

## **Research Article**

### **Democracy Promotion: An Idealist Discourse for Neorealist Goals?**

*Demokrasi Teşviki: Neorealist Hedefler için İdealist Bir Söylem mi?*

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#### ***Abstract***

*Democracy promotion and democratization has been a crucial issue in the international system especially from the later years of the Cold War. There are multitude of actors promoting democracy based on different theories and focusing on various goals, yet democracy promotion is still evolving both in practice and theory. This study analyzes these changes from historical and political dimensions of democracy promotion. Historically, there are three distinct phases for democracy promotion which have gone through considerable changes due to the goals of the promoters and changes in the international system. Politically, the domestic and international pressures affected the democratization processes and democracy promotion significantly. After evaluating the history and practice of democracy promotion, the recent developments in this area are reviewed. The long and contentious history of democracy promotion could be explained due to the promoters' ambivalent approaches. It seems that today's democracy promotion is based on incompatible views and goals. Democracy and democratization are essentially idealist approaches, however contemporary promotion efforts are driven by neorealist views which gives the sceptics of the concept a relatively solid foundation and causes democratization efforts to be less successful.*

**Keywords:** Democracy, Democracy Promotion, Neorealism, Populism, Spread of Democracy, Democracy Promotion Types.

#### ***Öz***

*Demokrasi teşviki ve demokratikleşme özellikle Soğuk Savaşın son yıllarından itibaren uluslararası sistemde elzem bir konu olagelmıştır. Her ne kadar pek çok aktör demokrasiyi farklı teoriler ve hedefler üzerinden teşvik etmekteyse de, demokrasi teşviki hem pratik hem de teorik bağlamda dönüşümüne devam etmektedir. Bu çalışma söz konusu değişiklikleri demokrasi teşvikinin tarihi ve siyasi boyutları üzerinden ele almaktadır. Tarihi bağlamda demokrasi teşviki teşvikçilerin hedefleri ve uluslararası sistemdeki değişimlere bağlı olarak üç ayrı safhada köklü değişimlerden geçmiştir. Siyasal olarak yerel ve uluslararası baskıların demokratikleşme süreçlerine ve demokrasi teşvikine önemli etkileri olmuştur. Demokrasi teşvikinin tarihini ve pratiğini değerlendirdikten sonra, bu alandaki güncel gelişmeler ele alınmaktadır. Demokrasi teşvikinin uzun ve çekişmeli tarihinin, teşvikçilerin ikircikli yaklaşımları ile açıklanması mümkündür. Günümüzde demokrasi teşvikinin birbirine zıt görüşler ve hedeflere dayalı olduğu görülmektedir. Demokrasi ve demokratikleşme özünde idealist yaklaşımlardır, ancak güncel teşvik çabaları neorealist hedeflerle yürütülmektedir. Bu durum şüphecilere görece sağlam bir dayanak noktası sağlamakta ve söz konusu çabaların başarısının azalmasına neden olmaktadır.*

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Demokrasi, Demokrasi Teşviki, Neorealizm, Popülizm, Demokrasinin Yaygınlaşması, Demokrasi Teşviki Türleri

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

The roots of democracy can be traced back to ancient times, but the idea that it is based on universal values applicable all around the globe is relatively new. This view has been expressed by the “Wilsonian Triad” that consisted of liberal governance, peace, and free markets (Acuto 2008, 463). At its very basic and vague form democracy is people’s ability to rule themselves but the definition always come with a number of additional expectations that are often only implied and led to various versions of democracy (Dahl 1998, 45): avoiding tyranny; essential rights; general freedom; self-determination; moral autonomy; human development; protecting essential personal interests; political equality; peace-seeking; prosperity. The fact that not all regimes we consider democratic can fulfill all of these requirements leads to various types of democracies that are at different stages of reaching the ideal. Today, not all regimes we consider to be democratic can fulfill all of these requirements. This shows that the level of democracy is also a matter of degree that ranks existing regimes depending on their closeness to the ideal. Because of its virtues, there is a general perception that not only democratic regimes are superior in responding to the needs of their population, but also are more peaceful in the international arena. This belief creates a pressure on authoritarian countries to transform.

Domestically, democratic transitions may be the result of societal pressures for more participation, major democratic and economic changes. Internationally, two factors are important. First is the international environment the country finds itself in. There is evidence that democratization has a contagion effect in countries in the same region or the ones in similar circumstances (Gleditsch & Ward, 2006; O’Loughlin et al., 1998; Starr, 1991). Second, is the democracy promotion efforts by various actors that either pose external pressure or attempt to create pressure for regime change from within.

The issue of democratization gained importance in the literature especially during the later years of the Cold War and still continues to attract attention. Even after decades long democratization attempts, still a relatively small number of formerly authoritarian countries achieved a consolidated liberal democracy. These failures are due to stalled or reversed transitions that fell short of their initially stated goals. While some of these countries become semi-democracies that only possess certain procedural and structural aspects of democracy, others completely revert to authoritarianism. These show us that democratization is not a unidirectional process. We can see countries at different levels of democratization and moving in opposite directions along the democracy-autocracy continuum. Even though the fluctuations in the number of successful democracies challenged the originally linear assumptions of the democratization theory, faith in democratization remains strong. The blame for the failures is often assigned to the application of the project, the actors that guide it or specific policies they adopt.

Over the past two decades, the failures of democratic transitions to succeed and fulfill expectations began to lead to a backlash from the very societies they targeted. This poses a problem for democracy in general and democracy promotion more specifically because it means that the domestic support for the transition that they have to rely on in order to succeed is dwindling, limiting the methods and tools available to them. Just like the process itself, this backlash has a domestic and international dimension. Domestically, the pace of democratization and the ability of the politicians to meet expectations determine the level of satisfaction among the population. When the raised expectations are not met, it is often seen as the failure of democracy as a regime type. This perception opens the door for alternatives. Among these more recent examples populists proved to be very skillful in exploiting the weaknesses of democracy. Internationally, the two important factors are concerns about the democracy promoters and competition from authoritarianism. While they can play a key role in advancing democracy, promoting actors are distrusted partly because of their connections to foreign governments and concerns about national sovereignty. Because many democracy promoting institutions have varying degrees of attachment to foreign governments, their actions are sometimes viewed with concern by target societies as representing the interests of those governments. Furthermore, the involvement of these foreign actors raises issues about the national sovereignty of the target country. Second, there is increasing competition from authoritarianism. It appears that authoritarianism also has a contagion effect (Ambrosio,2010; Cooper, 2021). The increasing number of authoritarian or semi-democratic regimes make it increasingly likely that an authoritarian bloc may emerge, presenting an alternative source of support for failing democracies and speeding up the trend. This authoritarian promotion not only appeals to other

authoritarian leaders struggling to remain in power or politicians in democratizing countries that are ill at ease about the process, but also certain actors in established democracies.

Today, there are a large number of countries that stalled or slowed down on their path toward a more democratic regime. These partial or semi-democracies are caught in the middle of a transition process and in the long run their status is unsustainable due to inconsistencies between their institutional structures, their populations' expectations, and their leaders' preferences. At some point in the near future, they will have to make a decision about their future between democracy and autocracy. According to Goldsmith (2008, 132-134), these partial democracies pose a three-dimensional threat to peace. The first dimension is domestic. These regimes threaten the social peace by limiting individual rights and freedoms. They tend to rely on populism and the polarization of their society in order to consolidate their base and stay in power. A report by the Political Stability Task Force<sup>1</sup> supports this view by pointing out that, regardless of the region, partial democracies "represent a disproportionate amount of the world's turmoil" (Goldsmith 2008, 132-134). Their data shows that for the period between 1945 and 1999, the likelihood of armed conflicts breaking out within partial democracies is two-thirds greater than in full autocracies. The second dimension is international. Goldsmith's research (2008) shows that a mixed regime is more likely to use its regular military forces against another nation-state. Various characteristics of these regimes lead them to adopt an aggressive foreign policy that tends to contribute to the escalation of conflicts. Finally, the third threat is terrorism. Where democratic institutions are unable or unwilling to address grievances the use of force emerges as an alternative to make sure those grievances are heard and/or avenged (Goldsmith 2008, 132-134). The presence of democratic institutions provides citizens with avenues to express their grievances limiting the need for violence. When these institutions are not effective or people's faith in them is not established, violence - in some cases - emerges as an acceptable method. We can add a fourth dimension to the list. The spread of semi-democracies and their ability to survive in the international system sets an example for others and can slow down the drive toward democracy and take the easy way out. It also allows populist politicians to blame their failures on democracy and advocate this different version of democracy as an alternative. Because the stakes are so high, the issue of the democratic failure demands special attention. The problem has a number of dimensions that are widely studied in the literature. One that received relatively less attention is the topic of democracy promotion and why its impact is relatively limited.

Here, following a brief look at the concept, I will evaluate the main approaches to democracy promotion. I argue that existing democracy promotion efforts play an important role in the spread of mixed regimes, not full-fledged democracies. As I will later demonstrate, even though democracy promotion is an idealist/ liberal idea, today it is used as a tool of neorealist policies, where the goal is not necessarily to change the world to a better place, but to guarantee the security and/or maximize the influence of the promoters. As a result, the threshold required for democratization remains limited to what is minimum for stability. Democratization, however, is a dynamic process that relies on changing needs and demands by the society to advance itself. As a result, if it does not move forward, it tends to slide back.

## **2. DEMOCRACY PROMOTION**

Democracy promotion, beyond its basic definition of working toward spreading democracy, is a fluid concept whose meaning and content changes over time. In order to better understand how we got to this point, we need to first define and categorize different versions of democracy promotion. We can use two dimensions. The first is the historical dimension. Historically, there are three distinct periods of democracy promotion: Wilsonian, the Cold War, and the post-Cold War. These three are distinguishable from one other based on the motivations to democratize and the actors involved in the process. The second dimension is the approach. Here, we will look at the two approaches evolving in different directions in the third period of democracy promotion. These two dimensions cannot be evaluated completely independently from one another. For example, mainly because the promotion of democracy and liberalism has strong historical roots in American identity, the first period was almost solely an American effort based on idealism. During the Cold War, while the US led the democracy promotion efforts, its allies were involved in the process. Western allies worked together toward their common goal

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<sup>1</sup> A U.S. government-funded interdisciplinary research program, formerly known as the State Failure Task Force.

of weakening their counterparts in the Communist bloc. This was also the period during which a European approach slowly began to appear. The period at the end of the Cold War was when the separation between the two approaches became clearer. Today we can speak of two distinct strands of democracy promotion with different theoretical backgrounds, distinct agendas, and diverse methods. Here, I will first look at the roots of the democracy promotion movement and the changes it went through over time. Later, I will turn my attention to the differences between the American and European approaches.

Rieff (2012, 60) relates the idea of democracy promotion to John L. O'Sullivan's "Manifest Destiny" that argued that the establishment of moral dignity and salvation of man on earth was the historical mission of the US. Even though O'Sullivan did not specifically mention democracy, the values he emphasized reflected how democracy was defined at the time. These ideas were put to practice following the Spanish-American War of 1898, when the US decided to build democracies in Cuba and the Philippines (Smith 2013, 31). This experiment was the first attempt at nation-building by external forces. The results, however, were far from being successful. Despite the claimed intentions, the goal rarely went further than the justification of the American domination of these newly acquired lands without appearing like a European colonial empire. In many ways, this first attempt was about the salvation of the white man and the spread of his values to new regions and peoples. The ideas O'Sullivan and others put forth during the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, combined with the view of American exceptionalism formed the basis of Woodrow Wilson's ideas and shaped his policies even before World War I.

Prior to World War I, Wilson had justified American interventions in Mexico, Haiti, and the Dominican Republic by a duty to spread democracy (Rieff 2012, 60). The promotion of democracy as a regime type was also specifically mentioned by Wilson as a reason for the American participation in World War I. His argument in favor of entering the war was to "make the world 'safe for democracy'" (Rieff 2012, 60). A goal that was limited to Europe where the collapse of three empires had led to a number of newly independent regions. Despite its very limited scope this first attempt at democracy promotion was viewed as too ambitious and failed to gain the support of other major powers. Smith (2013, 31) claims that the failure of these efforts was one of the main reasons behind the shift toward isolationism during the 1920s and 1930s, which only reinforced the failure.

However, Wilson's ideas were not fully abandoned and only a few decades later, democracy and freedom were cited as the reasons why the U.S. needed to enter World War II by Franklin D. Roosevelt. He argued that "once dictatorship in Europe and Asia had been defeated (...), the global order would be refounded on the basis of (...) 'the four freedoms'" (Rieff 2012, 60).

During its first period, democracy promotion was initiated and led by the U.S. with very little support from its European allies even though the focus was on Europe. Despite its narrow focus, American isolationism and European colonialism failed to properly support the process and only led to limited success that just lasted for a brief time period. This failure was the result of the incompatibility of the goals and means available to the major power of the time. The US pushed for democratic nation-building in Europe but was unable to remain involved in the process due to domestic political developments. European powers, on the other hand, had the necessary means and influence, but were concerned about the potential impact these ideas might have on their colonies. As a result, the process was watered down, and the target countries lacked the time and means they needed to consolidate their new institutions. These limited gains were soon erased by the rise of extreme ideologies, mainly fascism. Despite its failure, this first widespread attempt at promoting democracy was important because it was the result of idealist/liberal ideology that aimed to make the world a better and safer place, even though "the world" was only limited to Europe at the time.

Following World War II, the beginning of the Cold War shifted the priorities toward security and, at least initially, democracy and human rights took a back seat in Western foreign policy formulation. The main concern was to support anti-Communist regimes around the world in order to stop the spread of the Communist threat. This led to military interventions, proxy wars, support for coups, and alliances with authoritarian regimes. Lloyd (2010, 549-50) argues that democracy and human rights were not major concerns until the Carter administration. While it may not have been a major concern, democracy promotion has been present as a tool to combat Communism since the early years of the Cold War.

Democratic values, liberalism, and human rights were emphasized as major aspects of Western identity because these were viewed as the main shortcomings of Communist regimes. The promotion of these values was used to increase the appeal of the Western way of life. However, the double standards of the first period of democracy promotion remained firmly in place. While the West promoted democracy for the members of the Communist bloc, they did not refrain from supporting all types of authoritarian regimes solely on the basis of their anti-Communist stance.

During this period, the initial efforts to promote democracy were led by the CIA and other Western intelligence services. The main method was to support cultural projects and dissidents in the Eastern Block through Western philanthropies based on the belief that “culture is the continuation of war by other means” (Rieff 2012, 61). Over the years, these efforts proved to be so successful that when Ronald Reagan came to power American democracy promotion gained speed and structure. The establishment of the National Endowment for Democracy (NED) and its four subsidiaries<sup>2</sup> in 1983 was key in the American democracy promotion project. These and other similar institutions that followed created a network for the spread of democracy. With this new framework democracy promotion became an official policy and gained some level of transparency and legitimacy. The fact that these were heavily state sponsored organizations only added to their strength within the Cold War context.

This second period of democracy promotion coincided with Huntington’s (1993) third wave of democratizations, but only a portion of these transitions were externally promoted democratizations. Carothers (2002, 5) divides this wave of democratization to seven distinct steps: “1) the fall of right-wing authoritarian regimes in Southern Europe in the mid-1970s; 2) the replacement of military dictatorships by elected civilian governments across Latin America from the late 1970s through the late 1980s; 3) the decline of authoritarian rule in parts of East and South Asia starting in the mid-1980s; 4) the collapse of communist regimes in Eastern Europe at the end of 1980s; 5) the breakup of the Soviet Union and the establishment of 15 post-Soviet republics in 1991; 6) the decline of one-party regimes in many parts of sub-Saharan Africa in the first half of the 1990s; 7) a weak but recognizable liberalizing trend in some Middle Eastern countries in the 1990s.” Even though these democratizations are often viewed as the triumph of the liberal theory, what motivated Western actors was predominantly security concerns. In a way, democratization was weaponized in order to weaken Communism and give the West an advantage. The goal was to unite the world under a common set of values and ideology, where liberalism would have no ideological competitors and the countries that are the source of these ideals would have a central role in shaping and running the international system. In this sense, even though democracy promotion had clearly liberal roots this project had realist goals.

The third period of democracy promotion followed the end of the Cold War. Although the difference between these two periods is sometimes blurred, there are two separate features of the post-Cold War democracy promotion that separates it from the previous efforts. The first is that the third period builds on the successes of the second and benefits from the institutional framework that began to develop at the later stages of the Cold War. The development of this more transparent structure creates a wider variety of actors and methods employed by them. Second, and more importantly, unlike the previous period, the third period does not involve a joint effort against a common enemy. This is where we see a separation between the American and European democracy promotion on the basis of the different priorities. Even though the whole process is framed as a doctrine of “liberal internationalism,” the goals behind the policies vary greatly, leading to two very different types.

Liberal internationalism relied on the expansion of liberalism and democracy through diplomacy, international trade, humanitarian aid, and sometimes military force that according to Acuto (2008, 464) “guided a new neocolonial or imperial mission civilatrice in which peacebuilding operations could ‘serve as vehicles for a particular type of globalization’ that attempts to transplant the values and institutions of the liberal democratic core into the domestic affairs of peripheral host states.”. With a sense of liberal victory, the early days of the third period concentrated on refining the tools of democracy promotion and testing the newly available means. The relatively high number of transition attempts due to the collapse of the Communist bloc not only made it possible to test out different methods, but also

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<sup>2</sup> The International Republican Institute (IRI), the National Democratic Institute (NDI), the Center for International Private Enterprise, and the American Center for International Labor Solidarity.

inflated the rate of success. These experiences led actors to focus on providing technical and financial aid to large number of local groups that represented different parts of the target society to improve local capacity (Carothers 2006, 60). In order to achieve this, there were three paths available sometimes taken simultaneously (Carothers 2006, 60): 1) helping locals gain the ability to monitor elections independently; 2) backing independent civic groups to increase civic engagement in the electoral process; 3) providing training and equipment or other material assistance to opposition parties to help them campaign effectively.

These new methods, combined with increasing sources of support for democracy led to a period of success during which a large number of countries initiated democratic transitions. These transitions, however, were far from being perfect success stories. Many suffered from two main shortcomings. The first issue was the long-term sustainability of democracy in these countries. Many of these cases fell short of the expectations and failed to consolidate liberal democracies. Their transitions rarely went beyond the minimum procedural requirements of democracy. These countries hold regular elections, allow opposition parties, tolerate a limited civil society, and free media. At the same time, they maintain a stronghold on power through custom tailored political structures that aimed to keep liberal values out of democracy keeping opposition views from coming to power. These procedural democracies are very hard to sustain in the long run. Sooner or later, they end up making a choice between responding to the demands of their population by restarting their democratizations, or attempting to remain in power despite these pressures by increasingly becoming authoritarian. The examples we have seen so far show that the latter is much more likely unless there is a large-scale social movement for democracy.

The second issue was the nature of the democracy promotion projects. With the end of the Cold War, liberalism was proclaimed as the dominant ideology and “the end state of human political organization after all the other ideologies have withered away, the future’s moral default position” (Rieff 2012, 58). This was often interpreted by the promoters as that they had a license to shape the rest of the world in their own image. However, most of the democracy promotion we observed was motivated by power and security concerns, not spreading certain values that would be in the best interest of humanity. This was clearly visible to all parties involved. Depending on the actors, democratization support promoted a certain type of democracy and came with a set of strict requirements. The lack of flexibility not only caused grievances, but also made it harder for transitioning countries to achieve success. After a period of time, politicians figured out that while the high targets of these projects were very hard to achieve, as long as they maintained stable regimes that have the looks of a basic democracy, they could satisfy the promoters. At the same time, democracy promoters realized that a procedural democracy could achieve their goals at a fraction of the cost. As a result, we began to see the promoters increasingly become satisfied with semi-democratic regimes and stop pushing for further democracy. Many of the transitions were hindered and over time began to slide back to authoritarianism.

In order to better understand the reasons behind the high failure rate of democratic transitions one needs to look at different types of democracy promotion agendas and various methods used by these actors. Evaluating the two main branches of democracy promotion and their theoretical roots will help us better understand how a liberal policy became a tool for realist goals and how this incompatibility continues to lead to a failure that may have an impact even on consolidated democracies.

### **3. TYPES OF DEMOCRACY PROMOTION**

Today, democracy promotion can be categorized using two dimensions. The first is the nature of the promoter. Regarding their structure, the two types of promoting actors are state-funded institutions and non-governmental organizations that are sponsored by civil society actors. State institutions include various organizations that are either fully or partially funded by states. Due to relatively rich resources available to them, these represent a large portion of promotion projects. Similarly, the availability of resources allows state sponsored actors to become involved in larger scale projects. They often target post-conflict states in need of political and economic assistance. Starting with the assistance to draft constitutions and develop political institutions, these programs extend to election assistance, election observation, reform of judicial bodies, promotion of the rule of law, legislative assistance, and the training of the security forces (Acuto 2008, 468-469). The scope of these activities not only requires large budgets, but also cooperation between governments.

Non-governmental organizations, on the other hand, tend to emphasize civil advocacy groups as well as education programs. These are relatively low-cost programs that tend to take place after a certain level of stability is established in a country. Civil society often becomes involved either after state institutions successfully established the rules of the game in post-conflict societies, or in countries where democratic transition is a peaceful one.

The second dimension is the origins and the goals of the democracy promotion. Even though there are a number of countries that are involved in promotion projects the two major actors in the field are the U.S. and Europe. The differences between the two types began to emerge during the later years of the Cold War and gradually became more significant after the absence of a common enemy reduced the need for close cooperation. Kopstein (2006) argues that the divide exists because Europe and the U.S. promote slightly different “norm sets” as a result of their differing definitions of democracy. I argue that the difference between these two types goes beyond their definition of democracy and the norm sets they promote. The distinction goes well beyond that. They also have different motivations behind their programs and utilize different methods. In the following sections I will try to point out these differences.

### **3.1. The United States**

American democracy promotion projects are more visible not only because they are larger in scale and spread to more countries around the world, but also because coercive methods like military interventions are some of the preferred methods. Another cause of their visibility is the major role played by state sponsored institutions. In a sense, this makes democracy promotion a branch of American Foreign policy. For American democracy promotion movement, the foundation of the NED in 1983 is a turning point because it established the roots of the existing institutional structure and opened the way for providing direct public support for democracy activists in other countries. Even though NED was initially perceived as a tool of American imperialism, over time its track record, especially at the end of the Cold War, lent it a certain degree of credibility around the world.

Despite raising private contributions, 99% of the NED’s funding comes from the U.S. Congress (Smith 2013, 29). As a result, NED acts parallel to the American foreign policy. This leads to an image problem in target societies as an extension of American interventionism. These concerns, in turn, make it easier for authoritarian rulers to resist all attempts to democratize. Those concerns cannot be completely dismissed. From the beginning the U.S. administrations viewed democratic transitions as regime change processes that sought to replace existing regimes with democratic ones that are friendlier towards the U.S.

Joined by many other organizations that followed its example, by the early 1990s NED began to focus on newly democratizing states, providing technical assistance, advice on institutional design, and organizational help (McFaul 2004, 156). Others, like the USAID, also became involved in democracy promotion during this period even though it was not one of their original goals. The USAID, for example, placed democracy promotion among its seven strategic goals. According to their third strategic goal, USAID aims to “expand and sustain the ranks of prosperous, stable and democratic states by promoting effective, accountable, democratic governance; respect for human rights; sustainable, broad-based economic growth; and well-being” (Rieff 2012, 62). Rieff (2012, 62) points out that in 2011, \$17 billion (55% of the total State Department and USAID foreign assistance budget) was devoted to achieving this goal.

A more recent addition to the field is the Millennium Challenge Account created by President George W. Bush in order to fund development and democratization abroad. Especially Bush’s second term represents a jump in American democracy promotion. During the later stages of Bush Presidency, electoral assistance and civil society enforcement became preferred methods of democracy promotion (Acuto 2008, 471) as a sharp contrast to military interventions of Bush’s early years.

American democracy promotion projects need to be evaluated in connection with the American identity and the role American exceptionalism plays in it. The democratization project is based on “a mystical sense of mission, a belief in the redemptive role of the United States in global affairs, a missionary zeal in which remaking the world in America’s image seems not an act of hubris but a fulfillment of a moral duty” (Rieff 2012, 59). The sense of a mission that dominates the thinking of policymakers often leads

to one of two approaches. The first sees the U.S. as an example for the rest of the world and is mostly passive. This is often adopted during administrations that have a domestic focus. The alternative is more aggressive and is based on the idea that it is the U.S.' mission to venture out and create a world in its own image where democracy and liberalism are widespread. This view is often used justifying American attempts of military or non-military regime change abroad. This second view, because of its aggressive nature, is often the one perceived as American hubris by the targeted countries and societies, leading to reactions.

Another characteristic of the American approach is its willingness to use coercive methods such as military interventions. The data shows that democracy promotion through interventions is more likely to fail than succeed, yet until recently military interventions played an important role. Meernik (1996, 395) finds that when comparing the democracy levels between the year of the intervention and the year after, 63% of the cases show no change and only 37% of them show a positive change. He also shows that three years after the intervention the percentage of positive change drops to 22%, increasing the percentage of failure to 78%. Considering the financial and human costs of military interventions this success rate is not sufficiently high.

Overall, the American approach is more direct and has a top-down structure that sometimes uses coercive methods or attempts to initiate change from the top leadership positions, mostly concentrating on the elites. There are three important characteristics of the American democracy promotion program that distinguish it from the European version. First, it is ultimately about regime change. It is based on the assumption that if the existing regime does not respond well to external pressures, it will eventually come under pressure from the "democracy-promotion machinery" (Smith 2013, 38). Second, despite all the variety of resources devoted to democracy promotion since the mid-1980s, there is a strong link between U.S. democracy promotion and military intervention, or the threat of it. This is an important factor that not only undermines the credibility of such efforts, but also lends credibility to the legitimacy of authoritarian claims that it is a tool of American imperialism. And finally, because of the structure of democracy promotion apparatus and its close association with coercive methods these agents of democratization are not perceived as independent actors. Even when they do not have direct ties to the U.S. administration and its institutions, the work they do makes them a part of an organized foreign policy enterprise because of U.S. government's fixation on democracy promotion over the past forty years.

### **3.2. Europe**

The alternative is the European approach. Europe represents a complex system of democracy promotion. Like many other areas of policy there is a layered approach here. The first layer consists of individual countries that include but are not limited to EU members. Each country has their own priorities and agenda independent from the common EU policies. At this level there are two major types. While some countries are similar to the American version, others like Germany represent a different structure we can call the continental approach. Second, is the EU level where the same countries act in coordination and through EU institutions. Sometimes these two levels produce different results because a coordinated approach requires individual countries to compromise some aspects of their agenda to achieve their goals. When taken together, however, these two dimensions create a network of dozens of organizations that focus on various parts of the world. The total of resources devoted by these organizations to democracy promotion exceeds the budget of American institutions (McFaul 2004, 156), but their lack of coordination and the minimal use of coercive methods make them less visible. That is why these two levels need to be evaluated separately.

European governments have long been important contributors of development assistance. Much of this assistance traditionally focused on economic development. More recently, the focus started to include human rights and democracy. A good example of this shift is the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA). Even though traditionally SIDA's overall goal has been poverty reduction, their work gradually came to include "education and health, natural resources and environment, humanitarian aid, economic reform, and human rights and democracy (Lloyd 2010, 551). This expansion is based on the realization that the political will to reduce poverty required a transparent and responsive



political system that would be accountable to the public. Many European countries followed a similar logic throughout the development of their democracy promotion programs.

Among European countries Germany occupies an important role. The German model is at the center of the Continental approach. It relies on a combination of federal institutions and the creation of foundations created along political party lines. On the federal government side, German Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development and agencies like the German Development Cooperation see human rights and democracy as important parts of their work on German development policy that relies on social justice, economic efficiency, political stability, and ecological sustainability (Lloyd 2010, 551-552). In addition to this central approach, there is a network of foundations established along the political party lines that reflect their individual ideologies. Some of these foundations are highly active in democracy promotion. The first of German party foundations was the Friedrich Ebert Foundation, established by the Social Democratic Party in 1925 (Lloyd 2010, 553-554). The political party foundations are funded largely by the German federal government and to a lesser extent by individual state governments. Although their initial focus was domestic politics, these foundations began to work internationally in the 1960s and later played an important role in democratic transitions in Portugal, Spain, and Latin America by providing support for political parties, civil society, labor unions, and the media (Lloyd 2030, 553-554). Following these successes, the international dimension of their activities gradually increased.

Unsurprisingly, two countries that adopted the German model are Spain and Austria. Austria because of the historical and traditional ties they have with Germany and Spain because of the vital role German foundations played during Spain's own democratization. In Austria<sup>3</sup>, party foundations combine domestic and international functions. Austrian political party foundations are remarkably similar to their German counterparts and combine domestic functions with the international ones. They are also mostly funded by the state. Spanish foundations<sup>4</sup> are also along political party lines and in addition to their work on domestic politics, they act as training centers for international programs.

Other countries in Europe adopt an approach somewhat closer to the American model where political party representatives come together with foreign policy decisionmakers. The Westminster Foundation for Democracy (WFD) was established in 1992 as the Great Britain's independent foundation under the sponsorship of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office with a board that brought together party and Foreign Office representatives (Lloyd 2010, 556). In the Netherlands, the Netherlands Institute for Multiparty Democracy (NIMD) was established in 2000 with the contribution of seven major political parties (Lloyd 2010, 555). The advantage of this model is that it brings together available resources and mobilizes them more effectively than a group of semi-independent actors. The disadvantage, however, is two-fold. First, these are not independent bodies and as governmental organizations, there may be issues about how they are perceived by target societies. Second, because these bring together representatives from different ideological backgrounds, decision making may be problematic at times.

The second tier of European democracy promotion movement is conducted by the EU. The main tool of the EU's foreign assistance is EuropeAid, controlled by the European Commission. Its democracy promotion mission is described as "the Commission's support to democratization pursues both a top-down and bottom-up approach. This includes democratic institution building, such as capacity building of parliaments and local governments, electoral support and observation, reform and training of the judiciary, and anti-corruption measures. It also covers civil society programs, including projects supporting non-state actors in their advocacy, information, and education activities in the areas of human rights and democracy, as well as lobbying to secure political change or to monitor the actions of public institutions" (Lloyd 2010, 558). Lloyd (2010, 558) groups EU assistance activities under four categories: "improving election processes; strengthening parliaments; supporting independent media; and promoting pluralistic political systems." While mostly focused on the top-down structure, these four

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<sup>3</sup> Austria's Dr. Karl Renner Institute (Social Democratic Party) and the Political Academy of the Austrian People's Party were both established in 1972.

<sup>4</sup> The first of Spanish foundations was the Pablo Iglesias Foundation (FPI) established in 1977 by the Spanish Socialist Workers' Party, followed by the Foundation for Analysis and Social Studies (FAES) established by the center-right *Partido Popular* in 1989 (Lloyd 2010, 556).

categories of activities represent a better spectrum when combined with the efforts by individual national institutions. In addition to these four, the EU also has a number of programs that directly target societies and groups to fulfill the bottom-up part of their agenda. The EU's democracy promotion targets are distinct from its individual members because they have a regional focus. Many of the EU programs concentrate in the EU's immediate neighborhood and its members' former colonies. This preference is the result of EU members' priorities: stability along their borders and concerns about immigration.

There are significant differences between the American and European models. First, is Europe's heavier emphasis on the bottom-up approach, instead of the top-down approach the U.S. seems to favor. Second, and as a result of the first, is Europeans more often engage in social issues (rule of law, gender equality, human rights, etc.) while American democracy promotion is more geared towards economic liberalization and institution building. Third, instead of targeting political elites, European programs target different groups in society. This wider net requires cooperation and compromise by various actors, complicating the process, but at the same time instilling the core values of democracy like compromise. Finally, the European approach does not include coercive democratization as much as the American version. Even though this last point can, to some degree, be attributed to both sides' relative military capabilities, the main reason is likely the theoretical roots of their respective democracy promotion programs we will evaluate in the following section.

#### **4. DEMOCRACY PROMOTION AS A REALIST POLICY**

Looking at different cases of democracy promotion, one needs to take two sets of variables into consideration in order to get a better understanding of the motivation behind them. First are the background variables that are about actors' motivations to become involved in democracy promotion projects. The second group consists of variables that are case specific that look at the various actors that are involved in the process. The former is based on the theoretical background of democracy promotion policies and is relatively stable in the long run.

As I have pointed out earlier, the second period of democracy promotion during the Cold War was predominantly motivated by neorealist concerns that aimed at weakening the Communist bloc. An evaluation of the targeted countries during this period affirms this claim. During the Cold War democratization efforts were aimed at either communist regimes or authoritarian regimes that enjoyed close ties with these communist countries. On the other hand, authoritarian states with Western ties were not only tolerated, but also actively supported and protected from domestic and international threats. This created an uneven approach that signaled to the rest of the world that democracy promotion was not just for the benefit of the international system as a whole, as well as the targeted societies, but also a tool for regime change wielded by the West to remove unfriendly governments. This perception outlived the Cold War and still is behind the skepticism in some countries. The exact impact of democracy promotion in ending the Cold War is hard to determine, but it appeared to be one of the factors that played a role. This success led many to view it as a useful tool in creating a new international system that would be based on common values.

However, the faith in democratization as a system altering tool was misplaced for three reasons. First, the democratic transitions of the period had not consolidated yet and it was still unclear how many eventually would survive their path to a liberal democracy. At the end, the survival rate of these democratizations turned out to be relatively low with the exception of Eastern Europe where the possibility of EU membership was an additional motivating factor for governments and people in general. Second, the initial struggle to spread democracy was against a single ideology and the tools and methods were developed accordingly. Even if we accredit the success to democracy promotion alone, there were no guarantees that the same approach would work under different circumstances. The variation among the third period democratizations required adjustments but we have often seen that, confident of the fungibility of the product they promoted, agents of democratization refused to take this need into consideration. In some cases, this was one of the causes of backlash against democracy. Finally, the double standards that plagued the second period of democracy promotion were also present during the third. A number of authoritarian regimes not only managed to survive, but also continued to enjoy their strong ties with the West without the pressure to democratize. This naturally led to feelings of resentment by some, confirming their doubts about Western motives.

The end of the Cold War and the beginning of the third period of democracy promotion was also significant because it represented the beginning of the break between the American and European models. Until the end of the second period, the U.S. and its European allies had coordinated their efforts against the common threat. By the 1990s, we began to see a divergence due to their shifting priorities and threat perceptions. On the one hand, the U.S., as the sole surviving superpower, was attempting to shape the emerging international system in order to reinforce its position and maximize its interests. Because this model was based on the advancement of an actor's position around the globe, it can be best described as an "offensive model of democracy promotion." The U.S. used democracy promotion in order to protect and, when possible, advance its interests globally by interventions and the creation of regimes in its own image. At the time, Europe was trying to consolidate democracy in Eastern Europe as a prelude to its upcoming expansion. Because this expansion, by significantly stretching its territory, brought new neighbors to the picture, European priority was to ensure stability along these new borders. This model put the emphasis on security and stability along the Union's borders and was defensively motivated. This divergence between the two models was the result of the theoretical background each actor adopted.

During this period of the American democracy promotion, the determining factor appeared to be the shift in the international system. With the end of the Cold War, the U.S. believed that it was in a position to shape the system as the only superpower. Combined with the deep belief that the U.S. should set an example for the rest of the world as a political system, democracy promotion almost became a missionary project. Despite its traditional ties to liberal theory, American democracy promotion movement relied on a number of theoretical approaches to justify its policies. In an effort to develop a new grand strategy that would fit the needs of the new era a number of new theories appeared. Among these, Samuel Huntington's (1993) *Clash of Civilizations* was arguably the most influential for a period and deeply affected the democracy promotion projects. The choice of the *Clash of Civilizations* by policymakers and security officials as a guiding theory solved two problems. First, it identified a new source, namely Islamic and Chinese civilizations as potential challengers to U.S. dominance. This trend only gained more support after the attacks of September 11. More importantly, it established cultural differences replacing ideology as the source of this new challenge. Democracy promotion was to spread the values of liberalism and democracy as parts of a universal value system, reducing the differences between countries and bringing them together on a common ground. As these common values spread, the cultural differences that might lead to conflicts would diminish and the Western claims as leaders of the international system would be justified. Toward this goal, target countries' willingness was only secondarily important and the use of coercive methods of democratization were justified. This is mainly why the American democracy promotion is often perceived as a program of regime change. It is also one of the reasons why it seems to fail more often than it succeeds. In this sense, democracy promotion was an offensive policy adopted in order to achieve realist goals. The use of a liberal policy tool toward realist goals created an incompatibility that contributed to its failures by creating concerns in target societies.

A similar argument can be made for the European approach to democracy promotion. Even after the end of the Cold War, despite their economic wealth, the EU and major European countries failed to emerge as major political powers on the international stage and force a multipolar international system. There were a number of reasons for this. First, individually, none of these countries fulfilled the requirements for a global power. Even though they were much more powerful on paper when together under the EU, until very recently, they lacked the structures that would allow them to develop a coordinated foreign policy, as well as a defense policy. Even today, it is a constant struggle to maintain common policies in certain areas. Second, the main expansion that followed the Cold War elevated the integration of the new members on the priority list for the EU. This expansion also caused the member countries to refocus their democracy promotion agendas. While the first priority was the consolidation of democracy in candidate states, the second was to increase the security of the Union by promoting stability through democracy on EU's borders.

The theoretical background of the EU's focus on democracy and democratization in its neighborhood was the democratic peace theory and its belief in the peaceful nature and stability of democratic regimes. European policymakers believed that by supporting democracy and good governance along their

borders, they could overcome threats like immigration and conflicts that may result from political instability. Even though the theory behind it was liberal in nature, it soon became apparent that the policies adopted were based on realist goals. After a relatively short period of time for democracy to hold root, difficulties began to arise, and the democracy promoters faced a choice between full-fledged democracy and stability. Their choice of prioritizing stability over democracy shows us that their policy goals were based on maximizing their own security and realist in nature. This choice signaled that as long as they were politically stable and did not pose a threat to Europe, procedural democracies and even authoritarian regimes were acceptable.

Even though both uses of democracy promotion were based on realist policy goals, they differed from one another when it came to their motivations. They both valued the pacification and stabilization of their targets under regimes friendly to them over the creation of functional and consolidated liberal democracies. Since this goal is often more easily achieved under effective authoritarian and semi-democratic regimes, many of these democratizations were either abandoned the procedural requirements were reached and these regimes qualified as semi-democracies. Because it is hard to consolidate a mixed regime that contains inconsistencies between its structures and its practices in the long run some eventually began to slide back to authoritarianism. The main difference between the two versions is that while the American democracy promotion can be categorized as offensive where a country attempts to use regime change in order to advance its own interests around the globe, European promotion is defensive in nature. It focuses on regions perceived as a potential threat to its own stability and attempts to eliminate these threats through democratization and the stability it is expected to bring.

Because the regime type of a country is not the only determinant of stability, these democracy programs all had a second dimension to ensure the long-term cooperation of the target countries: economic liberalization. Economic liberalization opens a country to the forces of the international economic system with the promise of additional benefits they could not otherwise achieve. While, by opening themselves economically these countries are able to attract additional resources and investment, they also become more vulnerable to the fluctuations in the system. This dependency to the system and to others in it proved to be much more predictable and effective in keeping countries in line. It possesses all the necessary tools such as capital flows and sanctions, but very little of the unpredictability of a democratic rule. Since economic liberalization is often voluntarily adopted, it recently became increasingly emphasized over political liberalization. This is one of the reasons why once the economic integration to the system is achieved, the creation of a full-scale liberal democracy may appear unnecessary. As a result, once the establishment of liberal democracy proves to be problematic, promoters quickly settle for a simpler alternative: a procedural democratic model that was enforced by a liberal economic structure. This represented an incomplete transition, making consolidation almost impossible. One major problem that arose with these stalled political transitions is that like any change that is left incomplete, there is a great risk that structures will revert to their original state. A liberal economic system by itself is not enough to stop this slide because semi democracies and many forms of authoritarian regimes already proved to be capable of running liberal economies integrated to the international system.

One other threat to democratization efforts is internal to these countries. Societal backlash can be result of the concerns about the motives of democracy promoters or the failure of the past experiences with democracy. Conservative and traditionalist groups in that society are often the source of these reactions. Carothers (2006, 63) suggests two additional causes for the negative reactions against democracy promotion: the conditions and expectations that are related to the aid; the changing perception of democracy promotion around the world.

Like most aid, democratization aid comes with provisions. Often these requirements that accompany the aid are seen by recipients as being too restrictive. In most cases, this is the result of “one model fits all” approach adopted by promoters that do not take into consideration the realities of these cases and placing unrealistic expectations on these transforming regimes. Whether they are really unrealistic or not, these provisions and expectations allow politicians to blame the democratization process and its promoters for their own failures. Especially in cases where the democratization process is a top-down one, this becomes a problem because the promoters’ communication with the society they seek to transform is indirect and the societal backlash against potential setbacks or failures can be manipulated by certain

politicians to increase their own power. For these cases, it is not enough to start with clear and realistic goals that are case-specific, it is also crucial to establish direct communication lines with the target audience, making the process less top-heavy. The second cause of the backlash is the shifting perception on democracy promotion and the unease that accompanies it. Starting with the early 2000s, American policies, especially in the Greater Middle East, are seen around the world as a tool for regime change that does not necessarily lead to more democracy, but to more Western friendly governments. The coercive nature of these interventions, combined with the motivations behind them and their failure rate raised doubts about the whole democracy promotion movement. Today, in some parts of the world the term democracy promotion is “closely associated with U.S. military intervention and occupation” (Carothers 2006, 64). The fact that the majority of these programs are run by state sponsored organizations does not alleviate the concerns of the many potential candidate countries. On the one hand, politicians in power feel threatened by the potential of a regime change that may cause them to lose their hold on power because they believe they will lose control of the process once it starts. On the other hand, the failures of these transitions are a source of concern for general public because of the instability and insecurity they led to. In some cases, this even creates a nostalgia for the past authoritarian regimes. When these two distinct sets of concerns coincide, it becomes much easier for politicians to manipulate some groups in that society behind their agenda against further democratization, leading to the failure of the process.

According to Levitsky and Way (Goldsmith 2008, 137) the external pressure on democratizing states is the key for success and this pressure can be increased by emphasizing two factors: leverage and linkage. Here, leverage is the target government’s exposure to external pressure and linkage is the density of external economic ties. While it is clear that countries with higher levels of openness to the international system will be more vulnerable to pressures from it, this by no means guarantees the compliance of the target countries. There are at least two ways countries can escape some of these constraints. First, following the initial global push for democracy, an illiberal bloc started to gradually develop with the rise of authoritarian major powers like China and Russia. Other countries, whether they are disillusioned by the democratization experience, or run by populist leaders appear eager to join this bloc directly or indirectly by putting a distance between themselves and their former allies in the West. The emergence of these states meant that an authoritarian, or semi-democratic country, could find support outside of the democratic bloc, allowing politicians in democratizing countries to escape the constraints that were placed on them and pursue alternative agendas. Second, and closely related to the first, is the unwillingness of democracy promoters to enforce these constraints by applying pressure. On the one hand, because of the limited realist goals behind their policies, promoters have much lower expectations than a consolidated liberal democracy and would prefer not to alienate target governments and settle for a procedural democracy with a liberal economy. In addition to this pragmatic approach, one can suspect the existence of the unrealistic optimism that a government that stalled the democratization process can return to it in the future. On the other hand, democracy promoters are also concerned about the changes in the international system. as I have mentioned democracy is no longer the only alternative and we are already moving away from unipolarity. Whether the new system structure becomes bipolar or multipolar there will be a competition for allies. This is likely to lead the democracy promoters to lower their standards and expectations, not only making it harder to apply pressure to democratize, but also opening the way for more countries to backslide to authoritarianism as long as they remain loyal to their Western allies.

Under these circumstances, solely relying on external pressure for the promotion of democracy is unlikely to produce the desired results. What we need is an increased focus on the domestic dynamics of the transition process. There are three main areas on which democracy promotion programs need to improve on. First, we need to keep in mind that democracy is a dynamic concept with a constantly evolving definition. What we considered to be democracy during the early years of the 20<sup>th</sup> century is a far cry from today’s procedural democracies. When dealing with an evolving target like democracy, the goals must be determined from the beginning with the approval of all concerned parties. The presence of clear-cut goals and a plan to reach them will help avoid misunderstandings by defining what is considered to be a success, easing some of the anxieties among the general public. In addition, while determining these goals, promoting actors must also select the appropriate democratic model for the case by taking into consideration the history, culture, and societal structures of the target nation. This

case-specific approach may increase the support the project receives from the target society. Second, there is an increasing tendency to separate democracy's two dimensions in order to increase the probability of success. It may be useful to separate the procedural dimension from the liberal dimension that relies on rights and freedoms and introduce them one after the other. The general tendency appears to be to prioritize procedures and establish a democratic culture through them before expanding rights and freedoms beyond what is initially necessary. This approach assumes that once institutions and procedures are in place, the democratization process will continue, and society will be educated on the intricacies of the democratic culture. Unfortunately, past examples do not seem to support this view. In many of the failed transitions we see the process stall after democratic processes are put in place and the regimes achieve the minimum requirement of a functioning democracy. What follows often is a slide back to authoritarianism while keeping the appearance of a democracy. The spread of populist regimes around the world showed how easy it is to achieve this. Such leaders can hide behind hollowed out institutions, wield power and still be tolerated by democracy promoters. In a newly established democracy, the only force that can prevent backsliding toward authoritarianism is not the newly established institutions, but the society itself. The power of the society comes from the rights and freedoms individuals possess. This requires the consolidation of democratic values. To consolidate democratic values, it is not enough to give people wide reaching rights and freedoms. It is necessary that they are aware of the power they have and learn how to use it. A bottom-up approach that emphasizes education and guidance programs must accompany any changes to the political system and traditional guarantees. Only then people can resist their government's attempts to roll democracy back and even make demands for further democracy.

Finally, democracy promoting actors must also be restructured. As mentioned before, a vast majority of the resources devoted to democracy promotion are directly or indirectly controlled by states. This leads to two problems in practice. First, state-led attempts are observed with concern in many countries because they are interpreted as interventions that violate the country's sovereignty. Second, they usually lead to top-down efforts that focus on politicians and elites of the target society. They usually fail to instill democratic values at lower levels of social hierarchy that is crucial for its consolidation. As a result, these rarely go further than procedural democracies where there is a barrier between the rulers and the ruled. Non-governmental organizations are better equipped to adopt a bottom-up approach that better penetrates the target society. In order to overcome NGOs shortcomings regarding the resources, governmental and semi-governmental organizations can transfer some of their resources and establish better organized cooperation networks with them. This, however, would also require these states to coordinate their goals with these NGOs, which would mean more ambitious targets for democracy levels than their current interests dictate. In addition to these three improvements, one must also point out that coercive methods must be the exception, not the rule, in democracy promotion. These changes may not solve all the problems democracy promotion processes have but I argue that they represent an important first step in limiting the ability of realist politicians to use it as a tool to maximize their power and/or security.

## 5. CONCLUSION

Although not as old as democracy itself, democracy promotion has been around for over a century. During this time, it took different forms in order to achieve different goals. There are three main periods of democracy promotion. Out of these three, the most recent one is the most significant because of its scale and the resources devoted to it. However, relative to the efforts to spread democracy globally the results are not impressive. The number of regimes defined as semi, procedural, or illiberal democracies is on the rise. This trend is accompanied by the rise of populism in politics. While this is an important threat to democratizing countries, it also has the potential to derail consolidated democracies in the future.

Here, I argued that there are two main factors that contribute to the failure of democracy promotion projects. These are the nature of the project and the methods used by promoting actors. On paper, democracy promotion is a liberal project. It claims to seek the establishment of common liberal values that are expected to improve the conditions for all of us. In reality, it is clear that it is used by and large to advance the agenda of the promoting parties. Relatively small number of countries that are active in the field either try to improve their own position and maximize their interests in the international system,

or they try to increase their security and minimize the risks they face. These two sets of goals lead to a distinction of strands of promotion activities: offensive and defensive. What brings these two strands together is the realist nature of their policy goals. Adopting a liberal method to achieve realist goals creates an incompatibility and contributes to the failure of these transitions.

Regarding their methods, democracy promotion projects need to be more democratic. Here, three aspects of these processes need to improve. First, they need to be more transparent. Not only the goals and expectations should be clearly communicated, but also clear communication lines must be established with different segments of the target society. This makes it harder for domestic actors to manipulate the process. Second, promoters must adopt a case-specific approach and abandon the “one model fits all” approach that aims to create new regimes in their own image. By doing this they can increase the project’s acceptance by larger portions of the society and give themselves a better chance. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, the establishment of democratic values must take precedence over democratic structures. Without societal support for them democratic institutions and procedures can be manipulated to serve the interests of the few. It is the society that places demands for further democracy and resists the attempts to erode it. For this to happen, granting individuals and groups rights and freedoms is not enough. They must learn how to protect them and use them effectively. This can only happen through education programs that will add a bottom-up dimension to all promotion projects.

Regardless of its anticipated global impact, democratization, when successful, improves the lives of the people in that country. Its success, however, heavily relies on the motivations behind it and the methods used during it. With improvements to the existing framework, it may be possible to get better results for the amount of resources committed to this goal. Continuing with the current flawed system, on the other hand, is not only likely to lead to further failures, but also can damage democracy’s reputation and threaten all democracies.

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## **Araştırma Makalesi**

### **Democracy Promotion: An Idealist Discourse for Neorealist Goals?**

*Demokrasi Teşviki: Neorealist Hedefler için İdealist Bir Söylem mi?*

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#### **Genişletilmiş Özet**

Bir rejim tipi olduğu kadar bir değer sistemi olarak da demokrasinin evrensel uygulanabilirliği nispeten yenidir. Bu görüş I. Dünya Savaşı döneminde, liberal yönetim, barış ve serbest piyasalardan oluşan “Wilson Üçlemesi” ile sistematik bir şekilde ifade edilmiştir (Acuto 2008, 463). Bugün demokratik rejimlerin halklarının ihtiyaçlarına cevap vermede diğerlerine göre daha üstün olduğu kadar uluslararası alanda da daha barışçıl olduklarına dair genel bir algı mevcuttur. Bu inanç, otoriter ülkeler üzerinde dönüşüme yönelik iç ve dış baskılar yaratmaktadır.

Yurtiçinde, demokrasiye geçişler, daha fazla katılım, büyük demokratik ve ekonomik değişiklikler için toplumsal baskıların sonucu olarak ortaya çıkabilir. Uluslararası alanda iki önemli faktör vardır. Birincisi, çevresel faktörlerden kaynaklanır. Demokratikleşmenin aynı bölgedeki veya benzer koşullardaki ülkeler arasında yayılma eğiliminde olduğuna dair kanıtlar vardır (Gleditsch & Ward, 2006; O’Loughlin ve diğerleri, 1998; Starr, 1991). İkincisi, çeşitli aktörlerin ya dış baskı oluşturan ya da rejim değişikliği için içeriden baskı yaratmaya çalışan demokrasiyi geliştirme çabalarıdır.

Demokratikleşme konusu özellikle Soğuk Savaş’ın sonunda literatürde önem kazanmıştır. On yıllar süren yoğun demokratikleşme girişimlerinden sonra bile, nispeten az sayıda eski otoriter ülke konsolide bir liberal demokrasiye ulaşmayı başarmıştır. Bu başarısız örneklerden bazıları, demokrasinin yalnızca belirli prosedürel ve yapısal yönlerine sahip olan yarı-demokrasiler haline gelirken, diğerleri tamamen otoriterliğe geri döner. Bu sonuçlara rağmen, demokratikleşmeye olan inanç güçlü olmaya devam etmektedir.

Son yirmi yılda, demokratik geçişlerin umulan ölçüde başarılı olamaması ve beklentileri karşılamaması sonucunda hedefledikleri toplumlardan da tepki almaya başladıklarını gözlemlemekteyiz. Bu bir taraftan demokratikleşmenin başarısızlığına gösterilen bir tepkiyken aynı zamanda gelecekte yaşanabilecek dönüşümler için gereken desteğinin de azalmaya başladığının bir göstergesidir. Mevcut tablo demokratikleşme programlarının benimsediği yöntemlerin yeniden değerlendirilmesini zorunlu kılmaktadır.

Demokrasiyi geliştirme sürecini daha iyi değerlendirebilmek için iki boyutta ele almamız gerekir. Birincisi tarihsel boyuttur. Tarihsel olarak, demokrasi teşvikinin üç farklı dönemi vardır: Wilsoncu, Soğuk Savaş ve Soğuk Savaş sonrası. Bu üçü, demokratikleşme motivasyonları ve sürece dahil olan aktörler temelinde birbirinden ayırt edilebilir.

Demokrasiyi teşvik etmenin kökleri, John L. O’Sullivan’ın, ahlaki saygınlığın ve insanın dünyadaki kurtuluşunun ABD’nin tarihsel misyonu olduğunu savunan “Manifest Destiny”sine kadar uzanır (Rieff 2012, 60). O’Sullivan demokrasiden özel olarak bahsetmese de vurguladığı değerler demokrasinin o

dönemki tanımıyla örtüşür. Bu fikirler, ABD'nin Küba ve Filipinler'de demokratik rejimler kurma iddiasıyla yola çıktığı 1898 İspanyol-Amerikan Savaşı'nın ardından uygulamaya konmuştur (Smith 2013, 31). Bu deney aynı zamanda dış güçler tarafından ulus inşasına yönelik ilk olarak da kabul edilir. 19. yüzyılın ikinci yarısında O'Sullivan ve diğerlerinin ortaya koyduğu fikirler, Amerikan istisnacılığı görüşüyle birleşerek Woodrow Wilson'ın fikirlerinin temelini oluşturmuş ve I. Dünya Savaşı öncesinde politikalarını şekillendirmiştir.

İlk döneminde, odak Avrupa olmasına rağmen, demokrasi teşviki ABD'nin Avrupalı müttefiklerinden çok sınırlı bir destekle başlatıldı ve yönetildi. Dar odağına rağmen, Amerikan izolasyonizmi ve Avrupa sömürgeciliği süreci gerektiği gibi destekleyemedi ve yalnızca kısa ömürlü ve sınırlı bir başarıya ulaştı. ABD, Avrupa'da demokratik ulus inşası için bastırmasına rağmen iç siyasi gelişmeler nedeniyle sürece dahil olamadı. Avrupalı güçler ise gerekli araçlara ve etkiye sahip olmalarına rağmen bu fikirlerin sömürgeleri üzerindeki potansiyel etkisi konusunda endişeliydiler. Sonuç olarak, süreç sınırlandırıldı ve hedef ülkeler yeni kurumlarını konsolide etmek için ihtiyaç duydukları zaman ve araçlardan yoksun kaldılar.

Soğuk Savaş sırasında demokrasi teşviğinin ikinci dönemi başladığında ana öncelik güvenlik ve Komünist tehditle mücadele idi. Demokratik değerler, liberalizm ve insan hakları Batı kimliğinin ana yönleri olarak vurgulandı, çünkü bunlar Komünist rejimlerin temel eksiklikleri olarak görülüyordu. Bu değerlerin tanıtımı, Batı yaşam tarzının cazibesini artırmak için kullanıldı. Temel yöntem, "kültürün savaşın başka yollarla devamı olduğu" inancına dayalı olarak Batılı hayırseverler aracılığıyla Doğu Bloku'ndaki kültürel projeleri ve muhalifleri desteklemektir (Rieff 2012, 61). Süreç ağırlıklı olarak Batı'nın istihbarat örgütleri tarafından yönlendirildi. Yıllar geçtikçe, bu çabalar o kadar başarılı oldu ki, Ronald Reagan iktidara geldiğinde Amerikan demokrasisinin teşviki hız kazanmanın yanında yeni bir yapıya da kavuştu. Ulusal Demokrasi Vakfı'nın (NED) ve dört yan kuruluşunun 1983'te kurulması, Amerikan demokrasisini geliştirme projesinde kilit rol oynadı. Ardından gelen bu ve benzeri kurumlar, demokrasinin yayılması için bir ağ oluşturdu.

Demokrasinin ilerletilmesinin üçüncü dönemi, Soğuk Savaş'ın sona ermesini takip etti. Süreç, diplomasi, uluslararası ticaret, insani yardım ve bazen askeri güç yoluyla liberalizm ve demokrasinin genişlemesine dayanan "liberal enternasyonalizm" doktrini tarafından çerçevelendi ve Acuto'ya (2008, 464) göre bu yeni bir neo-kolonyal veya emperyal misyon sivil siyasetine rehberlik etti. Liberal demokratik çekirdeğin değerlerini ve kurumlarını çevredeki devletlerin iç işlerine aktarmaya çalışan barış inşası operasyonlarının belirli bir küreselleşme türü için araçlar olarak hizmet edebileceği görüşüne dayanıyordu. Bu üçüncü dönemde çabaların yaygınlaşmasına ek olarak aktörlerin çeşitlenmesine de şahit olduk.

Demokrasi teşvikini değerlendirebileceğimiz ikinci boyut ise yaklaşımdır. Son dönemde iki farklı yaklaşım farklı yönler evrilmeye başladı. Ortak bir düşmanın olmayışı ve değişen öncelikler, Amerikalı ve Avrupalı aktörlerin kendi programlarını geliştirmelerine ve farklı hedefler peşinde koşmalarına neden oldu.

Amerikan demokrasi geliştirme programının üç önemli özelliğinden bahsedebiliriz. Birincisi, rejim değişikliğinin ana hedef olarak görülmesi. İkincisi, ABD demokrasisinin teşviki ile askeri müdahale veya müdahale tehdidi arasında güçlü bir bağlantının varlığı. Üçüncüsü, demokrasi geliştirme aygıtının yapısı ve zorlayıcı yöntemlerle yakın ilişkisi nedeniyle, bu demokratikleşme ajanları bağımsız aktörler olarak algılanmaması.

Avrupa yaklaşımı ise, bireysel devletleri daha büyük AB aygıtıyla birleştiren iki katmanlı bir yapıya sahiptir. Bazı ülkeler Amerika Birleşik Devletleri'ne benzer yapılara sahip olsa da, AB düzeyi önemli ölçüde farklı bir yaklaşımı temsil etmektedir.

Amerikan ve Avrupa modelleri arasında önemli farklılıklar vardır. Birincisi, Avrupa'nın ABD'nin desteklediği yukarıdan aşağıya yaklaşım yerine aşağıdan yukarıya yaklaşıma daha fazla vurgu yapmasıdır. İkincisi ve birincinin doğal bir sonucu olarak, Avrupalılar daha çok sosyal meselelerle (hukukun üstünlüğü, cinsiyet eşitliği, insan hakları, vb.) meşgul olurken, Amerikan demokrasisinin teşviki daha çok ekonomik liberalleşme ve kurum inşasına yöneliktir. Üçüncüsü, Avrupa programları sadece siyasi seçkinleri hedeflemek yerine toplumdaki farklı grupları da hedef almaktadır. Bu daha geniş ağ, çeşitli aktörler tarafından işbirliğini ve uzlaşmayı gerektirir, bu da süreci karmaşılaştırır, ancak aynı

zamanda uzlaşma gibi demokrasinin temel değerlerini aşılar. Son olarak, Avrupa yaklaşımı, Amerikan versiyonu kadar zorla demokratikleştirmeyi içermemektedir.

Bu iki farklı yaklaşımın paylaştığı önemli bir özellik, çabalarının arkasındaki motive edici teorilerdir. Soğuk Savaş'ın sona ermesinden bu yana, Amerika Birleşik Devletleri'nin ana önceliği, kalan süper güç olarak dünyadaki etkisini en üst düzeye çıkarmak olmuştur. Bu, diğer ülkeler demokrasi ve liberalizm temel değerlerini paylaştığında daha kolay erişilebilir bir hedef haline gelir. Bu da demokrasi teşvikinin saldırgan bir versiyonuna karşılık gelir. Avrupa için ana motivasyon güvenlik gibi görünmektedir. Son genişlemesinden sonra AB'nin yeni komşularla sınırdas olması bu sınırlar boyunca güvenlik ve istikrar aramasına ve bunu demokrasiyi geliştirme programlarıyla sağlamaya çalışmasına yol açtı. Bu savunmacı yaklaşımın Amerika'nın saldırgan teşvikiyle ortak yanı, her ikisinin de Neorealist kaygıların bir sonucu olarak benimsenmiş olmasıdır. Son dönemdeki başarısızlıklara ve bariz tutarsızlıklara bakıldığında, demokrasinin teşvik edilmesi, ikinci ve üçüncü dönemlerinde, realist bir hedefe yönelik liberal bir araç olarak kullanılması ön plana çıkmaktadır. Araç ve amaç arasındaki tutarsızlık karşılaştığımız sorunların kökeninde önemli bir yer tutar.

Doğal olarak yeni bir yaklaşıma ihtiyaç duymaktayız. Bu amaçla öncelikli olarak demokrasiyi geliştirme projelerinin daha demokratik olması gerekir. Burada, bu süreçlerin üç bakımdan iyileştirilmesi zorunludur. İlk olarak, şeffaflığın artırılması kaçınılmazdır. Sadece hedefler ve beklentiler net bir şekilde iletilmemeli, aynı zamanda hedef toplumun farklı kesimleri ile net iletişim hatları oluşturulmalıdır. Bu, yerel aktörlerin süreci manipüle etmesini zorlaştırır. İkincisi, proje sahipleri, vakaya özel bir yaklaşım benimsemelidir ve kendi imajlarında yeni rejimler yaratmayı amaçlayan “herkese uyan tek bir model” yaklaşımını terk etmelidir. Bunu yaparak, projenin toplumun daha geniş kesimleri tarafından kabulünü artırabilir ve başarı ihtimalini arttırabilirler. Son olarak ve belki de en önemlisi, demokratik değerlerin oluşturulması, demokratik yapılardan önce gelmelidir. Toplumsal destek olmadan, demokratik kurumlar ve prosedürler azınlığın çıkarlarına hizmet edecek şekilde manipüle edilebilir. Daha fazla demokrasi talep eden ve onu aşındırma girişimlerine direnen toplumdur. Bunun mümkün olabilmesi için bireylere ve gruplara hak ve özgürlüklerin verilmesi yeterli değildir. Onları nasıl koruyacaklarını ve etkili bir şekilde nasıl kullanacaklarını öğrenmelidirler. Bu da ancak tüm tanıtım projelerine aşağıdan yukarıya bir boyut katacak eğitim programları ile olabilir.