Does Democracy Promotion Have a Future?

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When the organisers contacted me about this lecture, they essentially asked me to sum up the entire field of democracy promotion in thirty or forty minutes. This is actually an impossible task, but in a way, I think it is the right task now because many people these days are asking new but fundamental questions about the overall enterprise of democracy promotion. They are searching for some understanding of just what this endeavour really consists of and what it means.

I frequently travel to different parts of the world to speak about this subject, both in countries that are trying to promote or support democracy elsewhere and those that are on the receiving end of these efforts. When I do that, and I have been doing it for about twenty years, I always encounter a great deal of wariness, doubts and suspicions. This is partly because I am from the United States. As a global power on the world stage, the U.S. provokes many doubts and suspicions about its efforts to promote democracy. But I think the questions that people tend to ask when confronted with this subject are deeper than that.

The very act of one society trying to engage itself in the political affairs of another society naturally provokes concerns: what are the real motives and the methods, what is this really all about? In the past several years, I have encountered a qualitatively greater level of concern – in fact substantial amounts of bewilderment, suspicion and sometimes open hostility and anger – than ever before with respect to this subject. The subject of democracy promotion has become intensely controversial.

To some extent the reason for this is obvious. The close association of the concept of democracy promotion with the war in Iraq has alienated many people in the world. They hear the U.S. administration equating democracy promotion with the war in Iraq and, understandably, they react badly. But I think there are other factors at work as well and what I would like to do here is to explore the overall picture.

I believe that this shift, this fundamental questioning of democracy promotion, reflects a broader shift, occurring in this decade in international affairs, away from the immediate post Cold War period into a new period of international politics, one whose basic features are only starting to become clear but which is going to be quite different from what came before it in many important ways. In short, I believe that democracy promotion is significant not only in and of itself, but also more generally as a window to understanding the state of international politics.

In order to look through this window, I need to go back briefly and trace the evolution of work in this field in recent decades. You may feel that you did not come for a history lecture, so bear with me. It is just a brief tour. We have to look back a bit to understand this present decade because it is only by seeing the present in the light of recent history that I think we can understand its principal features.

The Start of the Third Wave

In looking backwards we could go far back if we wished. If we had enough time, we could go back to 1848 and talk about the spread of different ideas about democracy in Europe in the middle of the nineteenth century. We could also talk about World War I or World War II: both wars having been fought, at least on one side, in the name of democracy. We could talk about colonialism and the ways it contributed to, as well as detracted from, democracy in the world, and so on. Our time is limited, however and I wish to focus on what I consider to be the contemporary period of democracy

promotion, which is roughly the mid-1970s up to the present day. It is a period that began with what Samuel Huntington called the third wave of democracy.

Much contemporary democracy promotion is a response to the third wave of democracy. Democracy promoters often like to feel they are leading democracy in the world. In fact, in my experience they are often trailing behind, trying to catch up and support what has already started. We saw the initiation of this contemporary period of democracy promotion in the mid-1970s, with the efforts by German political foundations and some other European organisations to involve themselves in democratisation in Southern Europe, especially in Portugal and Spain. Then in the 1980s, as democratisation spread in Latin America and parts of Asia, democracy promotion began to emerge as an identifiable policy and aid domain.

It was in those years that assistance for elections began to spread in the world, both election observing and technical aid for election administration. Political party strengthening assistance also began to be broadly pursued. Rule-of-law aid emerged, as did legislative strengthening programs and other basic elements of what soon became a standard menu of democracy aid.

It was not just democracy aid. In the 1980s, pro-democratic diplomacy grew, such as European human rights diplomacy in Central America, pressure against Apartheid in South Africa and pressure on some Eastern European countries' human rights practices. The human rights agenda of the 1980s started to become a pro-democratic agenda and merged with movements for political change.

The 1980s were an essential start-up period. But in those years democracy promotion was deeply and in some sense fatally, entangled with Cold-War politics. Efforts by the United States and other Western powers to shape political events in other countries were often motivated by strategic anti-communist objectives and conflicted with democracy or often even undermined it. What was

done "in the name of democracy" was in reality often anti-democratic, either in its intentions or its results.

As a result, in the Cold-War years, democracy promotion was regarded with a great deal of suspicion by people in most parts of the developing world and by many people in Europe and North America. It was not until the 1990s that democracy promotion really took off. Why did this occur?

The 1990s – A New Consensus

There are several reasons why democracy promotion gained significant ground in the 1990s. The first was the rapid global expansion of democracy in those years. The third wave caught fire in the 1980s and early 1990s with the fall of the Berlin wall, the break-up of the Soviet Union, a rush of democratic or at least attempted democratic transitions in Africa, further democratisation in Latin America and Asia and so forth. Suddenly, the expansion of democracy was a dominant theme in the world and democracy promotion was the response. This was thus one driver of positive change.

The second cause was the end of the Cold War. The struggle with the Soviet Union fell away and was not replaced by a single overreaching security theme in Western policy circles. This had a tremendously stimulating effect on democracy promotion. Suddenly, it was no longer the case that when the United States or another Western country crossed borders trying to affect the politics of another country, the first assumption was that this was part of Cold War tactics. That sort of initial reaction was replaced with a question: "If you are not here for that, why are you here?" I remember vividly, when I started my work for the U.S. State Department in the mid-1980s, working in Latin America as a North American, I could not walk into a room with Latin Americans and use the term democracy promotion without people bursting into laughter or tears at the idea that the U.S. was at all serious about it.

In the 1990s there was instead a sort of puzzled silence: "You are still talking about this? What do you mean now?" There was at least the possibility of a real conversation about democracy promotion. People in the developing world in the 1990s began to think, "Well, if this is not about containing the Soviet Union by subverting the left, what is it then about?"

A third driver of democracy promotion in the 1990s was a new attachment of democracy promotion to the development agenda, as practised by the Western donor community. In the 1960s and 1970s and through much of the 1980s, there was a strong idea in the development community that countries do not need to have a democratic government in order to develop. In fact, the view was, strong-hand governments are really the best for economic development. What developing societies need to do is put up with authoritarianism for a generation or two and only then give democracy a try.

That began to change in the late 1980s. In those years, we saw the World Bank issue an important report on Africa, identifying governance problems as a key obstacle to African development. In the 1990s, this insight broadly emerged as the good governance agenda, which, when you looked at what governance included – accountability, transparency, participation and governmental responsiveness – had many pro-democratic features.

Although there was certainly still a gap in the 1990s between economic developmentalists and democracy promoters, there was, at the rhetorical level but also at the policy level, the idea that democratisation will promote development and development will promote democratisation. In short, there arose the powerful idea of a common unified donor agenda, political as well as economic.

The result of these three drivers, the spread of democracy, the detachment of democracy promotion from the Cold War framework and the merging of the donor agenda, gave a tremendous impulse to democracy promotion in those years. The result was the significant growth of the field. There was a multiplication in the number and type of organisations working on different aspects of

democracy building. Bilateral aid agencies created offices for democracy and human rights. Multilateral organisations began entering the field: the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the Organisation of American States (OAS), the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), the Commonwealth Institute, the Council of Europe and so forth. While democracy promotion was a kind of "boutique" activity in the 1980s, by the end of the 1990s it had become something of an industry, with some good and some bad elements of that term. It was absorbing well over 2 billion Euros a year, with a slightly larger share from European actors than North American ones.

We began to see greatly increased activities in the diplomatic realm as well. Foreign ministries added offices of democracy and governance and began to put forward strategies on democracy promotion. Many small- and medium-sized diplomatic interventions were initiated, supporting elections, pushing for political openness and supporting pro-democratic, post-conflict reconstruction and so forth.

There was the emergence at the diplomatic level of regional standards – the democratic charter of the OAS, the Copenhagen criteria of the OSCE and other attempts to create democracy at the normative level on the international plane. And of course, in these years there was the expansion of the European Union and the idea of a democratic threshold for entering the EU, which proved to be a strong positive force for democracy in Central and Eastern Europe.

Taken together, the changes in democracy aid and democratic diplomacy resulted in substantial pro-democratic engagement by the United States and Europe, particularly in Central and Eastern Europe, Southern Africa, Central America and Southeastern Europe, somewhat in the former Soviet Union and in a few other parts of the world. It came to a point by the end of the 1990s that if you travelled to a country attempting a democratic transition, every single sector in that country's political or public life was in some way touched by democracy assistance. You could not visit the

judiciary, the legislature, the local governments, the civil society organisations, media and so forth, without tripping over people from the other countries, trying to promote democracy.

Two striking, positive features characterised this pro-democratic activity. One was its growing legitimacy. The Cold War suspicion certainly did not disappear but people began to see that there was something potentially legitimate about this work, that it represented a set of values in and of itself, rather then simply being an instrument for something else. Democracy promotion, or at least certain parts of it, came to be accepted as somewhat normal. Election observation, for example, became to be something of a norm and standards began to emerge around it. It got to the point by the end of the decade that, for example, if a country refused to allow international observers at an election, such a refusal raised a serious question mark. The same was true of civil society development. Outside support for civil society began to be seen as sort of a norm.

Another striking feature was the fact that the United States and Europe began to converge to some extent in the activities they were carrying out. I remember in those years nothing used to anger European audiences more than if I stood before them and said, "You are basically doing the same thing in many of these programmes as the Americans." The same thing happened if I told an American audience: "Actually you are duplicating or moving in parallel with what the Europeans are doing," because both the U.S. actors and the Europeans liked to think they each had their own distinctive superior methods and ways of doing things. However, in those years I saw considerable convergence. This was very clearly evident, for example, in Serbia in the late 1990s. European and American actors worked very closely together in their efforts to support pro-democratic actors and processes in that country.

Flaws and Limitations

I do not wish to idealise the 1990s. We can find all kinds of flaws in the democracy promotion of that period. It was a crucial period

of expansion but it certainly was not democracy-building paradise. I want to highlight two limitations here. First, although the U.S. and Europe did begin to take this subject seriously in those years while committing more resources to it, their interest in the subject was often secondary to other interests. Both the U.S. and Europe maintained warm, sometimes very cosy relationships with non-democratic governments for all kinds of reasons: trade, access to oil, security cooperation, or other things. One saw the West on the one hand promoting democracy fairly seriously in certain parts of the world, but in China, Vietnam, Central Asia, the Middle East, substantial parts of Sub-Saharan Africa and elsewhere, the West really was not very interested and did not do very much about it.

The second limitation was that the actual effect of all this activity, both the assistance and the diplomacy, were actually pretty modest. I believe that outside actors can be helpful in encouraging democracy in other societies, but the externally-sponsored work we saw in those years was rarely very decisive. There was a frequent tendency on the part of democracy promoters to take too much credit for democratic advances, to believe that they could be or should be the agents of change in other societies, rather than just the facilitators of change.

The greatest successes of democracy, both in the late 1980s and the 1990s, were driven by people within the democratising societies themselves, despite the credit-taking that sometimes went on outside, whether in South Africa, Poland, Chile or Mongolia, or many other places.

Unexpected Trouble

By the end of the decade, it looked as though the world was moving into a period marked by a growing consensus on political values. It appeared that in the new century, democracy promotion would probably continue, either with a little bit of growth or reduction, but in a fairly steady pattern. That has not proven to be the case. Democracy promotion has instead, in these last six years,

been going through turbulent times, surrounded by controversy, doubt and uncertainty.

What happened? If we look back at the drivers of change from the 1990s: an advancing democratic trend, disconnection from a geostrategic framework that often conflicts with democracy and a growing connection between democracy and economic development, we see that all three of these are being challenged or partly reversed.

The global democratic trend has gradually slowed down and in many places stagnated. The evidence is everywhere before us. In the former Soviet Union, Russia has moved backwards in the last six years, away from the political openness that it started to enjoy in the 1990s, and it has cast a chilly political spell on its neighbours in the Caucasus and Central Asia. The former Soviet Union is very short on successful democracy, despite encouraging experiments in a few places.

China has been in a process of de-liberalisation in the last several years in which political reform gains of the 1990s have been steadily reversed, despite continued economic development. Even Central and Eastern Europe, which made such notable political progress in the 1990s, is facing a number of vexing political standoffs and challenges, such as the recent problems of forming a government in the Czech Republic, the dispiriting political conflict in Hungary, worrying signs on the right in Poland and trouble with respect to reform in Slovakia.

Latin America has been going through a self-conscious crisis of democracy in the last five or six years. Its citizens, although still loyal to the idea of democracy, are tremendously frustrated with the political systems that they have, and some are opting for politicians from outside the system, who are promising or in some cases threatening, to break the existing system in some way. In the Middle East, a shaky political reform agenda is being overwhelmed by a rash of bloody conflicts.

Of course, there are also positive events that have occurred over the last five or six years, such as the noteworthy democratic progress in Indonesia, the pro-democratic breakthroughs in Georgia and Ukraine and the new political settlement in Nepal. Nevertheless, the overall democratic trend has stagnated.

Why has this occurred? Several factors are at work. First, there is a natural slowing down of any political trend of this sort. Those dictatorships that could not cope with the surge of democratic impulses have already fallen. Those dictatorships which remain are the adaptable, clever ones, often ones that have oil or other valuable natural resources. These dictatorships have learned to navigate the waters of international democratic pressures. In short, the easy cases are finished, the harder ones remain.

Second, democracies are struggling in many places to deliver the goods to their people. People in many countries are saying, "We have been trying democracy for five or ten years, I do not see my life becoming any better. In fact all I have seen are corrupt politicians trading amongst themselves. I do not like it and I want to try something different". They are therefore trying something different in some places.

Third, and this is extremely important, rivals to democracy are growing. A striking feature of the 1990s was the absence of any alternative to the liberal democratic model having any significant legitimacy on the international scene. But the success of Russia's and China's economic development over the last five or six years, which in China's case of course extends back for several decades, has greatly strengthened the idea of the strong-hand model once again. One sees a return in some places to the notion that development requires a strong, i.e., non-democratic hand, which puts off democratisation until some indefinite future, and focuses on economic development and perhaps a little rule-of-law development.

These two countries have been actively promoting this model. Chinese officials invite African officials and activists to come to

China and study the Chinese model. Russia puts both positive and negative pressures on its neighbours to follow its political and economic path.

You thus have a model that is actually very appealing, especially to non-democratic elites in the Middle East, South East Asia and other parts of Asia and Africa, who can use it to argue that their being in power is necessary for their country's development. In many places, citizens frustrated with the democratic experiments they have lived through are going along with this new trend.

The fourth reason for the slowdown of the democratic trend is a simple but powerful one – the high price of oil and gas. The massive flow of oil and gas revenues has been a tremendous benefit to many non-democratic governments because most oil-rich countries are not democratic. Kazakhstan, Azerbaijan, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, United Arab Emirates, Iran, Russia, Venezuela – these are countries awash in oil money. And concerns about energy supplies weaken Western willingness to put pressure on any of these governments regarding their non-democratic practices.

The War on Terrorism

A second change in this decade, one completely unpredicted in 2000, has been the reattachment of a democracy agenda to a geo-strategic agenda. I refer of course to the U.S. war on terrorism. President Bush has set forward democracy promotion again and again as a central element and theme of the war on terrorism. This has had a major effect on democracy promotion. This is a complex topic with many facets, but let me just highlight a few parts of the picture.

First, as I mentioned at the outset, the war on Iraq, which President Bush holds out as a central part of the war on terrorism, has closely associated democracy promotion with a war that is almost universally reviled, rejected and regretted around the world. This association of democracy promotion with what is widely viewed as unauthorised military force, violations of rights and a horrendous level

of violence in Iraq, has been devastating to the legitimacy of the concept of democracy promotion.

Second, President Bush's more general association of democracy promotion with regime change has taken the associational damage of Iraq and broadened it. For many people in the world, democracy promotion has become a way of describing efforts to get rid of governments that the United States does not like and a cover for ouster efforts. In other words, this is a reattachment of security interests with the democracy concept, whether *vis-à-vis* Syria, Iran or other countries.

Third, it may sound good when the administration in the U.S. says, "We have to promote democracy as part of the war on terrorism because it is only through democracy that we will undercut the roots of terrorism." The reality that many people in the world see, however, particularly in the Islamic world, is that actually the war on terrorism involves closer relationships between Western governments and non-democratic governments for the sake of security cooperation. The United States has reversed its policies towards Pakistan, for example. While it used to give Pakistan's military dictatorship somewhat of a cold shoulder, the U.S. suddenly became a major aid donor and warm friend to Pakistan in 2002. Pakistan is only one example. The U.S. war on terrorism includes closer relationships with the intelligence services of Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Jordan and other non-democracies.

Adding to all of this is that American legal abuses abroad, above all the violations of rights of prisoners and detainees in Iraq, Afghanistan, Guantanamo, off the streets of European cities in some cases and in the United States itself, have done devastating damage to the concept and the practise of democracy promotion abroad. They have badly hurt the status of the United States as a model of democracy and as a legitimate democracy promoter.

So the three drivers of positive change in the 1990s, the advance of democracy, the detachment of democracy promotion from a

conflictive geo-political security framework, and the positive idea that economic development and democracy necessarily go hand in hand, are now in question in the world. The result is new doubt about the legitimacy of the concept of democracy promotion itself, as well as a renewed questioning of the Western democratic model. When I speak to audiences in the developing world, whether in Asia, the Middle East, substantial parts of South Asia or Sub-Saharan Africa, the first question I often hear is now: "Why are you so sure that your model of democracy is right for us?" That question had faded considerably in the 1990s but it is now very much back.

In addition, for the first time there is serious resistance to democracy assistance activities. The Russian government has been setting out a very strong line on this. The Russian government has decided that it is going to oppose Western democracy assistance. President Putin openly criticises U.S. democracy aid programmes. The government is making it more difficult for Western democracy promotion organisations to operate in Russia and warning its neighbours about the purported dangers of such activities. The Russians are trying to block the OSCE's democracy assistance functions, such as election observation. In short, Russia is carrying out a systematic, sophisticated campaign against Western democracy assistance.

But the backlash does not come just from Russia. As I described in a recent article in *Foreign Affairs* called "The backlash against democracy promotion," one sees this phenomenon in many places.[1] Ethiopia kicked out some U.S. democracy promoters recently. So too did Bahrain. Nepal has made it harder for international NGOs to operate there. Peru recently passed a restrictive law limiting funding of NGOs. One can name many points on this new map. There is a rising sentiment in the world of: "We were uncertain about this democracy aid in the 1990s but we have woken up to what it is all about and we are not sure we like it." There are many open statements articulating a fear of foreign-backed colour revolutions.

A Growing Lack of International Political Consensus

This troubled situation of democracy promotion is a manifestation of the fact that the overall state of international relations has changed significantly from the 1990s. We are no longer in a world in which there is a growing international consensus on political values. We are in a world in which there is less consensus on basic political values and increased conflict about them. We are in a world in which consensus on even the ability or right of other countries trying to promote certain parts of a political consensus is now in question.

What does this mean for democracy promotion? Well, obviously it means harder times. It is harder to establish trust with partners and with governments. Let me give one example. It is a microscopic example but an indicative one. I was in Indonesia doing some research a couple of years ago and working with me was an Indonesian man, who was working with the Netherlands Institute for Multiparty Democracy. He told me he had just seen a couple of Indonesian parliamentarians about a programme his organisation was hoping to develop in Indonesia. One of these parliamentarians had said to him: "This is part of a democracy promotion programme, isn't it? We don't want that sort of thing in our country." This fellow was a bit surprised and said, "I am an Indonesian, working for a Dutch organisation, I am not part of the war on Iraq. I am not part of the American security project." This parliamentarian replied, "Yes, but now we know what this democracy promotion business is really about. We didn't understand it before. Now we do and we don't like it."

So, in many small conversations in many different parts of the world people have to work harder to establish trust when they walk through the door and say, "I am here for democracy." There are also more disagreements among democracy promoters about basic methods. Should you push harder in such situations? Should you back away? What is the right response? And there is less of a sense

of momentum in many countries about the advancement of democracy. Instead, there is, as I said, greater scepticism about democracy itself.

How to React: the U.S. Perspective

The fact that democracy promotion is harder and more in doubt does not mean that we should give up. But it does mean that those interested and involved in the field need to take stock and do some things differently. For the United States, this has some serious implications. In the U.S. there is now a new debate about democracy promotion. As we enter into the early stages of the presidential campaign in the U.S., it is clear that one of the issues will be, "Should we be doing democracy promotion anymore? Iraq has been horrendous. Maybe this push on democracy was a mistake?" For the first time in decades, public opinion surveys show only a minority of Americans believe the U.S. should be involved in democracy promotion. This is a significant change for American society. The U.S. faces the choice between moving significantly away from this domain or instead trying to do it differently, while still preserving the basic intention. If we are to preserve the basic endeavour, which I think we should, I think we need to decontaminate American democracy promotion. What do I mean by decontamination in this field? I mean several simple things. The U.S. needs to self-consciously begin to rebuild its own credibility of democracy promotion work itself. There is no one way to do this but rather, a series of approaches or steps.

If the U.S. wishes the world to take its own actions seriously in this domain, it has to first say that democracy promotion will not be pursued via unauthorised military force against another country. Secondly, it means that the U.S. must stop associating democracy promotion with regime change generally. I believe that the U.S. and other countries and democracies can still be critical of dictatorships and can still apply pressure, whether it is to the government of Burma, Zimbabwe or Belarus. But this has to be done on the basis of democratic principles, not near-term national strategic interest. And it has to mean pressure that is based on democratic

ideas and principles, encouraging positive developments in other societies, not ousting particular governments.

Third, it means not intervening in elections for the sake of favouring certain groups. Last year the U.S. was engaged in trying to tilt the Nicaraguan election away from Daniel Ortega. That is not an appropriate form of democracy promotion. It has to be put aside. Similarly, in the Palestinian elections in early 2006, certain American assistance programmes were used to try to help Fatah before the elections. Intervening in elections under the cover of this idea of democracy promotion undercuts the field.

Fourth, the rhetoric on democracy promotion coming out of Washington has to be reduced to a manageable level. The rhetoric is simply counterproductive at this point. Not only because it comes from a president who is immensely unpopular around the world, but simply because the rhetoric is out of sync with the reality of the policies. When you are cosy with the Pakistani government, the Saudi government, the Egyptian government and so forth, you cannot tell the world that freedom is what principally motivates you. It only produces cynicism.

Fifth, America has to clean up its own legal act with regard to the rights of detainees and prisoners abroad and at home. Unless the U.S. starts setting up a positive example of how a war on terrorism can be conducted with respect for the rule of law, both at home and abroad, it will not be taken seriously as a democracy promotion actor.

A European Response

What about Europe? I think Europe also needs to take some steps. The current situation is a difficult one for a number of European governments and non-governmental actors. On the one hand they do not wish to be closely associated with the American agenda on democracy promotion. On the other hand, they do not wish to be perceived as trying to cash in on anti-Americanism and dissociating themselves from the U.S.

I think there is an important opportunity for Europe right now to step forward in the domain of democracy promotion and show a doubting world that democracy promotion is not one and the same as the pursuit of American strategic interests. For Europe to be effective in such an effort, several things have to happen. First, European organisations involved in this field need to define for themselves, in a group sense, what the distinctive principles of the European approach really are. There is a lot of belief among European actors that "we do things a lot differently than you Americans." Now is the time to come forward and tell the international community what those things are and what is distinctive about the European approach. I think there is the instinct on the part of European actors that Europe has greater belief in a real partnership in democracy work, that it draws on multiple models of democracy and does not offer the world a single model, and that Europe has more humility than the U.S. because Europe has had a lot ups and downs with democracy in the twentieth century. These are all part of the picture. They need to be put together to advance a European democracy agenda that the world could listen to and understand and believe in.

To do that, some of the mechanisms of European democracy promotion need to be strengthened. The response of the European Commission to the challenges of democracy promotion in the last ten years has at times been surprisingly and disappointingly weak. The Commission has struggled to create effective instruments in this field despite ample funding. Europe can do better than that and I think it has to.

Third, the major powers in Europe, and here I am pointing to Germany, the UK and France, need to get together at least on a couple of countries and show that they are serious about this. The world is watching European policy towards Russia and towards the Middle East for example, where there are quite productive and friendly relationships between all three of these countries and governments of dubious democratic fidelity and asking, "How serious is Europe about this? Where is Europe pushing hard?"

In short, strengthening European democracy promotion has to involve defining an approach, creating effective mechanisms and attaching some real diplomatic weight to the words.

Challenges Ahead

The United States has a challenging agenda ahead of it, if it wishes to re-establish credibility in this domain. I think the challenge for Europe is a serious one too. Looking ahead in international politics in the next ten to twenty years, the core questions about democracy's future are of fundamental importance: whether or not Russia finds at least a somewhat reformist and democratic path. Whether Latin America gets through this shaky period and avoids returning to authoritarianism. Whether China is able to establish a political reform dynamic. Whether or not the encouraging democratic experiments in some parts of Sub-Saharan Africa really take root and succeed. Whether or not the Arab world finally finds a way to translate some of its modest political reforms to something more far-reaching. These are not just issues about how democracy is doing in the world. These are issues that will define what kind of world we live in, what kind of relationships exist among states, what kinds of conflicts occur in the world.

Thus, I sincerely believe that despite these serious problems, democracy promotion has a vital place in the world for the next several decades. But it is not an automatic or an easy place. It is a place that we have to earn through the seriousness of our purpose and the excellence of our efforts. It is up to all of us concerned with the state of democracy to engage and earn that place in the years ahead.

Note

1 Thomas Carothers, 2006. "The Backlash against Democracy Promotion," *Foreign Affairs,* March/April 2006, pp. 55-68.