms of whether it would bolster the legitimacy of the military government there and lessen the prospects for a return to civilian rule. In Warsaw in June, more than 80 foreign ministers met at the first “Community of Democracies” meeting, an effort spearheaded by the administration to bolster worldwide acceptance of a democratic norm.

Only by assessing the actual extent to which democracy promotion has played a role in Clinton’s policies is it possible to arrive at some judgment of the significance of those efforts and to identify both major accomplishments and missed opportunities. And that undertaking in turn

points to the question of how the next administration—whether Democratic or Republican—is likely to take on the issue of democracy promotion, and what approach would be best.

## SEMI-REALISM REDISCOVERED

No simple, black-and-white judgment of the Clinton record on democracy is possible. U.S. policies on democracy vary sharply from region to region, ranging from serious engagement to almost complete disinterest. Moreover, democracy promotion is pursued both as “high policy” and “low policy,” and the degree of engagement at one level often does not correspond with that on the other. Furthermore, the Clinton approach has changed over time, in response to political developments in the world and at home.

The uneven nature of the U.S. commitment to fostering democracy abroad is striking. Several regions or countries stand out on the positive side of the ledger. In Latin America, the Clinton administration, largely following the line set out in the Bush administration, has supported ongoing transitions to democracy and market economics in the belief that a democratic, prosperous hemisphere will best serve U.S. security interests. The administration has spoken out clearly and often on the importance of democracy, helped head off coup threats in Guatemala, Paraguay, and Ecuador, sponsored aid programs to shore up shaky transitions, and tried to push the Organization of American States to take an active role in democracy promotion. Yet the democracy component of U.S. policy in Latin America is hardly seamless. Across most of the 1990s, for example, the United States maintained close ties to President Fujimori, despite his anti-democratic tendencies, because of his cooperative stance on U.S. anti-narcotics efforts. Nevertheless, even many Latin Americans long hostile to U.S. involvement in their countries’ internal affairs acknowledge that the United States is now, on balance, a pro-democratic force in Latin America.

Similarly, in Eastern Europe, the Clinton policy line, again following that set out by the Bush administration, rests on the view that U.S. interests in democracy, market economics, and security work together. Except in former Yugoslavia, where, as discussed below, democracy has often been a secondary concern, the Clinton administration has emphasized democracy at the diplomatic level and continued many aid programs designed to bolster post-communist transitions to democracy. Although the root motivation behind the decision to expand NATO into Central Europe remains an item of debate, at some level NATO expansion represents another element of a policy aimed at “locking in” democracy where it has been achieved in Eastern Europe.

The Clinton administration ratcheted up the place of democracy promotion in U.S. policy toward Russia soon after taking office and devoted real attention to the issue across the span of Boris Yeltsin’s rule. As in Latin America and Eastern Europe, the guiding concept was the integration of political, economic, and security goals. Democracy promotion in Russia encountered substantial limitations and tensions in practice. Supporting democracy became a policy of supporting Yeltsin, which put the administration in some awkward spots—such as

downplaying large-scale Russian human rights violations in the first war in Chechnya, lauding a presidential election in 1996 marked by significant flaws, and alienating various parts of the Russian democratic political spectrum not closely associated with Yeltsin or with favored groups of reformers. Still, the U.S. commitment to bolstering Russian democracy was real and occupied the attention of senior policy makers.

On the other side of the ledger, a number of equally prominent cases stand out in which the Clinton administration has downplayed democracy. It was China that first took the wind out of the sails of Clinton's early billowing rhetoric about democracy promotion. The administration's 1994 decision to delink human rights and trade effectively meant that human rights, and by extension democracy, would stay at the margins of Clinton's China policy. As the administration intensified its push this year to rebuild U.S.–China relations on the basis of commercial engagement, Clinton officials played up the idea that increased U.S. trade and investment in China would be an important force for political liberalization. Although this idea may have some validity in the long-term, it is obvious that Clinton's China policy is primarily about economics and that the democracy rationale is very much an add-on.

In Indonesia, the administration maintained the long-standing U.S. friendship with President Suharto—reflecting the traditional U.S. view of Suharto as a politically flawed but nonetheless valuable economic and security partner—right up to the last few weeks and even days before his fall in 1998. In Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and other Middle Eastern countries, this administration has preserved close U.S. ties with autocratic regimes that serve U.S. interests on oil, the Arab–Israeli peace process, and resistance to Islamic fundamentalist groups. In Central Asia and the Caucasus, the tantalizing vision of huge, newly discovered oil and gas reserves spurred the administration, at least until the last year or two, to take a soft line toward most of the strongmen regimes, most notably in Kazakhstan and Azerbaijan. In Africa, Clinton officials enthused for a period in the mid-1990s over the soft authoritarian regimes in Uganda, Rwanda, and Ethiopia, seizing upon the briefly florescent concept of “Africa's new leaders” in the hope that they could deliver regional stability and order.

This divided ledger highlights the fact that, despite the many assertions by Clinton and his top foreign policy advisers that America's ideals and interests in the world are now harmonious, serious conflicts of interest still exist. Economic and security interests of various types, from access to national resources to regional security issues, still collide with U.S. interest in democracy in many places. The core strategic approach of U.S. policy under Clinton remains what it has been for decades, a semi-realist balancing of sometimes competing and sometimes complementary interests. Where democracy appears to fit in well with U.S. security and economic interests, the United States promotes democracy. Where democracy clashes with other significant interests, it is downplayed or even ignored. And where the United States has few identifiable economic or security interests of any real consequence—as in large parts of Africa, for example—the United States will give some attention to democracy out of a general idealistic impulse but usually not commit major financial or human resources to the task.

## INSTITUTIONALIZING DEMOCRACY PROMOTION

A second element of the Clinton record on democracy promotion renders the already highly varied picture more complex: the gradual institutionalization of democracy promotion mechanisms and mindsets within the policy bureaucracy. This is a process that began during the Reagan years, continued under Bush, then accelerated under Clinton. Evidence of the process is found in many places. The Clinton administration created various democracy promotion positions and offices at the State Department and USAID and set up several inter-agency groups to coordinate democracy programs and policies. The administration reorganized the international affairs budget around strategic priorities, and made democracy building one of those priorities. U.S. missions abroad are now required to produce an annual performance plan, one component of which is a democracy promotion strategy. Throughout the policy bureaucracy, U.S. officials are much more conversant with, engaged in, and often serious about democracy-related issues than they were ten or even five years ago.

The most substantial element of this process of institutionalization is the large growth in aid for democracy—assistance programs explicitly designed to foster or bolster democratic institutions and processes. The current wave of U.S. democracy aid began under Reagan but multiplied exponentially under Clinton, from around \$100 million annually ten years ago to more than \$700 million today. In approximately 100 countries around the world, a raft of U.S. government agencies, quasi-governmental organizations (such as the National Endowment for Democracy and the Eurasia Foundation), and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) operating with public funds are promoting free and fair elections, sponsoring judicial and legislative reform, supporting independent media, encouraging decentralization, underwriting advocacy NGOs, and pursuing other elements of a by now familiar international agenda of democracy aid. The effects of these programs are usually modest and sometimes paltry. They rarely determine political outcomes or fundamentally reshape political systems. Nonetheless, they positively affect the skills and outlook of thousands of political actors in other countries and over the long term contribute to helping democratization advance.

For the most part, the institutionalization of democracy promotion in the policy and aid bureaucracies—what can be considered the “low policy” side of the picture—fits within the “high policy” framework. Where the United States has defined its overall diplomatic line as one that seeks actively to back democracy, these programs help fill out the policy. In Peru this year, for example, the forthright election monitoring carried out by the National Democratic Institute and the Carter Center in the run-up to the first round of presidential balloting provided the State Department with a strong basis for taking a tough line on President Fujimori’s manipulation of the process. In some cases, however, low policy quietly operates against the main current of high policy. While the U.S. government maintained cordial relations with President Tudjman of Croatia in the mid-1990s, the National Democratic Institute worked extensively to train those Croatian political parties not linked with Tudjman. When Tudjman died in 1999, the activists and parties that NDI had worked with emerged quickly as major actors on the new political scene. Similar examples could be cited from Indonesia, Kazakhstan, Vietnam, and elsewhere.

## CHANGE OVER TIME

Still another complicating factor is the fact that Clinton's policies in this realm have shifted over time. Setting aside the pro-democracy rhetorical framework, which has been largely constant, the actual level of attention to democracy has increased somewhat, especially since 1997. In some cases, political developments—sometimes positive, sometimes negative—in other countries have spurred greater U.S. attention to democracy building. After dictators fell in Indonesia and Nigeria, for example, the administration shifted gears to broadly promote democracy in those two countries and now counts them as two (along with Ukraine and Colombia) of four priority countries for democracy promotion. Sometimes it is democratic backsliding rather than breakthroughs that prompt a new look. For example, in contrast to a fairly forgiving U.S. approach to democracy in Central Asia in the first half of the 1990s, Secretary Albright came down hard on the issue during her trip to the region this year. Albright's advisers explain the new tougher line as a result in part of the accumulated backsliding of democracy in the region and the sense that some threshold of political decay had been crossed, especially in the former democratic bright spot, Kyrgyzstan.

In other contexts, a changed security situation has provoked a different line on democracy. During the war in Bosnia, for example, U.S. policy toward Serbia, Croatia, and the rest of former Yugoslavia had little to do with democracy. The administration felt it was necessary to deal cooperatively with Milosevic in Belgrade and Tudjman in Zagreb, dictators though they might be, for the sake of peacemaking goals. After the Kosovo crisis and NATO military action there, however, promoting democracy in Serbia—or at least ousting Milosevic—became something of a priority. And with Tudjman gone, the administration is now openly enthusiastic about democracy building in Croatia (though short of resources for the task).

Personnel changes in Washington as well as political developments abroad have also moved the Clinton administration toward a somewhat greater embrace of democracy concerns. Secretary of State Albright is the only top official in either the first or second Clinton administration who has demonstrated a searching, sustained interest in democracy promotion. Albright has had to face some major limitations on her role as Secretary of State—a President only intermittently engaged in foreign affairs, a cautious National Security Adviser with the ear of the President, an aggressive Treasury Department with a lock on international economic policy, and a Defense Department determined to control military-related security issues. Moreover, the Kosovo crisis took up most of one full year of her tenure. Nevertheless, she has stayed with the theme and helped connect high and low policy in a pro-democratic direction in various places, such as Peru, Pakistan, Serbia, and Central Asia.

It should be noted that the Republican-controlled Congress has done little to increase the place of democracy building in U.S. policy. With their aversion to or even disdain for international issues, the 1994 House Republicans have been suspicious of any U.S. commitments abroad beyond certain basic security arrangements. They are prone to lump democracy promotion together with the humanitarian interventions they so much dislike and seem at times willfully ignorant of the fact that democracy promotion is not a Clintonian do-gooder invention.

Congress's constant cutting of the international affairs budget has inevitably crimped what is possible on democracy promotion. After Indonesia and Nigeria launched potentially historic democratic transitions in 1998, for example, the administration had trouble coming up with funds to support new democracy aid programs in those countries. Only by taking money away from already lightly funded democracy-building activities in other countries was the administration able to create special initiatives in those two important transitions.

## THE BALANCE SHEET

The Clinton administration clearly fell short of its lofty rhetorical aspirations on democracy. It neither fundamentally revised the semi-realist framework of U.S. policy nor devoted high-level attention to the topic in a broad, sustained fashion. Democracy concerns have, however, played a supporting but genuine role in U.S. policy toward many countries, and merged with U.S. economic and security interests in more places than ever before. The institutionalization of democracy programs and policies within the policy and aid bureaucracies has accelerated under Clinton, and a tendency toward somewhat increased attention to the issue is evident in the last several years.

To assess the significance of Clinton policies in this domain and identify the major accomplishments and shortcomings, it is useful to take a brief look at the overall state of democracy in the world. In the early 1990s, democracy was dramatically on the rise, and facile assumptions about a major U.S. role in that trend were easy to make. The state of the "worldwide democratic trend" is today rather more sobering, leading to less expansive views about the U.S. causal role.

Of the nearly 100 countries that experienced political openings in the 1980s or early 1990s and were counted by exultant democracy promoters as part of democracy's "Third Wave," only a small number have succeeded in consolidating democracy. These are the dozen or so relatively affluent countries of Central Europe, East Asia, and the Southern Cone of Latin America. And only a few new countries have joined the Third Wave since the early 1990s, most notably Indonesia, Nigeria, and Mexico. Most of the transitional countries are still far from liberal democracy. Some of them, such as Belarus, Uzbekistan, Tunisia, and Cote d'Ivoire, have slipped back to outright authoritarianism, raising doubts about whether they should have been considered transitional in the first place. Many of them are stuck awkwardly in a gray zone between democracy and dictatorship, with democratic forms but little real democratic substance. Whole regions have made disappointingly little democratic progress to date in the Third Wave. Central Asia and the Caucasus are dominated by undemocratic strongmen. A small number of African countries are making valiant efforts to preserve political pluralism work, but failed states, new interstate wars, and seemingly unending old civil wars tragically dominate large sections of the continent. The Middle East remains a political backwater, with political liberalization visible only in a few places. Although Latin America seemed a few years ago to be firmly in the democratic camp, a whole subregion—the Andean countries of Venezuela, Colombia, Ecuador, and Peru, as well as Paraguay—is unnervingly close to democratic breakdown.

It is tempting for some commentators simply to ascribe blame or credit for the overall state of democracy in the world to whichever U.S. administration is in power. Democracy on the rise—kudos to the administration! Democracy losing ground—what are those idiots in Washington doing! Certainly at some very general levels—as guarantor of a security framework in many regions and as bedrock of the international economy—the United States helps create the underlying conditions of peace and prosperity in which democracy can flourish. Yet the direct effects of U.S. policies on the success or failure of democracy in most countries are usually fairly limited. The difficulties that have plagued so many of the attempted democratic transitions around the world are for the most part internal factors on which outside actors can have only secondary influence: such factors include deeply rooted psychological legacies of dictatorial rule, heavily concentrated economic power structures, and debilitatingly weak governmental institutions. And those countries that have managed to consolidate democracy in recent years have drawn primarily on their own resources, innovations, and resilience.

At the same time, it is possible to identify some ways in which U.S. policies and programs have contributed to democratization abroad in the past ten years. To start with, the strong, positive incorporation of democracy as a mutually reinforcing goal alongside U.S. economic and security interests in some places—primarily Latin America, Eastern Europe, and Russia—has been useful. It has helped firm up the idea in these countries or regions that democracy is the normal, expected outcome; stimulate the creation of multilateral mechanisms to support democracy; and put the weight and prestige of the United States clearly on the side of democracy. This does not ensure democracy, but it is a tangible positive factor widely felt in relevant foreign political circles.

Second, active U.S. diplomatic involvement at some critical political junctures has helped keep democracy intact or increase the possibility of its return. U.S. opposition to threatened coups in Guatemala, Ecuador, Paraguay, and elsewhere in Latin America was not the only factor causing their defeat but it was significant. U.S. pressure on Fujimori in Peru's presidential elections this year did not stop him from manipulating the process but raised the price he is paying at home and abroad for doing so. U.S. support for Georgian president Eduard Shevardnadze at several key moments helped him hold on to power. The administration's nuanced response to the recent military coup in Pakistan—attempting to blend democracy concerns with a recognition of the profound political problems of the past decade there—has not had decisive effects, but it struck the right note in unusually difficult circumstances.

Third, in dozens of countries, U.S. democracy aid programs have in small but real ways helped successful transitions advance or keep troubled transitions from closing down entirely. Aid efforts have improved the quality of many elections in Africa, Eastern Europe, Latin America, and Asia. They have helped sustain and diversify independent media in numerous countries. Although the Clinton administration's sudden, urgent enthusiasm about civil society and its promotion were overblown, U.S. aid to advocacy NGOs all around the world did stimulate some positive reforms. Similarly, although the administration's "discovery" of rule of law as a means of promoting democracy abroad was laden with simplistic assumptions, the

burgeoning world of law-related programs has encouraged some countries to take seriously the need to reform legal and judicial institutions.

Alongside these positive effects are some shortcomings. The administration failed to integrate democracy concerns effectively with economic and security interests in some regions, weakening the credibility of the democracy theme overall. The administration can claim to have arrived at a China policy that successfully combines U.S. economic and security interests. Even if that is true, which is debatable, the path getting there was rocky. For years the administration failed to pursue a consistent, persuasive approach to combining human rights and democracy concerns with economic and security interests. The administration's obvious eagerness for most of its tenure to downplay the deficiencies of strongman rule in Central Asia and the Caucasus reflected a disappointing lapse into old-think about the value of "friendly tyrants." And in the Middle East the administration showed little proclivity to find a way to introduce a policy of real U.S. support for even gradual political reform.

Although the administration acted successfully at some key junctures for democracy, it did not in others. The administration uttered no words of criticism when Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak steamrolled his way through yet another national election in 1996. In Indonesia, the administration missed the chance in 1997–1998 to get out in front on democracy in Suharto's declining months. In the period immediately following the signing of the Dayton accords, Clinton and his top advisers failed to take tough measures—such as pushing for the arrest of top-level Bosnian Serb war criminals—that might have given Bosnian democracy a real chance.

Haiti was the single most visible disappointment of the Clinton administration's democracy promotion efforts, if only because it was initially touted by Clinton officials as the leading edge of the new democracy policy. Haiti was and remains a remarkably difficult place to try to build democracy, due to its catastrophic economic situation and ragged socio-political history. But there have also been flaws in the post-1994 U.S. effort there, including an unwillingness to push harder on some of the key political leaders and some second-rate efforts on democracy aid. More generally, the fact that the administration chose one of the least promising countries in the world to be the leading edge of its democracy policy reflects a persistent unwillingness to think strategically rather than idealistically in this domain.

## LOOKING AHEAD

What role will democracy promotion likely play in the foreign policy of the next administration? What role should it play? Governor George Bush and his advisers are emphasizing a return to realism, promising to set America's sights firmly back on the big power issues and to stop what they see as a pattern of dispersing American resources and attention on issues of secondary importance, especially those of a humanitarian nature. Though of course not openly critical of Clinton policies, Vice President Al Gore and his advisers quietly echo elements of the same theme, stressing that the Vice President is fully comfortable with geopolitical and military issues, in an implicit contrast to the President.

A certain corrective toward a greater focus on power and geopolitical strategy is natural and desirable given Clinton's shortcomings on this plane. Whichever candidate wins the White House, however, should be careful not to throw democracy promotion unthinkingly into the revisionist hopper. The Bush team in particular should not make the mistake of viewing or characterizing democracy promotion as a Clintonian concern per se. On the rhetorical level, Clinton did try to claim the term as his own. The current emphasis on democracy promotion got its start, however, in the Reagan years, and has demonstrated bipartisan appeal now for almost two decades.

Certainly democracy promotion policies must be built on realistic assumptions about the ability of the United States to affect the political direction of other societies. And the ebullient pro-democracy rhetoric should be scaled back. However, the core idea that democracy promotion is not merely an idealistic enterprise but is often integral to U.S. "hard" interests should be preserved. Slipping back to the view that democracy is merely a nice "add-on" in U.S. policy would be an unfortunate retrogression.

It is likely that the next administration will hew to the well-established policy line in Latin America and Eastern Europe of linking democracy to economic and security goals. Adverse developments in the Andean region—such as continued defiance of democratic norms by President Fujimori in Peru and democratic slippage in Venezuela—may test that policy line early on. A much bigger and less certain question is whether the next administration can settle on policies toward Russia and China that incorporate democracy concerns into the framework of a renewed focus on the larger security issues.

In Russia it is clear that, in this new Putin-led phase of Russian politics, the U.S. government should not try to engage in the same sort of domestic politicking that it did in the Yeltsin era, especially the anointing of favorites and the efforts to influence elections. Yet this does not mean returning to some "billiard ball" model of the past, which some Bush advisers seem at times to propose, in which only Russia's international behavior matters to the United States. The next administration will engage the Russian government actively on a host of security issues and might be able to maintain a constructive security dialogue even if Russia slides toward authoritarianism. But U.S. security interests will be facilitated and much improved over the long run if democracy succeeds in Russia. And the United States can still play a positive, albeit modest role in that process, by consistently articulating the belief and expectation that Russia will continue on a democratic path, speaking out forcefully if the Russian government takes openly anti-democratic actions, and expanding U.S. support for the wide-ranging but precarious universe of non-governmental organizations that are broadening sociopolitical participation in Russia.

Similarly, U.S.–China relations in this decade will be dominated by economic and security issues, however Chinese politics evolve. But as with Russia, U.S. security concerns will be ameliorated if China moves toward liberalization, pluralism, and, eventually, democracy. And though U.S. influence on that process is limited, democracy promotion should nonetheless be viewed as part of, and even integral to, the overall approach. Increased U.S. trade with and

investment in China may be a force for positive political change over the long term, but there is nothing automatic about it. U.S. businesses pushing for permanent normal trade relations with China have argued that they will serve as models and leaders in China on the rule of law, transparency, accountability, and corporate social responsibility. The next administration should hold them to account on these grounds, and establish some specific advisory consultative mechanisms for doing so. The next administration must also renew and broaden U.S. human rights policy toward China, going well beyond pressure on individual dissident cases to systematic, high-level attention to religious rights, labor rights, freedom of speech, and freedom of association.

Elsewhere, in such places as Central Asia, the Caucasus, and the Middle East, the next administration should limit as much as possible the cases where it keeps democracy completely off the table for the sake of other interests. This means taking seriously even small differences between autocratic regimes that are at least attempting limited reforms and those that are completely set in their ways. Everywhere the next president must be ready to respond boldly to critical political junctures abroad—whether it is the unexpected weakening of a dictator or the threatened breakdown of a democracy—and to assume that its responses in such situations will reverberate widely. Finally the institutionalization of democracy promotion in the policy and aid bureaucracies should be continued. It is easy for those persons primarily focused on large-scale geopolitical issues to brush aside democracy aid and other such efforts as marginal. Such a view, however, ignores the fact that democratization often begins as the result of accumulated attitudinal change in publics and policy elites, change that the “low policy” methods can actually foster over time.

In short, it is well past the time to be debating the role of democracy promotion in U.S. foreign policy in simplistic realist versus idealist terms. The traditional boundaries of hard and soft U.S. interests are much less clear than before, and democracy concerns are to some extent present in U.S. policy in most countries in the world. The challenges at hand now are understanding when democratic change is likely to occur, how it will affect the full range of U.S. interests, and whether and how the United States can make a difference in trying to advance it. It is difficult to balance a sober view of the often limited ability of the United States to foster democratic change abroad with a genuine acceptance of the often integral nature of democracy in other countries to America’s national interest. But achieving such a balance is the key to effective policy in this critical domain.

## SELECTED STATEMENTS ON DEMOCRACY AND DEMOCRACY PROMOTION BY PRESIDENT CLINTON AND HIS FOREIGN POLICY AIDES

“The defense of freedom and a promotion of democracy around the world aren’t merely a reflection of our deepest values. They are vital to our national interest. . . .

As we restructure our military forces, we must reinforce the powerful global movement toward democracy. United States foreign policy simply cannot be divorced from the moral principles we believe in. We can’t disregard how other governments treat their own people, whether their domestic institutions are democratic or regressive, whether they encourage or check illegal conduct beyond their borders. . . .

It should matter to us how other people govern themselves. . . . Democracies don’t go to war with each other. . . . Democracies don’t sponsor terrorist acts against each other. They’re more likely to be reliable trading partners, protect the global environment, and abide by international law.”

— GOVERNOR BILL CLINTON  
*Georgetown University, Washington, D.C.*  
*December 12, 1991*

“As the third pillar [of US foreign policy]—we must encourage the democratic revolution that has swept so much of the world. By promoting democracy and free markets, we do more to honor the universal values upon which our nation is founded. We must go beyond just the moral aspect of it to ensure our own security and prosperity. . . . Democracies tend not to make war on other democracies. They are more reliable partners in diplomacy, business, trade, arms agreements, and global environmental protection. We should have no illusions. Democracy cannot be imposed from above. By its very nature it must be built from underneath, from the bottom up. . . . We should embrace and promote this process by sustained support for democratic institution-building in the former Soviet bloc and elsewhere. And we should by collective engagement, working in partnership with other great democracies, promote democracy around the globe.”

— SECRETARY OF STATE WARREN CHRISTOPHER  
*Statement before the Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice, State, and Judiciary,*  
*House Appropriations Committee, Washington, D.C.*  
*March 10, 1993*

“Most Presidents who followed [Wilson], Republicans and Democrats alike, understood we must promote democracy and market economics in the world—because it protects our interests and security; and because it reflects values that are both American and universal. . . .

Throughout the Cold War we contained a global threat to market democracies; now we should seek to enlarge their reach, particularly in places of special significance to us. . . . The successor to a doctrine of containment must be a strategy of enlargement—enlargement of the world’s free community of market democracy. . . .

I see four components to a strategy of enlargement. . . . First, we should strengthen the community of major market democracies. . . . Second, we should help foster and consolidate new democracies and market economies, where possible, especially in states of special significance and opportunity. . . . Third, we must counter the aggression—and support the liberalization—of states hostile to democracy and markets. . . . Fourth, we need to pursue our humanitarian agenda . . . by working to help democracy and market economics take root in regions of greatest humanitarian concern. . . .

[This] is a moment of unparalleled opportunity. We have the blessing of living in the world’s most powerful and respected country at a time when the world is embracing our ideals as never before. We can let this moment slip away. Or we can mobilize our nation in order to enlarge democracy, enlarge markets, and enlarge our future. . . .

— NATIONAL SECURITY ADVISOR ANTHONY LAKE  
*Johns Hopkins University, School of Advanced International Studies*  
*Washington, D.C.*  
*September 21, 1993*

“President Clinton believes that our generation has an historic opportunity to shape our world. He believes that since it is, above all, the triumph of democracy and markets that has brought us victory in the Cold War, it must be, above all, the *defense* of democracy and markets that should guide us now.”

— DEPUTY SECRETARY OF STATE STROBE TALBOTT  
*Cyril Foster Lecture, Oxford University, Oxford, United Kingdom*  
*October 20, 1994*

“Already we have dismantled many of the blocks and barriers that divided our parents’ world. For the first time, more people live under democracy than dictatorship. . . .

Every dollar we devote to preventing conflicts, to promoting democracy, to stopping the spread of disease and starvation brings a sure return in security and savings.”

— PRESIDENT BILL CLINTON  
*State of the Union Address, The House Chamber, The Capitol*  
*Washington, D.C.*  
*February 4, 1997*

“Our answer to the skeptics, the critics, and the self-styled realists is straight-forward: look at history, and look at the world around us. Democracy contributes to safety and prosperity, both in national life and in international life—it’s that simple. . . .

[The] record shows that democracies are less likely than non-democracies to go to war with each other, to persecute their citizens, to unleash tidal waves of refugees, to create environmental catastrophes, or to engage in terrorism. And democracies are more likely to be reliable partners in trade and diplomacy. . . .

There is a hard-headed, national-interest-based rationale for weaving the promotion of human rights and democracy into the fabric of our diplomacy as a whole. It is precisely, an imperative of realpolitik, not just of idealpolitik.”

— DEPUTY SECRETARY OF STATE STROBE TALBOTT

*Denver Summit of the Eight Initiative on Democracy & Human Rights*

*Washington, D.C.*

*October 1, 1997*

“I am convinced, moreover, that the United States has a vital strategic interest in seizing the opportunity that now exists to strengthen the international system by bringing nations closer together around basic principles of democracy, open markets, law and a commitment to peace. . . .

We have a political interest in helping post-conflict societies to embrace democracy and to become part of the solution to global threats such as proliferation, pollution, illegal narcotics and trans-national crime.”

— SECRETARY OF STATE MADELEINE ALBRIGHT

*USAID Conference, Washington, D.C.*

*October 31, 1997*

“The Clinton Administration has given such a high priority to supporting struggling democratic movements and governments around the world.”

— SECRETARY OF STATE MADELEINE ALBRIGHT

*National Democratic Institute, Washington, D.C.*

*November 5, 1997*

“It has long been a guiding principle of American foreign policy—which is to say, American preventive diplomacy—that promoting democracy advances America’s own interests, including its security interests. That is because democracies are more likely to abide by their international commitments—more likely to be stable trading partners, less likely to interfere in the affairs of their neighbors, and less likely to make war on each other.”

— DEPUTY SECRETARY OF STATE STROBE TALBOTT  
*Conference on Diplomacy and Preventive Defense, Stanford University*  
*Palo Alto, California*  
*January 16, 1999*

“We are here in Warsaw this week to affirm our faith in democracy’s promise and to pledge our best efforts to fulfill that promise not just for some, but for all our citizens. . . . We also come together to endorse a Declaration of Principles that we pledge to uphold, recognizing that building democracy is not an event, but a process for which each nation must take individual responsibility, but which we all have a duty through our mutual efforts to support. . . . Our purpose is to develop a framework for global cooperation that will help democracies of every description to deepen and sustain their liberty.”

— SECRETARY OF STATE MADELEINE ALBRIGHT  
*“Towards a Community of Democracies” Conference, Warsaw, Poland*  
*June 26, 2000*

“We are a community because we each believe that democracy is a fundamental and universal human right; because we want our own citizens to enjoy this right; and because we are committed to helping others strengthen and sustain it. . . .

We did not come to Warsaw to create a new organization with its own building and bureaucracy. The Democratic Community we are determined to forge will be not be comprised of mortar and steel; but of principle and conscience. . . .

Now, at the start of a new century, we have come together here in Poland, to pledge our cooperation in promoting and strengthening democracy. . . .

Democracy is the one road we can walk down together. . . . A road whose new beginning we have found this week in Warsaw. . . . A road that leads toward a true Community of Democracies, and to a future—we are determined—of greater security, prosperity and freedom for all.”

— SECRETARY OF STATE MADELEINE ALBRIGHT  
*“Towards a Community of Democracies” Conference, Warsaw, Poland*  
*June 27, 2000*

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