

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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Many democratic governments say they care about promoting democracy beyond their borders. This survey of the foreign policy records of 40 countries from around the world looks at how well they have lived up to the commitments they have made to each other to defend and promote democracy. It concludes that, while the international community has helped advance the cause of democracy and human freedom around the world, democratic states have largely failed to incorporate the defense and promotion of democracy as a central element of their foreign policies. Nonetheless, in more places than not, the gap between rhetoric and reality is closing. As the global movement towards open democratic societies takes hold, and citizens raise their voice to demand change, governments likely will be called upon to expand their efforts to promote democracy. If they heed that call, the democratic gains of the 20th century will stand a much better chance of flourishing and spreading to places where the right to democracy does not yet exist.

Rationale for a Defending Democracy Survey

The rising tide of democracy around the world continues to pose new and complex challenges and opportunities for the international community of democracies. One of the most important tasks for this growing community, one which its members have pledged to undertake, is to defend democracy when under attack from forces determined to usurp power for their own ends.

This mutual obligation to protect and extend democratic gains is at the heart of the Warsaw Declaration of the Community of Democracies, a gathering of over 100 governments that took place in Poland in June 2000 and will meet again in Seoul, Korea in November 2002. The Warsaw Declaration commits governments to abide by a core set of democratic principles and to cooperate with one another to promote and consolidate democratic progress. It symbolizes a new doctrine in international affairs, as described by United Nations Secretary General Kofi Annan to the foreign ministers gathered in Warsaw: “[W]herever democracy has taken root, it will not be reversed.”

This new principle in international relations was not invented in Warsaw. It can be found in the core documents of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, the Council of Europe and the Organization of American States. It is enshrined in the articles of the Commonwealth, the Organization of African Unity, and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe. With the adoption of the Warsaw Declaration, the principle of mutual cooperation to defend democracy is extending even further to incorporate democratizing states in Asia and the Middle East. More importantly, states are putting this principle into practice in ways that have helped deter threats to democracy and restored the peoples’ right to govern themselves in every corner of the world, from Venezuela to Cambodia, from Fiji and Cote d’Ivoire to the Former Republic of Yugoslavia.

The meeting of the Community of Democracies in Seoul marks an important milestone in the slow but steady march toward building an international architecture founded on universal values of democracy and human rights. It also offers a logical occasion for releasing the results of the first-ever independent survey to chronicle how governments have adhered to their commitments to promote and defend democracy beyond their national borders over the past ten years.

How the Survey Was Conducted

The Defending Democracy Survey examines the foreign policy records of a representative sample of 40 countries from every region of the world, at different stages of democratic development, against four principal criteria:

- 1) Response to the overthrow of democratically elected government;
- 2) Response to manipulation of electoral processes;
- 3) Promotion of international norms and values of democracy and human rights and the institutions that sustain them; and
- 4) Policy toward entrenched dictatorships.

These criteria were chosen because they offered a way to assess how governments responded to a range of situations in which their rhetorical commitments to promote democracy were put to the test. A set of exemplary cases was chosen for each criterion as a way to gauge how governments reacted to a particular event of seminal importance. For example, the April 2002 coup in Venezuela against President Hugo Chavez triggered mechanisms established by the 34 governments of the Americas for dealing with interruptions to democratic rule. How did these governments respond? Or take the flawed elections held in Zimbabwe in March 2002, which violated electoral standards which Zimbabwe and its fellow members of the Southern African Development Community (SADC) had adopted. Did governments continue to recognize the Mugabe regime as the legitimate authority of the country? Governments also were given credit -- or not -- based on how they advanced norms of democracy and human rights in other ways, for example by voting for binding "democracy clauses" in the charters of regional organizations, or helping to build democratic institutions through their development assistance strategies. Based on their performance against these criteria, and taking account of disparities in resources and power, governments were awarded a composite score -- very good, good, fair or poor -- that tries to capture their overall record. The survey also provides an analysis of each country's competing priorities and future foreign policy trends.

While reports assessing the quality of democracy and respect for human rights in individual countries have proliferated, no systematic study of states' foreign policies examined through the prism of democracy promotion has ever been attempted. During the Cold War, popular aspirations for democracy in many places were smothered by the superpower clash between East and West. This made it virtually pointless to evaluate whether a government was genuinely concerned about promoting democracy when its more urgent desire was to contain or defeat the opposing side. The military overthrow of Salvador Allende in Chile in 1973, or the violent suppression of the Prague Spring in Czechoslovakia in 1968, come to mind as examples where external actors directly subverted democratic rights and aspirations in the name of national security. But with the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, the international climate has dramatically changed. A growing number of governments have identified the promotion of democracy as a foreign policy priority and have entered mutual cooperation agreements designed to prevent a return to authoritarian civilian or military rule. Regional and international norms are being established and mechanisms created to enforce them. And with the spread of open media, new technologies, an increasingly vocal civil society, and new leaders who came to power with help from democratic forces abroad, a body of evidence has developed that allows for a credible investigation and evaluation of the behavior of states on these grounds.

Nonetheless, despite the greater flow of information that globalization has fostered, we found that the motives underlying foreign policy decisions remain remarkably opaque, too often hidden behind the diplomatic niceties of communiqués. Foreign policy formulation is still influenced by ruling elites, negotiated through secret deals in diplomatic backrooms and military headquarters. Legislatures, the press, scholars, businesses, nongovernmental organizations and concerned citizens

face many obstacles to collect and analyze basic information about how their elected officials, as well as the unappointed bureaucrats who more often than not actually devise foreign policies, are conducting the nation's business abroad. Government officials retain the upper hand in controlling the flow of information, and too often invoke "national security" as a way to avoid public scrutiny. To overcome this deficit, it is critical that government representatives, journalists, parliamentarians and concerned citizens do more to ask and answer the hard questions about how foreign policy is, and should be, conducted. We need to democratize foreign policy so that both process and content reflect the values inherent in open democratic societies.

The difficulty in researching a subject of this complexity required us to make certain adjustments to the survey methodology:

- First, we decided early on that any evaluation of a country's foreign policy must be undertaken in the context of that country's unique history and circumstances. Each essay is meant to capture the competing forces that influence a government's definition and pursuit of national interests so that its democracy promotion policy is not analyzed in a vacuum. Therefore, we eschewed the notion of a numerical ranking or other quantitative indicia in favor of qualitative analysis. At the same time, while we recognized the enormous disparities in each country's power and influence to effect democratic change abroad, we started from the premise that even small, weaker democracies can take steps to contribute to a pro-democracy outcome.
- Second, we sought to hold governments accountable to commitments they themselves have made, rather than imposing an external set of prescriptions. For example, each government surveyed, except France, has endorsed the Warsaw Declaration. Therefore, to avoid any contentious debate over terms like "democracy," we relied on the definitions contained in the Warsaw Declaration and other documents widely adopted by governments (Universal Declaration of Human Rights, UN General Assembly Resolution on Promoting and Consolidating Democracy, etc.). We also sought to hold governments accountable to the democracy clauses found in such instruments as the Inter-American Democratic Charter (and its predecessors), the Copenhagen Document of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, and the Harare Declaration of the Commonwealth states.
- Third, to guard against bias, we asked noted experts in the fields of international relations, democracy and human rights, to review and critique each essay. In some cases, we also approached government officials of the surveyed states to solicit information, although not all of them replied.
- Fourth, because this is the first systematic attempt to document governments' willingness to defend democracy abroad since the end of the Cold War, we looked back over the past ten years as a way to establish a benchmark for future surveys.
- Finally, we did not try to measure the effectiveness of the pro-democracy strategies pursued by governments, a subject of intense debate, particularly regarding sanctions against entrenched dictatorships. Rather, we sought to analyze a government's demonstrated willingness to pursue a pro-democracy approach, as evidenced by its own statements and actions. In reaching judgments about each country's performance, we started from the premise that, in diplomacy, words matter, but actions matter more.

Key Findings: Cause for Celebration and Concern

One overarching observation can be made about the trends over the past decade: governments are beginning to see democracy promotion abroad not only as the right thing to do, but also the smart thing to do. A consensus is forming that there is no inevitable split between democratic ideals and pragmatic interests, especially when governments take the longer-term view. A growing body of literature has demonstrated, for example, that over time democracies tend to be more stable, do not experience famine, and do not go to war with one another. Donor governments, and expert agencies such as the United Nations Development Program, are concluding that democratic governance is an essential condition for human development and, therefore, building sustainable democracies should be a priority for development assistance. In the age of transnational threats like terrorism, financial crises, and nuclear proliferation, the international community is slowly recognizing that there is only one kind of durable stability – one founded on democratic governance, respect for human rights and the rule of law.

- There is a strong, direct correlation between the level of a country’s internal democratic development and its support for democracy abroad. Using Freedom House rankings of political rights and civil liberties for 2001 as one guide, nearly all states rated “free” earned scores as “good” or “very good” promoters of democracy abroad. Similarly, states rated “not free” or “partly free” have only a “fair” or “poor” record of defending democratic principles in their foreign relations.
- While established democracies do a better job than other states of promoting and defending democracy abroad, in practice few regard democracy promotion as in their vital national interests. Security and economic considerations usually trump democracy promotion concerns, even among those most genuinely committed to enlarging the community of democracies.
- Most democratic states increasingly are speaking out in favor of democratic norms and against violations of democratic rule, but action to punish transgressors or reward democratizing states still lags behind the rhetoric, particularly when other vital interests are at stake.
- The more powerful or strategically important the state experiencing a democratic crisis, the less likely the international community will intervene.
- Overall, surveyed states scored higher on their responses to gross violations of democratic norms (e.g., coups), and in their efforts to promote democracy through international institutions, and lower on their responses to flawed elections and policies toward entrenched dictatorships. This finding held true across all regions and regardless of the level of internal democratic development.
- Newer democracies are eager to enter into mutually binding commitments to defend democracy, and to support their application to specific situations, in part as a way to deter would-be transgressors of the democratic order. This is particularly true for democratic leaders elected after decades of military dictatorship. For them, democracy clauses are seen as an insurance policy against the risk of a future coup.
- States that belong to multilateral organizations with pro-democracy clauses in their charters are more likely to respond favorably to challenges to democracy abroad. The more egregious the violation of democratic norms, the more likely states will reach a consensus to act.

- States that belong to multilateral organizations that do not have pro-democracy clauses, like the Association of Southeast Asian Nations or the Arab League, are the least likely to respond to challenges to democracy abroad.
- Membership in multilateral organizations often serves as a cover for states unable or unwilling to act unilaterally in support of democracy abroad. Such nations tend to defend democracy only under the umbrella of the relevant grouping.
- One reason states with flawed or weak democratic institutions refrain from criticizing undemocratic practices elsewhere is because it would expose their own shortcomings to international scrutiny.
- Even when countries have few competing interests at stake, giving them greater latitude to criticize other governments without fear of reprisal, they often avoid doing so. Reasons for this include: ideological solidarity against “neo-colonialists”; adherence to traditional notions of non-interference in others’ internal affairs; and fears that Western-style democracy would deepen ethnic or other cleavages, give rise to fundamentalism, or in other ways destabilize and thereby threaten other interests.

How Have States Responded to Overthrows of Democratically-Elected Government?

- Most democratic states surveyed condemned coups and other types of unconstitutional overthrows of freely-elected leaders and called for a prompt return to democratic rule, but few took further action against offending regimes.
- Timely threats from the international community to isolate or punish coup-plotters have helped to deter coups in some countries.
- Smaller states tend to defer to bigger states in reacting to illegal overthrows.
- Surveyed states’ reactions to coups vary according to national interests at stake, perception of the alternative government, and short-term calculations of the benefits of standing on the sidelines.
- States generally are less critical of coups against unfriendly democratically-elected regimes, although the regional response to the coup against Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez in April 2002 stands out as an exception to this rule.
- Coups are more likely to be tolerated if they topple unpopular rulers, e.g., Nawaz Sharif in Pakistan or Henri Konan Bedie in Cote d’Ivoire, or if the new leadership is seen as bringing greater stability to the country and/or region.
- Condemnation of, or action against, coup leaders is less likely to be sustained if they promise to organize elections within a reasonable time. Usually, members of the junta leadership are allowed to contest such elections and often win, thereby encouraging future unconstitutional coups.

How Have States Responded to Manipulation of Electoral Processes?

- Most states surveyed participate in some type of electoral monitoring activities and are willing to criticize blatant electoral malpractices, but avoid tougher actions.
- States frequently respond to polling-day fraud but do little about pre-polling electoral malpractice and gradual erosion of electoral processes. However, there is a trend in some regions toward giving electoral monitors a mandate to investigate the climate for free and fair elections before election day; if conditions warrant, states are more willing to withdraw before ballots are cast so as not to confer legitimacy on a flawed electoral process.
- Newer democracies that have benefited from international electoral monitoring assistance, and that are confident of their own balloting processes, more readily offer assistance to other democratizing states. Some of these states do so as a way of building international legitimacy or currying favor with donor governments.
- Despite years of efforts to improve electoral processes, there remains a surprising lack of detailed electoral standards that have been formally adopted by governments. The lack of consensus concerning what constitutes a “free and fair” election, and what enforcement mechanisms may be appropriate, allows incumbent regimes to extend their rule even when electoral outcomes are in doubt.
- Even when governments have adopted a set of clear electoral standards, as in the case of the Southern African Development Community (SADC), other interests and values usually trump the goal of conducting free and fair elections, as in the case of Zimbabwe.

How Have States Promoted the Norms and Institutions of Democracy?

- There are a growing number of multilateral organizations that require members to have democratic systems of government (e.g., the European Union, the Organization of American States), or which have taken on democracy promotion activities as a core element of the organization’s mandate.
- Most states surveyed have voted for “democracy clauses” in international and regional agreements. A growing number of these democracy clauses are found in trade agreements, development assistance pacts, customs unions and other regional integration schemes (e.g., Mercosur, EU-ACP Cotonou accord).
- The European Union’s accession process, which requires aspiring members to fulfill detailed conditions relating to respect for democratic norms and values, serves as an effective magnet for encouraging political and economic reforms in the region.
- Democracy-related resolutions at the UN General Assembly and other UN bodies have followed traditional North-South voting patterns in which more established democracies are opposed by those defending the principle of non-interference in internal affairs, even in the face of gross human rights abuses.
- However, there are some signs that this pattern is beginning to change, as evidenced by the UN General Assembly’s approval in December 2000 of a Resolution on Promoting and

Consolidating Democracy, which passed without objection. Nearly all the governments that did not vote for the resolution were non-democracies. The formation of an ad hoc UN “democracy caucus” was instrumental in drafting and sponsoring the resolution.

- A number of the wealthier democracies have established nongovernmental institutions that specialize in promoting democracy abroad through technical assistance or direct grant-making.
- Newer democracies which received diplomatic or development support to help consolidate democratic rule are increasingly becoming donor nations active in democracy promotion efforts in third countries (e.g., Poland, Chile, Czech Republic, Republic of Korea). Those not in a position to provide funding are offering technical assistance, particularly in elections management (e.g., Mexico, Benin).
- The extent to which development assistance contributes to international democracy is difficult to assess because:
 - a) Most donor and recipient states do not maintain separate budgetary records on democracy assistance, which gets lumped together with other types of development and humanitarian assistance.
 - b) Several donor states (particularly those in the EU) channel extra assistance through multilateral organizations. Disaggregating such contributions can be difficult.
 - c) Some donor states channel significant amounts of their democracy assistance through NGOs working in recipient states.

What Kind of Policies Do Democratic States Pursue towards Entrenched Dictatorships?

- We found two dominant policy approaches toward entrenched dictatorships. In practice, surveyed states often employed elements of both:
 - “Constructive Engagement” – used across regions, and regardless of the level of democratic development, the constructive engagement policy is designed to use ongoing diplomatic and economic relations as leverage in persuading authoritarian leaders to liberalize their regimes. Some governments, such as Japan, as a result of their societies’ own experience with democracy, genuinely believe that economic development is the logical path to eventual political liberalization. These governments in turn apply this policy to their relations with other countries, particularly China. They may at times make respect for democracy and human rights part of the bilateral dialogue, but do so in a low profile way. Most others, however, have used “engagement” as a cover to protect economic and other interests, and make no effort to raise democracy-related concerns with the regime or to support the democratic opposition.
 - Economic/ diplomatic sanctions or isolation – this approach is favored by more powerful states that are willing to pressure dictators to liberalize or even surrender power. In cases where there is a strong political consensus and effective enforcement of the sanctions regime, this approach has been effective in pressuring governments to change, as in apartheid South Africa. On the other hand, where consensus is lacking, such an approach has frequently divided the democracy community,

prompting concerted opposition from a number of states. The most obvious example of this phenomenon is the U.S. embargo of Cuba, which has diverted attention away from Fidel Castro's repressive policies and solidified opposition towards measures like sanctions.

Policy Recommendations

The findings identified above point to an overarching conclusion: *It is in the self-interest of democracies to promote democratic values abroad because new democracies tend to reform their foreign policies to favor interests shared by the wider community of democratic nations.* In that light, there are a series of recommendations for diplomats, policymakers, civil society activists, researchers and educators to consider. We believe the extent to which the community of democracies chooses to promote and defend the right to democracy along these lines will determine whether the 21st century is an era of lasting peace and prosperity.

- To promote democracy effectively, the international community should increase development assistance to democratizing states, make democracy-building assistance a higher priority, and otherwise give preferences to democracies in their foreign aid strategies.
- States participating in the Community of Democracies should develop concrete action plans designed to deepen cooperation on issues of democracy promotion abroad. They should also establish a secretariat to help coordinate common activities and programs.
- Democracies should organize themselves as caucuses in international organizations like the United Nations, the World Bank and relevant regional organizations. They should agree to coordinate policies that favor strengthening democracies and protecting them from economic collapse and other threats.
- Foreign ministries in democratic states should integrate democracy promotion into all aspects of their foreign policies by:
 - Establishing senior level positions with dedicated professional staff drawn from the career diplomatic corps with the mandate to develop and implement foreign policies that will promote and strengthen democracy abroad.
 - Strengthening the capacity of civilians to manage and oversee military establishments and national security decision-making, as a way to counter the vestiges of military rule.
- Civil society should undertake systematic, independent monitoring of foreign policies of democratic states to ensure they reflect democratic values and more effectively defend and promote democratic institutions and respect for human rights.
- Foreign policy decision-making should be made more transparent, more inclusive of civil society participation and more responsive to the needs of emerging democracies. Legislatures, in particular, should play a more active role in overseeing the resources and policies managed by foreign policy leaders and managers.
- Educators should address the alarming deficiencies in the public's understanding of world geography, foreign languages, international law, and other cultures. These deficiencies are widespread and persist even in advanced democracies with interests throughout the world.