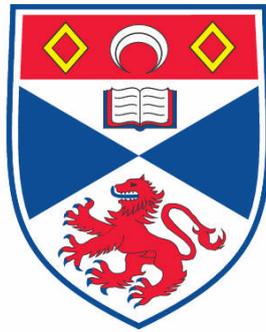


**CRUSADE FOR FREEDOM? UNITED STATES DEMOCRACY
PROMOTION FROM REAGAN TO GEORGE W. BUSH**

Michael Walker

**A Thesis Submitted for the Degree of PhD
at the
University of St. Andrews**



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Democracy Promotion from Reagan to
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Michael Walker

Degree: PhD in International Relations

Final Version Submitted on 14 May 2008

Abstract

Presidents of the United States and other American policymakers have throughout history cited democracy promotion as one of the chief goals of American foreign policy, and the current administration of George W. Bush has been no exception. However, and notwithstanding the habitual endorsement of this objective by US administrations, the subject of democracy promotion has received relatively little academic attention. This study aims to correct this gap in the literature by considering two questions relating to United States democracy promotion. First, have the efforts of the US to spread democracy to other countries met with success? Second, is promoting democracy truly a priority of American policymakers, or is it rather window dressing cynically aimed at winning public and congressional support for foreign policy? I begin by defining the terms democracy and democracy promotion. I then use three recent case studies to answer the two questions outlined above, the first of which focuses on President Reagan's policy towards Nicaragua. In the second case study I consider President Clinton's policy towards Haiti, while the third deals with President George W. Bush's policy towards Colombia. The evidence I present points to the conclusion that the United States has not been successful in its efforts to promote democracy in other countries, and that spreading democracy abroad is at best a secondary goal of American foreign policy. The evidence presented in the thesis also demonstrates the utility of foreign policy analysis-based approaches to the study of international relations.

I, Michael Walker, hereby certify that this thesis, which is approximately 79,000 words in length, has been written by me, that it is the record of work carried out by me and that it has not been submitted in any previous application for a higher degree.

date signature of candidate

I was admitted as a research student in September 2004 and as a candidate for the degree of PhD in International Relations in September 2005; the higher study for which this is a record was carried out in the University of St Andrews between 2004 and 2008.

date signature of candidate

I hereby certify that the candidate has fulfilled the conditions of the Resolution and Regulations appropriate for the degree of PhD in International Relations in the University of St Andrews and that the candidate is qualified to submit this thesis in application for that degree.

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List of Acronyms

AIFLD	American Institute for Free Labour Development
ARDE	Democratic Revolutionary Alliance
AUC	United Self-Defence Forces of Colombia
CBC	Congressional Black Caucus
CDN	Democratic Coordinator
CEP	Provisional Electoral Council
CODHES	Consultancy for Human Rights and Displacement
COSEP	Superior Council of Private Enterprise
DAS	Department of Administrative Security
DIA	Defense Intelligence Agency
DMO	Domestic Election Monitoring Organisation
EERP	Emergency Economic Recovery Plan
ELN	Army of National Liberation
FADH (FAD'H)	Armed Forces of Haiti
FARC-EP (FARC)	Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia – People's Army
FDN	Nicaraguan Democratic Forces
FDR	Revolutionary Democratic Front
FLIP	Freedom of the Press Foundation
FMLN	Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front
FPA	Foreign Policy Analysis
FRAPH	Front for the Advancement and Progress of Haiti
FSLN	Sandinista National Liberation Front
FTA	Free Trade Agreement
FTAA	Free Trade Area of the Americas
FTO	Foreign Terrorist Organisation
GAO	General Accounting Office/Government Accountability Office
GN	National Guard
HNP	Haitian National Police
ICITAP	International Criminal Investigative Training Assistance Program
IDP	Internally Displaced Person
IPSF	Interim Public Security Force
IRI	International Republican Institute
LASA	Latin American Studies Association
MICIVIH	International Civilian Mission in Haiti
MNF	Multinational Force
NDI	National Democratic Institute for International Affairs
NED	National Endowment for Democracy
NHAO	Nicaraguan Humanitarian Assistance Office
NSC	National Security Council
NSPG	National Security Planning Group
OAS	Organisation of American States
OPL	Lavalas Political Organisation
PCD	Democratic Conservative Party
PLI	Independent Liberal Party

UCLA	Unilaterally Controlled Latino Asset
UNHCHR	United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNMIH	United Nations Mission in Haiti
UP	Patriotic Union
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
WOLA	Washington Office on Latin America

1. Introduction

The objective of spreading democracy abroad has been a prominent feature of the foreign policy discourse of President George W. Bush, with the president famously committing the United States to furthering freedom in foreign states in his 2005 state of the union address. There was, however, nothing particularly original about President Bush's democracy agenda, beyond its emphasis on the Middle East, for he was simply emulating the example of many of his White House predecessors. Bill Clinton, whom Bush had castigated while a presidential candidate for spending too many of America's resources on nation-building, had made "democratic enlargement" the centrepiece of his foreign policy. Bush's father, George H.W. Bush, had also professed support for foreign democracy, while Ronald Reagan once called for a global "crusade for freedom." Perhaps the most celebrated presidential advocate of foreign democracy was Woodrow Wilson, a man who left the White House eighty years before George W. Bush took his first oath of office. The pedigree extends far deeper into American history than Wilson, though. As one scholar has put it,

The decision by the [George H. W.] Bush and Clinton administrations to pursue the enlargement of the democratic community can be viewed almost as an instinctive and involuntary reversion to the very core values of America...From the time of the founding, Americans have viewed themselves and their government in a special light. The Winthropian metaphor of America as a shining "City upon a Hill" has held great meaning for countless Americans throughout time.¹

¹ Rick Travis, "The Promotion of Democracy at the End of the Twentieth Century: A New Polestar for American Foreign Policy?" in James M. Scott, ed., *After the End: Making U.S. Foreign Policy in the Post-Cold War World* (Durham & London: Duke University Press, 1998), p. 253.

This study concentrates on the role of democracy promotion in US foreign policy from Reagan onwards. I aim to answer two questions. First, has the United States succeeded in its efforts to advance democracy abroad? The answer to this question ought to have serious implications for future United States foreign policy. Huge sums of money are spent by the US government on policy initiatives that are defended in terms of their contribution to democracy in other nations, the most obvious recent example being the invasion and subsequent occupation of Iraq. Yet if it can be shown that these ventures are likely to end in failure it would behove US policymakers, as well as American citizens, to ask whether promoting democracy is really worth the enormous financial burden. There are other costs to take into account as well. One of the favoured means for furthering foreign democracy is to send the American military into action, which of course carries the risk that American soldiers will die. Should soldiers' lives be wasted on futile quests for foreign democracy?

The second question I ask concerns the significance of democracy promotion as a foreign policy objective of the United States. Do American policymakers really mean what they say when they proclaim their commitment to advancing democracy in foreign countries, or can we dismiss these statements as rhetoric designed to drum up public and congressional support for foreign policy? The importance of this question cannot be overstated. The objective of spreading democracy abroad is routinely advanced by American officials, yet if it can be shown that in reality they consider this goal to be of little import then our understanding of United States foreign policy will undergo a significant change. Moreover, there is some justification for being sceptical of the pro-democracy pretensions of American officials, for there have been occasions when the state of democracy in other nations appeared to be of little concern to American leaders. An in-depth appraisal of the role of democracy promotion in United States foreign relations is therefore very much in order. It is also germane when we consider the emphasis placed on this objective during President George W. Bush's tenure. Another reason for undertaking a thorough analysis of United States democracy promotion is to add knowledge to an area of study that has received relatively little academic attention. As Thomas Carothers, a well-known and respected writer on the subject has commented, "overall, democracy promotion remains remarkably understudied" and "is only weakly

present in scholarly research circles.”² This relative dearth is peculiar given the repeated pronouncements of support for foreign democracy on the part of American officials, and should be corrected.

This is largely an empirical study, although I do highlight theories that are relevant to my work. As I make clear in chapter two, the thesis is grounded in the sub-field of international relations known as foreign policy analysis (FPA). I proceed from the assumption that individuals and institutions matter when it comes to foreign policy. Variations between presidencies are to be expected. I also consider some of the theoretical work on democratization. I discuss the democratic peace thesis, which has influenced many US policymakers in recent times, and which has been invoked as the justification for democracy promotion. Nonetheless, theoretical questions are largely outside the remit of this study. Nor do I address the question of *why* the United States promotes democracy. My intention is to take a step back and ask *whether* America promotes democracy. There is a tendency among democracy promotion scholars to assume that democracy promotion is a genuine policy goal; I want to explore whether this is truly so. I therefore give little attention to the issue of why American officials regularly claim that advancing democracy is a primary foreign policy objective of the US, although, as noted above, I do touch on the democratic peace thesis. Why the US promotes democracy, if indeed it does so, is a question for future research.

I have chosen to employ a qualitative methodology for this study. There are three case studies, each of which deals with a major democracy promotion effort carried out by a modern presidential administration. In the first case study I consider President Reagan’s policy towards Nicaragua, the second concerns President Clinton’s policy in Haiti, while the third involves an examination of President George W. Bush’s policy towards Colombia. I have used these recent presidencies to ensure that my findings are pertinent to current US foreign policy. The administration of George H.W. Bush was overlooked as a result of his comparatively short tenure. In terms of the case studies, various factors informed my choices. I wanted to use examples where policy was described in unmistakably pro-democracy terms, and which received a great deal of attention from

² Thomas Carothers, *Critical Mission: Essays on Democracy Promotion* (Washington, D.C.: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2004), pp. 2-3.

policymakers over a long period of time. I also wanted to look at countries in the Western Hemisphere, as the states in that region are closest to the United States and most susceptible to its influence. If the US has had little success promoting democracy in the Americas or has shown scant concern for democracy there then it is reasonable to extrapolate these conclusions to other regions.

I use two separate metrics to determine whether or not the US has been successful in promoting democracy and the extent to which this is a goal of US foreign policy. The first of these may be referred to as the democracy metric. This comprises three broad criteria by which we can measure the level of democracy in the state in question. These criteria are first, the extent to which elections are genuinely free and fair; second, the degree to which citizens can put certain vital human rights into practice; third, the legitimacy of a state's political institutions. The second metric is used to measure the commitment of the US to promoting democracy. I list five actions that the US can take that would demonstrate its dedication to furthering democracy. These are the promotion of genuinely free and fair elections; opposition to any actions that jeopardise the legitimacy of a state's political institutions; the promotion of human rights; attaching democracy-related conditions to any aid provided to another state; and attempting to effect the replacement of a dictatorial regime with an elected one, whether by imposing sanctions, using force, or employing diplomacy. This last test of America's dedication to furthering democracy applies only to situations where a dictatorial regime is in place. The two metrics are outlined in more detail in chapter two. It is the use of these two metrics to answer the questions posed above that makes this thesis truly original.

I declined to use a quantitative methodology for one very good reason: the data would simply be unreliable. I say this because my thesis focuses on democracy, a notoriously slippery concept. It is not always obvious if a state is democratic or not. As I will make clear in chapter two I do not believe that the ritual of regular elections is enough for us to deem a state democratic. We must look further, taking into account the human rights situation and the legitimacy of a country's political institutions. By restricting my analysis to three cases I can provide a very thorough evaluation of the state of democracy in each of the nations in question, which will allow me to draw firm conclusions about whether or not the United States was successful in its efforts to

promote democracy there. It would have been more difficult to reach robust conclusions had I chosen a quantitative methodology, as the larger data set would have precluded a detailed consideration of each state's democratic credentials.

What will become clear from the case studies is that, notwithstanding the pretensions of American policymakers, the record of the United States when it comes to promoting democracy abroad is not stellar. There must be serious doubts about the Reagan administration's commitment to furthering democracy in Nicaragua, for its chosen method for doing so was to finance a group of anti-government rebels that engaged in acts of terrorism against Nicaraguan civilians. By the time Reagan departed the White House thousands of Nicaraguans had been killed as a result of the US-sponsored war, while the country's economy and infrastructure had been devastated. The Reagan administration also strove to discredit elections held in Nicaragua in 1984. There was a good deal more truth to the Clinton administration's claim to want to further democracy in Haiti, with President Clinton going so far as to dispatch US forces to remove that country's military leader and reinstate the elected president. However, Clinton's dealings with Haiti were heavily influenced by domestic politics, especially his relationship with Congress, and this, rather than promoting democracy, was the main factor governing policy. Democracy promotion in Haiti ultimately proved a failure, with human rights abuses, shambolic elections and political turmoil the order of the day as Clinton's presidency wound down. Clinton's successor as president, George W. Bush, invoked the goal of defending democracy in Colombia from the beginning, but his administration's policy has been inconsistent. Although the Bush administration has supported free and fair elections in Colombia, and funded programmes aimed at strengthening political parties, NGOs, and furthering human rights, it has carried out other policies that call into question its dedication to Colombian democracy. For instance, the US has sought to downplay a scandal linking members of Colombia's Congress with the far-right paramilitary organisation known as the AUC, despite the implications these revelations have for the legitimacy of Colombia's political institutions.

The thesis is divided into five sections. In the first of these I define democracy, outline various ways that democracy may be promoted, and review the literature on United States democracy promotion. I then move on to the case studies, the first of which

deals with the policy of the Reagan administration in Nicaragua. This is followed by an analysis of the Clinton administration's policy towards Haiti, with the final case study concerning George W. Bush's policy in Colombia. In the final, concluding, chapter I review the findings of the case studies and offer answers to the two questions outlined in this introduction. I also consider the implications of the study for international relations theory. I conclude by offering a number of recommendations for future US foreign policy and suggest some possible avenues for future research.

2. Defining Democracy and Democracy Promotion

In order to answer the two questions addressed in this study it is necessary first to provide definitions of democracy and democracy promotion. The meaning of the word democracy is a source of considerable disagreement. It is therefore imperative to elucidate precisely what the word signifies, otherwise no conclusions can be reached about the success or failure of attempts by the United States to promote democracy, or the relative importance of this goal in overall US foreign policy. The second part of the chapter concerns the issue of democracy promotion. I will begin this section by discussing the various means for promoting democracy that have been outlined by scholars. I will then provide an overview of the literature on United States democracy promotion, a body of work that can be grouped into mainstream and critical categories. I will conclude the chapter with a critique of the assumptions and arguments characteristic of these two schools of thought. The chapter begins, however, with a brief overview of the sub-field of international relations called foreign policy analysis.

Foreign Policy Analysis

This thesis is located within the branch of international relations theory known as foreign policy analysis. I proceed from the assumption that to understand foreign policy we must look further than systemic theories of international relations and take into account domestic factors, such as the preferences and personalities of leaders, institutions, and bureaucratic politics. This focus on how internal factors shape policy is a defining characteristic of the literature on foreign policy analysis. As Jean Garrison has put it, “Decision-making scholars...specifically argue that there is a need to look inside the state to understand the complex motivations that make up a state’s foreign policy.”³ Or, to quote Valerie Hudson, FPA presupposes that “human decision makers acting singly and in groups are the ground of all that happens in international relations and that such decision makers are not best approximated as unitary rational actors equivalent to the

³ Jean Garrison, “Constructing the “National Interest” in U.S.-China Policy Making: How Foreign Policy Decision Groups Define and Signal Policy Choices,” *Foreign Policy Analysis*, vol. 3, no. 2 (2007), p. 105.

state,” placing this approach at odds with rationalist theories of IR such as structural realism.⁴

By applying FPA to the study of foreign policy we can assess the extent to which individuals and institutions have an impact on the decision-making process and the direction of policy. Some scholars have focused on the role played by high-level decision-makers in making foreign policy. Stephen Benedict Dyson, for example, has studied how the personality of Prime Minister Tony Blair affected the British decision to join the United States in its war against Iraq in 2003. According to Dyson, “Tony Blair’s personality is a crucial factor in understanding why the British went to war.” He comments further that the example of Blair and Iraq “reemphasizes the importance of actor-specific factors in theories of foreign policy. Put simply, the proposition that “who leads matters” does seem to be supported in this instance.”⁵ Other scholars have explored the way partisanship affects foreign policy decisions. In their analysis of European attitudes towards the US decision to invade Iraq in 2003, Jurgen Schuster and Herbert Maier find that in Western Europe “the party affiliation of a government seems to be a good indicator of how a country behaved during the Iraq crisis,” with eight out of ten governments acting in line with their ideological standpoints, although they concede that partisanship can’t explain the attitudes of countries in Eastern Europe.⁶ Their findings lead them to assert that “political parties should receive greater attention in the analysis of foreign policy” and that “to ignore the ideological orientations of parties and governments today means to ignore an important determinant of foreign policy.”⁷

In short, then, a full understanding of foreign policy requires that we give due consideration to the role of individuals and institutions like political parties, not just the structural factors that are emphasised by rationalist theories of international relations. In the case studies that form the bulk of this thesis I start from this insight and I therefore

⁴ Valerie M. Hudson, “Foreign Policy Analysis: Actor-Specific Theory and the Ground of International Relations,” *Foreign Policy Analysis*, vol. 1, no. 1 (2005), p. 2.

⁵ Stephen Benedict Dyson, “Personality and Foreign Policy: Tony Blair’s Iraq Decisions,” *Foreign Policy Analysis*, vol. 2, no. 3, (2006), pp. 303-4.

⁶ Jurgen Schuster and Herbert Maier, “The Rift: Explaining Europe’s Divergent Iraq Policies in the Run-Up of the American-Led War on Iraq,” *Foreign Policy Analysis*, vol. 2, no. 3 (2006), p. 233. Schuster and Maier posit that left-of-centre parties should be expected to oppose America’s policy towards Iraq, while right-wing parties should support the US. Ibid, pp. 229-30.

⁷ Ibid, pp. 236, 238.

look at the policy makers involved and the influence of institutions, especially the United States Congress, on American foreign policy. However, I would like to make clear at this point that although this study is grounded in the field of foreign policy analysis my main purpose is not to prove the validity of such an approach, or to open up new areas of FPA-related research, but to answer the questions of whether or not the United States genuinely seeks to promote democracy and if it has had any success in this respect. These are empirical questions, and I do not intend to draw on theory to answer them. Having said this, I will return to the theme in the conclusion, where I will discuss the implications of my work for research on FPA.

The Meaning of Democracy

What William Robinson has called “the classic definition of democracy”⁸ – the rule of the people – lost out in academic circles following the end of the Second World War to an institutional, or procedural, interpretation of the word. In 1942 Joseph Schumpeter recast democracy as a form of rule in which the role of the people was reduced to voting for political leaders in regular elections.⁹ As Schumpeter expressed it, “Democracy means only that the people have the opportunity of accepting or refusing the men who are to rule them.”¹⁰ Democracy no longer meant the rule of the people, but the rule of elites, with the political activity of the citizenry restricted to the act of choosing their leaders every few years. According to Samuel Huntington, the debate between those who insisted on the classical definition of democracy and those who favoured Schumpeter’s interpretation continued until the 1970s, by which time “the debate was over, and Schumpeter had won.”¹¹

The procedural definition of democracy is set out by Huntington himself. Following Schumpeter, he writes that “The central procedure of democracy is the selection of leaders through competitive elections by the people they govern.” A state

⁸ William Robinson, *Promoting Polyarchy: Globalization, US Intervention, and Hegemony* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), p. 50.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 51; David Beetham, *Democracy and Human Rights* (Cambridge: Polity, 1999), p. 2.

¹⁰ Quoted in Robinson, *Promoting Polyarchy*, p. 49.

¹¹ Samuel Huntington, *The Third Wave: Democratization in the Late Twentieth Century* (Norman and London: University of Oklahoma Press, 1991), p. 6.

may be viewed “as democratic to the extent that its most powerful collective decision makers are selected through fair, honest, and periodic elections in which candidates freely compete for votes and in which virtually all the adult population is eligible to vote.” This “popular election of the top decision makers is the essence of democracy.” While Huntington’s emphasis is squarely on the act of voting for political leaders, he does acknowledge that his variety of democracy “implies the existence of those civil and political freedoms to speak, publish, assemble, and organize that are necessary to political debate and the conduct of electoral campaigns.”¹²

One of the foremost modern thinkers on democracy is Robert Dahl, who, like Huntington, advances a procedural definition of the term. Dahl contends that it is necessary to distinguish between democracy as “an ideal and an actuality.”¹³ He argues, with reason, that in large political systems such as the modern nation-state the “ideal” type of democracy is simply impracticable, as the citizen body is far too numerous to make political decisions directly. As the ideal is impossible to achieve, it is therefore necessary to find an alternative that can be actualised. This alternative is representative democracy, or what Dahl calls polyarchy. Dahl claims that in a polyarchal system of governance citizens are able to exercise control of politics through the institution of elections, which allows them “to elect their top officials and hold them more or less accountable...by dismissing them, so to speak, in subsequent elections.”¹⁴ Like Huntington, Dahl underlines that, in addition to the right to choose their leaders in periodic elections, citizens must also have other political rights if democracy is to exist, notably the freedoms of expression and assembly, and access to sources of information not provided by the state.¹⁵ Although Dahl recognises that polyarchy is “highly imperfect”, he also asserts that it is the “only feasible solution” to the problem of ensuring a democratic political process in a large state.¹⁶

The likes of Dahl and Huntington are right to underscore the importance of elections, for by definition there can be no democracy if citizens do not have the opportunity to decide who is to govern them. Elections are consequently a vital element

¹² Ibid, pp. 6-7, 9.

¹³ Robert A. Dahl, *On Democracy* (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 2000), p. 26.

¹⁴ Ibid, p. 93.

¹⁵ Ibid, pp. 85-86.

¹⁶ Ibid, p. 93.

of any truly democratic political system. Nonetheless, procedural definitions of democracy do suffer from limitations. Most obviously, defining democracy in such a way associates the existence of a set of institutions, like free and fair elections, with the existence of democracy. But democracy is not a set of institutions. Institutions exist to realise the rule of the people, and it may well be that these institutions are incapable of ensuring popular control of the government. As David Beetham has commented, equating democracy with institutions “is to elevate a means into an end, to confuse an instrument with its purpose.” The “end” is democratic rule – popular control of the government – while the “means” to achieve this is a set of institutions such as those outlined by Dahl and Huntington. The point is that the institutions of democracy may be little more than “a façade” concealing undemocratic practices.¹⁷ In short, institutions like elections are only democratic to the extent that they actualise the rule of the people. They should not be confused with democracy itself.

This over-emphasis on institutions on the part of many modern theorists of democracy can lead to contradictory statements. For example, Huntington notes that elected governments “may be inefficient, corrupt, shortsighted, irresponsible, dominated by special interests, and incapable of adopting policies demanded by the public good.” Yet Huntington claims that these failings do not make such governments “undemocratic,” only “undesirable.”¹⁸ And yet, a government that is dominated by special interests is self-evidently undemocratic, as a small group exerts undue influence over government policy. Such a state of affairs has more in common with oligarchy – the rule of the few - than democracy. As regards corruption, a government that accepts bribes for political favours is acting in its own interest, rather than the people’s. In such situations, democracy is not functioning: money, rather than the will of the people, is the determining factor in political decisions. The types of government mentioned by Huntington are therefore both “undesirable” *and* “undemocratic,” but he is unable to draw conclusion as he associates the holding of elections with the existence of democracy, which leaves no room for a consideration of whether the government in fact rules democratically.

¹⁷ Beetham, *Democracy and Human Rights*, p. 3.

¹⁸ Huntington, *The Third Wave*, p. 10.

If procedural definitions of democracy are inadequate, how then should we define the term? A more satisfying definition of a democratic political system is offered by the political scientist Anna Dickson, according to whom democracy “includes not only regular elections but also redistributive social and economic reforms, broadened political participation, social justice and respect for human rights.”¹⁹ A similar definition is offered by William Robinson, who outlines the concept of “popular democracy.” According to Robinson, popular democracy encompasses “a dispersal throughout society of political power through the participation of broad majorities in decision-making.” Democracy “begins with respect for human rights, civil liberties, the rule of law, and elections, and includes the outlawing of racial, ethnic, gender, and other forms of discrimination.” These, however, are merely “pre-conditions” for democratization, which takes place to the extent that there is “direct participation of majorities in their own vital affairs.” As for elections, in popular democracy they are “meaningful components of popular democratization to the extent that [they]...allow for accountability and control by the population over those elected.” Ultimately, Robinson writes, “a society is democratic to the extent that popular majorities are able to impose their sovereignty.”²⁰

Respect for human rights is essential if a system of government is to be considered democratic. This is recognised, albeit partially, even by theorists who propound procedural definitions of democracy. Robert Dahl for one has remarked that “Democracy is not only a system of governing,” it “is inherently also a system of rights.” If citizens are to participate effectively in political life, they must “necessarily possess a *right* to participate and a *right* to express their views” (italics in original). Furthermore, Dahl states that written or legal guarantees of these rights are inadequate, asserting that they “must be effectively enforced and effectively available to citizens in practice,” otherwise “the trappings of “democracy” are merely a façade for nondemocratic rule.”²¹ According to Dahl, political rights are core elements of a democratic political system. Freedom of speech, for example, is vital if citizens are to play any role in political life for, as Dahl asks, “How can citizens make their views known and persuade their fellow

¹⁹ Anna K. Dickson, *Development and International Relations: A Critical Introduction* (Cambridge: Polity, 1997), p. 137.

²⁰ Robinson, *Promoting Polyarchy*, pp. 57-59.

²¹ Dahl, *On Democracy*, pp. 48-49.

citizens and representatives to adopt them unless they can express themselves freely about all matters bearing on the conduct of the government?”²²

Dahl is of course correct to argue that certain political rights are essential if citizens are to exert control over the government. If citizens lacked the right to discuss political matters, they would self-evidently be unable to play a role in political life and would have no influence on the government. If they only had access to one news source, their capacity for formulating independent ideas would be severely curtailed. If they were deprived of the right to form political groups, the state would face nothing more than a multitude of powerless individuals. To quote David Beetham, “human rights constitute an intrinsic part of democracy, because the guarantee of basic freedoms is a necessary condition for people’s voice to be effective in public affairs, and for popular control over government to be secured.”²³ However, Beetham goes further than those who merely focus on political rights. While he agrees that political rights are imperative for the effective functioning of democracy, he also asserts that social and economic rights must be respected and advanced if a political system is to be considered genuinely democratic. Political rights are, in this view, but one part of the body of human rights.

Beetham’s point is that while citizens may be endowed with formal political rights, this does not imply that they will benefit from them in practice. One barrier to the enjoyment of one’s political rights is poverty: citizens who are barely subsisting are unlikely to make use of their political rights, as they have more pressing concerns, like survival; even if they wished to play a significant political role, their ability to do so is constrained by their lack of resources. As Beetham remarks, “the poor [may be] so deprived that they are incapable of exercising any basic civil or political rights, and are effectively excluded from any common citizenship.”²⁴ At an even more basic level, the right to life of citizens may be tenuous: their physical security may be jeopardised by violence or they may lack the most basic economic necessities, like food, clothing, clean water and shelter. If a person’s very survival is in doubt, it is doubtful that he or she will participate politically. So a state whose constitution upholds the rights to vote and to freedom of speech but that cannot protect its citizens cannot be considered truly

²² Ibid, p. 96.

²³ Beetham, *Democracy and Human Rights*, p. 93.

²⁴ Ibid, p.97.

democratic. In the words of one scholar, “all other rights are meaningless” if these “fundamental human rights,” those which are “basic to the preservation of life itself,” are not protected.²⁵ Beetham considers education to be another essential human right: it is “necessary if we are to be able to exercise our civil and political rights effectively, or even to know what these are.” The denial of a right to education “is especially damaging to the democratic principle of civil and political equality.”²⁶ Citizens who are uneducated will probably have no understanding of public affairs, and given their presumably precarious economic situation, will have no time to engage in political matters; some may be illiterate, hence effectively disenfranchised. In sum, then, if these social and economic rights are absent then the quality of a state’s democracy is severely impaired.

To sum up, human rights need to be protected and advanced if a state is to be considered democratic. Political rights are essential if citizens are to play a significant role in political life and exercise control over the government. These political rights, however, imply the presence of civil and socio-economic rights such as the right to life, the right to education and the right to an adequate standard of living, if they are to be anything more than noble principles. Poorer members of society who are barely subsisting or whose physical security is threatened cannot be expected to involve themselves in political affairs. The socio-economic inequalities in modern states need to be mitigated if poorer sectors are to play any role in politics, which requires the state to do its utmost to promote the aforementioned economic and social rights.

It remains for me to clarify exactly how I define the term democracy. The key is to combine the two approaches, procedural and substantive. Proponents of the procedural definition rightly highlight the pivotal role of elections in a democracy, while substantive theories of democracy emphasise human rights. Much of the literature on democracy suffers from a failure to integrate the two approaches, and it is vital that we bridge this gap. In my view, democracy comprises three elements, and we can measure the extent of a state’s democracy by applying these criteria, the first of which is the holding of genuinely free, fair and regular elections.

²⁵ Michael Linfield, “Human Rights,” in Thomas W. Walker, ed., *Revolution and Counterrevolution in Nicaragua* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1991), p. 275.

²⁶ Beetham, *Democracy and Human Rights*, p.97.

Six conditions must be met for an election to be deemed truly free and fair. First, the election must be contested by at least two political parties, which are independent of one another and which offer at least some distinct policies. This guarantees that voters are offered a meaningful choice when casting their ballots. Second, it must be free of fraud, which means that there can be no tampering with ballot papers, no padding of electoral rolls, no stuffing of ballot boxes and no falsification of results. Third, independent international or domestic election monitors must be present to witness the election, in order to deter cheating and ensure that any violations of electoral rules do not go unreported. Fourth, the overwhelming majority of adults must have the right to vote. Certain members of society, such as non-citizens, may justifiably be refused this right. Fifth, voters and candidates alike must be able to participate in the electoral process in an atmosphere that is free of intimidation, and without fear of retribution. Sixth, voters must be given the chance to make an informed judgement when voting. This means that all political parties and candidates competing in an election must have the opportunity to disseminate their message. It follows that there must be media outlets that are not controlled by the government.

The second core element of democracy is the protection of certain essential human rights. Two criteria must be met in this context. First, the state must ensure that citizens are able to enjoy a number of constitutionally guaranteed civil and political rights, as set out in the 1966 UN Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. These include the following rights: to life; to freedom of expression, including the “freedom to seek, receive and impart information and ideas of all kinds”; to freedom of assembly; to freedom of association; to vote in elections.²⁷ Second, citizens must possess a number of economic and social rights, as set out in the 1966 UN Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights: specifically, the right to an education; and “the right of everyone to an adequate standard of living,” which includes “adequate food...and housing.”²⁸

It could be argued that these criteria are simply unrealistic, for no state can ever fully guarantee the right to life of its citizens, nor can we expect that developing, or

²⁷ Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, “International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights,” Articles 6, 19, 21, 22, 25, <http://www.unhchr.ch/html/menu3/b/a_ccpr.htm>

²⁸ Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, “International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights,” Articles 11 and 13, <http://www.unhchr.ch/html/menu3/b/a_cescr.htm>

relatively poor states, will be able to ensure that everyone has adequate shelter and food. I would emphasise here that I am using an ideal standard against which to measure the level of democracy in a given state. I do not expect that states will be able to ensure that all citizens have the right to life, or that all will have access to adequate housing and nourishment. Nonetheless, we can draw conclusions about the *extent* to which these rights are protected, which has implications for democracy, for as I noted above, citizens who are barely subsisting or whose physical security is seriously imperilled are not likely to participate in political life.

The third component of democracy is legitimate political institutions. Legitimacy implies that the executive and legislature be empowered by the people, which means in practice that both must be elected, either directly or indirectly, by the voting public. While the legislature must be directly elected by voters, the executive may be chosen indirectly by the legislature. Legitimacy also implies that members of the legislature and the executive represent the interests of those who empowered them, namely the electorate. Therefore, special interests cannot be granted undue influence, nor can members of the legislature and/or executive accept money for political favours. If this occurs, they can no longer be said to represent the electorate, rendering the executive and/or legislature illegitimate.

In the chapters that follow this comprehensive definition of democracy will serve as a metric that will be used to judge whether the United States successfully promoted democracy in the cases in question. However, I would like to make clear at this point that not all of the criteria listed above need to be met for us to conclude that democracy was indeed successfully promoted. I have set out an ideal of representative democracy and there is probably no state in the world that could be said to meet all of my standards. Nevertheless, by applying this metric we can draw conclusions about the *degree* to which a state is democratic, enabling us to make judgments about the success or failure of United States democracy promotion.

Ways to Promote Democracy

Perhaps the most well-known way of promoting democracy is the so-called democracy assistance programme, which can take various forms: training and funding political parties, trade unions, and non-governmental organisations (NGOs); developing independent media; and helping states to hold free and fair elections. Free and fair elections are viewed as a particularly crucial marker on any state's path to democracy, especially by academics and officials in the United States. Indeed, as Jeffrey Kopstein has emphasised, United States government officials view the holding of an election as "the apotheosis of democracy."²⁹ The salience given to elections leads advocates of democracy promotion to highlight the importance of having monitors observe electoral processes. Francis Fukuyama has underscored the pivotal role played by election monitors in helping to facilitate the democratic transitions in Yugoslavia, Georgia and Ukraine between 2000 and 2005. "Without a sophisticated network of international elections monitors who could be mobilized quickly," he writes, "it would have been impossible to demonstrate the falsification of election results."³⁰

Democracy promoters can also help to ensure the fairness of elections by supporting domestic election monitoring organisations (DMOs). An example of a DMO that has made an important contribution to democracy is Peru's Transparencia, which has received funding from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and the EU, among other donors. Transparencia proved "a major force in Peru's controversial 2000 elections," with its election monitors reporting that "pre-electoral media coverage was highly skewed in favour of the incumbent, Alberto Fujimori." Transparencia "documented widespread anomalies in the first-round vote count," and ultimately condemned the contest as "critically flawed," a judgement shared by international observers. Although Fujimori initially claimed he had won, he soon fled the country.³¹ However, at times DMOs can have a less positive impact. For example, in 1990 the National Endowment for Democracy (NED), which receives an annual

²⁹ Jeffrey Kopstein, "The Transatlantic Divide over Democracy Promotion," *Washington Quarterly*, vol. 29, no. 2 (Spring 2006), p. 89.

³⁰ Francis Fukuyama, *After the Neocons: America at the Crossroads* (London: Profile, 2007), pp. 136-7.

³¹ Sharon F. Lean, "Democracy Assistance to Domestic Election Monitoring Organizations," *Democratization*, vol. 14, no. 2 (2007), p. 300.

appropriation from the US Congress, financed a Nicaraguan DMO called Via Cívica that served as a vehicle for the US-backed opposition coalition aiming to unseat the ruling Sandinistas. “All the members of the board of directors of the organization were representatives of political parties or business groups with direct ties to the opposition UNO coalition,” with the result that Via Cívica “was widely perceived to by the Nicaraguan public as partisan (anti-Sandinista)” and just exacerbated the country’s already serious political divisions.³² In sum, then, we can say that external aid to DMOs can have a salutary effect on democracy, but if these groups are not independent they may do more harm than good.

Another type of democracy assistance is training and funding political parties, which can also contribute to a state’s democratization. “International assistance has generally had a positive, and often significant, effect on electoral processes in recipient countries,” writes Krishna Kumar. “It has enabled many nascent political parties to better participate in elections by teaching them skills and techniques that they could put to use immediately.”³³ Nonetheless, there is some controversy about the propriety of foreign funding and training of political parties, NGOs, and other civil society groups. Kumar observes that foreign donors at times exhibit partisanship when deciding which political parties to support, which “blurs the distinction between assistance and political manipulation.” Examples include the defeat of the Sandinistas in the 1990 Nicaraguan elections, an outcome that was heavily influenced by US support for the opposition coalition.³⁴ A related point is that political parties that accept money and training from abroad may lack independence, and may not be responsive to or representative of people in their own country. Democracy entails popular rule, and this could be undermined if political parties are taking money from foreign donors. The same concerns apply to foreign support for NGOs. As Marina Ottaway and Theresa Chung point out, foreign funding of NGOs enables them “to arise whether or not they have support in their countries.” A feature of NGOs that are reliant on foreign money is that “it is not the membership that determines the organisation’s policies, but the leaders, together with the

³² Ibid, p. 302.

³³ Krishna Kumar, “Reflections on International Political Party Assistance,” *Democratization*, vol. 12, no. 4 (2005), p. 508.

³⁴ Ibid, p. 520. Kumar wrongly gives 1989 as the date of the elections lost by the Sandinistas.

fundes and the NGOs from donor countries that won the contract to “strengthen civil society” in a particular country.”³⁵ It is clearly not good for democracy if NGOs are more responsive to the demands of foreign donors than those of the country’s citizens.

Attaching democracy-related conditions to the support, financial or otherwise, given to a foreign state has come to be seen by scholars as one of the most effective ways to advance democracy in other states. An example of conditionality is the US, or any other state, insisting that recipients of foreign aid must hold free and fair elections or eliminate corruption as a condition of continued, or future, financial support. The utility of this instrument has been underlined by Larry Diamond, who, in a recent article on the “rollback” of democracy in numerous countries, asserts that by “making foreign aid contingent on good governance, donors can help reverse the democratic recession.”³⁶ Diamond contends that many democracies are suffering from the “predatory” rule of elites who seek to monopolize power and use the state as a means of making money, necessitating the creation of strong institutions to curb their corrupt practices. He condemns international donors for providing developing states with “indiscriminate aid that only serves to entrench corrupt elites and practices,” and argues that the “key” to effecting change in these failing democracies is conditionality. “The leverage needed to bring about radical change will never exist unless the politicians and officials who sit atop the structures of predation come to realize that they have no choice but to reform,” writes Diamond.³⁷ Evidence that conditionality can have an impact on democratization comes from the EU, which makes democratization a condition of membership. As Peter Schraeder notes, this “political conditionality has greatly influenced the further democratization of late southern European joiners to the EU club, as well as providing a powerful incentive for many aspiring states in central and eastern Europe to refashion their political systems in a more democratic direction.”³⁸ The importance of conditionality has also been emphasised by Ecaterina McDonagh in her analysis of the democracy promotion efforts of the EU, the OSCE and the Council of Europe in post-

³⁵ Marina Ottaway and Theresa Chung, “Toward a New Paradigm,” *Journal of Democracy*, vol. 10, no. 4 (1999), p. 107.

³⁶ Larry Diamond, “The Democratic Rollback,” *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 87, no. 2 (March/April 2008), p. 37.

³⁷ *Ibid*, pp. 47-8.

³⁸ Peter J. Schraeder, “The State of the Art in International Democracy Promotion: Results of a Joint European-North American Research Network,” *Democratization*, vol. 10, no. 2 (2003), p. 39.

independence Moldova. She concluded that these “European institutions were very much part of the political change process” in a country that has experienced a rocky transition to democracy, and that “their involvement became more effective when conditionality and new incentives were applied.”³⁹

The use of violence to force from power an autocratic ruler or regime is often proffered as another way to promote democracy abroad. Presidents of the United States have often claimed to be promoting democracy through military action. As James Meernik has noted, “All through history, when United States presidents have sought to explain or defend US military interventions in foreign lands, few goals...have been advanced with such regularity and frequency as the promotion of democracy.”⁴⁰ President Clinton, who declared “democratic enlargement” to be the defining feature of his foreign policy, was following “a century-long American tradition,” remarks Mark Peceny. In the Cold War alone, Peceny notes, “the United States promoted democracy during military interventions in Greece, South Korea, South Vietnam, Lebanon, the Dominican Republic, El Salvador, and a variety of other nations.”⁴¹ While there are grounds for disputing Peceny’s characterisation of these actions as democracy promotion efforts, there is no doubt that the United States often falls back on pro-democracy rhetoric when justifying the resort to force.

There are theoretical grounds for arguing that military action can indeed have a very beneficial impact on democracy in a foreign state. If the use of force brings about the fall of a dictator and his replacement by an elected government then self-evidently democracy has been promoted, at least to some extent. Things are not quite so clear cut, though. By utilising violence to get rid of an authoritarian ruler, a state such as the US may cause the deaths of many civilians, which has serious negative implications for democracy. It could be argued that it is oxymoronic to assert that a state is promoting democracy while at the same time killing civilians. Democracy is after all the rule of the

³⁹ Ecaterina McDonagh, “Is Democracy Promotion Effective in Moldova? The Impact of European Institutions on Development of Civil and Political Rights in Moldova,” *Democratization*, vol. 15, no. 1 (2008), p. 156.

⁴⁰ James Meernik, “United States Military Intervention and the Promotion of Democracy,” *Journal of Peace Research*, vol. 33, no. 4 (1996), p. 391.

⁴¹ Mark Peceny, *Democracy at the Point of Bayonets* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1999), p. 2.

people, so how is it furthered by killing those who are supposed to rule? There is thus a very fine line between a military action that promotes democracy and one that harms it.

According to David Hendrickson, “The promotion of democracy and human rights through economic sanctions has become one of the most important components of contemporary American foreign policy.” Sanctions are seen as a way of economically isolating an undemocratic government in order “to punish the enemy so badly that it has no choice...but to submit” to the demands of those imposing the sanctions. The sanctions option was employed by the United States against the military regime that ruled Haiti from 1991 to 1994, throughout the 1990s in an effort to unseat Iraqi President Saddam Hussein, and during the wars in Yugoslavia in the early part of that decade. Yet as Hendrickson himself concedes, they are a blunt tool, for it is “highly doubtful” that their imposition will effect the collapse of the “enemy government.” Moreover, the use of sanctions “inflicts punishment on the entire economy and society,” rather than just the authoritarian regime, so that ultimately it becomes “difficult not to move to military intervention.” Hendrickson concludes that imposing “draconian economic sanctions are [a] particularly suspect” method of advancing democracy: “They can only have an effect by wreaking serious damage on a broad range of civil activities, yet they are normally incapable of inflicting sufficient deprivation on the holders of power to make them surrender.”⁴²

David Adesnik and Michael McFaul have argued that states can also promote democracy by “using close ties with a [dictatorial] regime to exert effective pressure for political liberalization.”⁴³ They point to various policies pursued during the presidency of Ronald Reagan as examples of this particular branch of democracy promotion. In the Philippines and South Korea, for instance, the Reagan administration began “pushing for democratic change when oppositions arose within the autocratic countries,”⁴⁴ notwithstanding the fact that these regimes had long been reliable friends of Washington. McFaul and Adesnik discern lessons for present US policymakers here, asserting that “The experience of democratization in anti-Communist autocracies during the Cold War

⁴² David C. Hendrickson, “The democratist crusade: intervention, economic sanctions, and engagement,” *World Policy Journal*, vol. 11, no. 4 (Winter 1994) (electronic version).

⁴³ David Adesnik and Michael McFaul, “Engaging Autocratic Allies to Promote Democracy,” *Washington Quarterly*, vol. 29, no. 2 (Spring 2006), p. 8.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 11.

suggests that U.S. officials can and should engage...autocratic allies [in the Middle East] while pushing for evolutionary change as a pre-emptive strategy to avoid revolutionary change.”⁴⁵ Francis Fukuyama also invokes the case of the Reagan administration as evidence that the US, by exerting diplomatic pressure, can have a major impact on democratization processes. He notes that the Reagan administration withdrew its support of Chilean dictator Augusto Pinochet in the late 1980s and “played a critical role in easing Ferdinand Marcos out of office” in the Philippines, while in South Korea in 1987 the US “used its influence to prevent the South Korean military from cracking down on student and trade union protesters, and facilitated that country’s move to free legislative elections.”⁴⁶

Many scholars have argued that promoting free market economics is a crucial, and very effective, element of democracy promotion. To quote Michael Mandelbaum, “the best way to foster democracy is to encourage the spread of free markets.” He argues that a free market economy engenders democracy because it generates wealth, and “wealth implants democracy by, among other things, subsidizing the kind of political participation that genuine democracy requires.”⁴⁷ It is in fact widely accepted by scholars of democratization that a strong correlation exists between wealth and democracy. As Henry Rowan has commented, since the 1960s “it has been well known that the higher a nation’s income, the more likely its politics are to be democratic.”⁴⁸ In an exhaustive statistical analysis of the relationship between political regimes and economic development from 1950 to 1990 Adam Przeworski, Michael Alvarez, José Antonio Cheibub and Fernando Limongi conclude that “there is no doubt that democracies are more likely to be found in the more highly developed countries.”⁴⁹ They argue that the richer a democracy is the more likely it will endure. Indeed, they go so far as to say that

⁴⁵ Ibid, pp. 24-5.

⁴⁶ Fukuyama, *After the Neocons*, p. 135.

⁴⁷ Michael Mandelbaum, “Democracy Without America – The Spontaneous Spread of Freedom,” *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 86, no. 5 (September-October 2007) (electronic version).

⁴⁸ Henry S. Rowan, “The Tide Underneath the ‘Third Wave,’” *Journal of Democracy*, vol. 6, no. 1 (1995), p. 53.

⁴⁹ Adam Przeworski, Michael E. Alvarez, José Antonio Cheibub, Fernando Limongi, *Democracy and Development: Political Institutions and Well-Being in the World, 1950-1990* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), p. 106.

“in affluent countries democracy is impregnable,” whereas it is “brittle in poor countries.”⁵⁰

Mandelbaum also argues that the free market promotes democracy by enabling civil society to develop, which acts “as a counterweight to the machinery of government.”⁵¹ A similar argument is made by Larry Diamond, who asserts that in the absence of free market conditions the state will have a stranglehold over the economy, preventing the “distribution of power resources” throughout society, the upshot of which is that the state will face no serious political competition.⁵² These arguments are persuasive, and it is in truth hard to think of any democracy throughout history that has not had a free market economy. As Robert Dahl has written, “Polyarchal democracy has existed *only* in countries with predominantly market-capitalist economies and *never* (or at most briefly) in countries with predominantly nonmarket economies.”⁵³ The alternative to capitalism is a planned economy, which “puts the resources of the entire economy at the disposal of government leaders,” giving them enormous power. In a free market economy, by contrast, economic power is dispersed to firms and individuals independent of the state.⁵⁴

However, Dahl himself acknowledges that market capitalism “has two faces” in terms of its impact on democracy, one “friendly” and the other “hostile.”⁵⁵ Capitalism, Dahl writes, “is important in causing an unequal distribution of many key resources: wealth, income, status, prestige, information, organization, education, knowledge” and so forth, with the result that “some citizens gain significantly more influence than others over the government’s policies, decisions, and actions.”⁵⁶ William Robinson makes a similar point, arguing that a free market economy militates against truly free and fair elections by creating an “unequal distribution of material and cultural resources among

⁵⁰ Ibid, pp. 109, 137. Przeworski et al do not claim, however, that economic development inevitably leads to the democratization of dictatorships. Their data reveal that “dictatorships survived for years in countries that were wealthy by comparative standards. Whatever the threshold at which development is supposed to dig the grave for an authoritarian regime, it is clear that many dictatorships have passed it in good health.” Ibid, p. 94.

⁵¹ Mandelbaum, “Democracy Without America.”

⁵² Larry Diamond, “Promoting Democracy.” *Foreign Policy*, no. 87 (Summer 1992). p. 33.

⁵³ Dahl, *On Democracy*, p. 166-7.

⁵⁴ Ibid, pp. 168-9.

⁵⁵ Ibid, p. 173.

⁵⁶ Ibid, pp. 177-8.

classes and groups.”⁵⁷ The downside of the free market economy has also been highlighted by David Held, who has written that it places “constraints” on governments that “systematically limit policy options.” As its fate is closely related to the health of the economy, a government is obliged to “follow a political agenda that is at least favourable to, i.e. biased towards, the development of the system of private enterprise and corporate power.”⁵⁸

Amy Chua contends that the mix of free markets and democracy is potentially explosive in societies where an ethnic minority dominates the economy. “Markets concentrate enormous wealth in the hands of an “outsider” minority,” notes Chua, “fomenting ethnic envy and hatred among often chronically poor majorities.” Holding elections under these circumstances is not necessarily a wise idea, for “the competition for votes fosters the emergence of demagogues who scapegoat the resented minority and foment active ethnonationalist movements demanding that the country’s wealth and identity be reclaimed by the “true owners of the nation.”” This volatile mix of democracy and the free market can result in the mass emigration of persecuted ethnic minorities, or, worse still, “majority-supported violence aimed at eliminating a market-dominant minority.”⁵⁹ Examples of the latter phenomenon mentioned by Chua are the Rwandan genocide of 1994 and the wars in the former Yugoslavia in the early 1990s. “In the former Yugoslavia,” writes Chua, “the result of market liberalization and democratic elections was not prosperity and political freedom, but rather economic devastation, hatemongering, populist manipulation, and civilian-conducted mass murder.”⁶⁰ In short, then, promoting free market economics can under certain circumstances have very nasty consequences.

What can we conclude about the effect of free market economics on democracy? The answer would seem to be that it can have both a positive and negative impact. As Przeworski et al have shown, democracy is far more stable in wealthy societies than in poor ones, which suggests that promoting free market economics is good for democracy. Furthermore, a free market economy enables civil society to emerge and dilutes the

⁵⁷ Robinson, *Promoting Polyarchy*, p. 59.

⁵⁸ David Held, *Models of Democracy*, 3rd edition (Cambridge: Polity, 2006), p. 170.

⁵⁹ Amy Chua, *World on Fire: How Exporting Free Market Democracy Breeds Ethnic Hatred and Global Instability* (London: William Heinemann, 2003), pp. 9-11, 164.

⁶⁰ *Ibid*, p. 175.

economic, and hence political, power of the state. In contrast, Robinson and Dahl have argued that the free market can create inequalities in income that lead in turn to inequalities in political resources, which has a negative effect on democracy. The extent to which this is true is contextual, with the problem far more serious in countries like Colombia, where “the richest 10% owned 42.7% of national income” in 2000,⁶¹ than in European democracies such as the Netherlands, which have a strong social democratic ethos. However, it is my contention that notwithstanding the at times salutary impact of free market economics on democracy, Mandelbaum is nonetheless wrong when he says that “the best way to foster democracy is to encourage the spread of free markets.” In my view, the best way to foster democracy is to promote human rights and genuinely free and fair elections.

This leads us to the issue of how we can determine whether democracy promotion is truly a goal of United States foreign policy. There are a number of actions the US, or any other state, can take that would demonstrate its commitment to promoting democracy. The first strand of democracy promotion relates to the holding of free and fair elections. There are numerous contributions that can be made in this respect, each of which would serve as evidence that the US truly seeks to promote democracy. It could assist political parties, NGOs, trade unions and other civil society organisations that are committed to democracy, whether through funding or training. It is imperative, however, that such support be non-partisan. The US could also send observers to monitor electoral processes, or support international or domestic election monitoring bodies, although there is a crucial caveat: these election monitors be free of political bias. Any electoral fraud or intimidation of voters or candidates during elections must be highlighted by US officials. A more general point is that elections should be treated on their merits: if they are unsatisfactory, American officials should acknowledge this. Taken together, these actions would constitute strong evidence of a desire to promote democracy.

A second test of a country’s commitment to democracy promotion is whether or not it opposes any actions that undermine the legitimacy of a state’s political institutions. The next branch of democracy promotion relates to human rights. If the United States

⁶¹ Grace Livingstone, *Inside Colombia: Drugs, Democracy and War* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2004), p. 78.

undertakes a policy that is aimed at promoting citizens' enjoyment of the political, civil, and socio-economic rights necessary for democracy, this may be considered evidence of a genuine effort to promote democracy. Examples would be the provision of peacekeeping troops in a post-conflict situation, or assisting trade unions or media groups. A fourth means of promoting democracy is attaching democracy-related conditions to any aid provided by the US to another state. If the US makes military assistance conditional on improvements in human rights then this would count as evidence that America genuinely seeks to promote democracy. There is a final strand of democracy promotion that relates specifically to situations where an authoritarian regime is in place. If the US attempts to effect the replacement of a dictatorial regime with an elected one, whether by imposing sanctions, using force, or employing diplomatic means, we can say that its policy is aimed at promoting democracy.

It will be observed that I have not listed promoting free market economics as one of the actions that are indicative of a state's commitment to promoting democracy. This is because it is very difficult to predict the impact of free market economics on democracy. This is a complex issue that is simply beyond the scope of this study, and rather than offering superficial arguments I have chosen not to incorporate it in my democracy promotion metric.

Democracy Promotion and United States Foreign Policy

It is now necessary to move on to a consideration of the issue of United States democracy promotion. Broadly speaking, we can divide the literature on this subject into two categories, mainstream and critical. Mainstream writers prefer a procedural definition of democracy and are inclined to believe that the US is genuinely committed to furthering democracy abroad, either out of pure self-interest or because such a course of action is perceived to be morally right. Mainstream scholars attribute some success to Washington in its efforts to spread democracy, although it is conceded that its record is mixed. Scholars writing from a more critical standpoint interpret democracy in substantive terms and are much less willing to accept that democracy promotion is a genuine American

foreign policy goal. They also argue that the United States has often had a distinctly adverse effect on democracy in other nations.

Mainstream Perspectives on United States Democracy Promotion

The mainstream literature on United States democracy promotion is characterised by three central themes. First, the United States is considered to be genuinely committed to furthering democracy abroad, for both ethical and strategic reasons. Second, the word democracy is defined in procedural terms, with particular emphasis placed on elections, although I should add that mainstream thinkers do not always offer a definition. Nonetheless, the procedural definition of the word is implicit in their writings. This overemphasis on procedures and institutions leads to the classification of certain states as democracies when they have obviously undemocratic features, and to claims of democracy promotion by the US when it did no more than press for elections. Third, although mainstream scholars do believe that the US seeks to promote democracy, they also acknowledge that it has not always done so, and in fact has sought to destabilize or overthrow democratic governments on occasion. There are varying opinions as to the extent to which the US allows other foreign policy goals to impede its desire to advance democracy.

America's enthusiasm for spreading democracy to foreign countries is emphasised by Jonathan Monten. According to Monten, the George W. Bush administration's alleged preoccupation with democracy promotion is rooted in an American foreign policy tradition that has always embraced liberalism and democracy. He argues that America is notable for "a foreign policy nationalism that regards the United States as an instrument of democratic change in the international system."⁶² This American urge to advance the cause of democracy in foreign countries "originated not only in the instrumental maximization of some material interest, but in a moral commitment to the universal political values that define the United States as a self-

⁶² Jonathan Monten, "The Roots of the Bush Doctrine: Power, Nationalism, and Democracy Promotion in U.S. Strategy," *International Security*, vol. 29, no. 4 (Spring 2005), p. 114.

contained political community.”⁶³ He argues that the issue for US policymakers has always been how – not whether - to advance the cause of democracy outside the United States. The question facing officials is therefore whether Washington should follow the path of “exemplarism,” using its own democratic institutions and values as an inspiration to others, or employ a policy of “vindicationism,” which involves the use of “active measures to spread its universal political values and institutions.”⁶⁴ One of these “active measures” is of course military action.

A similar perspective to Monten’s is offered by G. John Ikenberry, who argues that during the Cold War the US pursued twin strategies of containment of the Soviet Union and of promotion of a “liberal democratic order” among the industrialised states of the West. The goal of advancing this liberal democratic order, which embraced “open markets, democratic states, and international institutions,” has persisted following the collapse of the Soviet Union and is “deeply bipartisan.”⁶⁵ Ikenberry asserts that the US desire to promote democracy and, more generally, “liberal internationalism,” is reflective of “a distinctively American national security orientation,” which posits that a state’s internal characteristics have major implications for the attainment of American foreign policy aims. As Ikenberry puts it, “the United States is better able to pursue its interests, reduce security threats in its environment, and foster a stable political order when other states – particularly the major great powers - are democracies rather than non-democracies.”⁶⁶ As we saw above, this idea of the US promoting democracy out of pragmatism, rather than merely idealism, was invoked by Monten. Another scholar who emphasises that furthering democracy is in Washington’s own self-interest is Tony Smith. Writing just after the collapse of the Soviet Union, Smith concluded that the promotion of democracy abroad “as a way of enhancing the national security” was “surely the greatest ambition of United States foreign policy over the past century.”⁶⁷ He speaks of America’s “century-old determination to promote this cause,” and like Ikenberry, notes “how firmly

⁶³ Ibid, p. 120.

⁶⁴ Ibid, p. 113.

⁶⁵ G. John Ikenberry, “America’s Liberal Grand Strategy: Democracy and National Security in the Post-war Era,” in Michael Cox, G. John Ikenberry and Takashi Inoguchi, eds., *American Democracy Promotion: Impulses, Strategies, and Impacts* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), pp. 124-25.

⁶⁶ Ibid, pp. 103-4.

⁶⁷ Tony Smith, *America’s Mission: The United States and the Worldwide Struggle for Democracy in the Twentieth Century* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), p. 4.

bipartisan it now has become to see American national security promoted by the expansion of democracy around the globe.”⁶⁸ Smith marvels at the contribution of the US to democracy throughout the world, opining that “we can have no confidence that, without the United States, democracy would have survived,” and he asserts that “it is difficult to escape the conclusion that since World War I, the fortunes of democracy worldwide have largely depended on American power.”⁶⁹

Smith defines democracy as “free elections contested by freely organized parties under universal suffrage for control of the effective centers of governmental power.”⁷⁰ As with other scholars who adopt so narrow an interpretation of the term, Smith’s excessive focus on elections leads him to describe as democratic states that exhibit patently undemocratic features. For example, in a major text on US democracy promotion published in 1994, he referred to the Philippines as “a troubled democracy, but...a democracy nonetheless.”⁷¹ The basis for this assertion appears to be the holding of procedurally fair elections. A more plausible assessment of politics in the Philippines has been offered by Joel Rocamora who, writing at about the same time as Smith, observed that “the Philippine political system today, is not, in any substantive sense, a democracy.” Rocamora noted that political participation was restricted to “limited elite circles,” human rights violations were prevalent, while the military remained an effectively autonomous actor.⁷² There were six coup attempts in the first six years of “democracy” after the flight of dictator Ferdinand Marcos in 1986, with “each attempt...followed by [President Corazon] Aquino government concessions which strengthened the military as an institution.”⁷³ While Smith was surely right to say that the Philippines was “troubled,” his designation of the country as a democracy is more questionable.

Larry Diamond also subscribes to the view of democracy as a set of institutions. In a work he co-edited on democratization in Latin America, Diamond and his fellow editors stated that their “conceptualization of political democracy” was one “that focuses

⁶⁸ Ibid, p. 6.

⁶⁹ Ibid, pp. 9-10.

⁷⁰ Ibid, p. 13.

⁷¹ Ibid, p. 39.

⁷² Joel Rocamora, “Lost Opportunities, Deepening Crisis: The Philippines under Cory Aquino,” in Barry Gills, Joel Rocamora and Richard Wilson, eds., *Low Intensity Democracy: Political Power in the New World Order* (London: Pluto, 1993), p. 221.

⁷³ Ibid, p. 207.

on procedural issues rather than substantive outcomes, and that does not conflate democracy with social and economic dimensions.”⁷⁴ Democracy is to be understood as a political system encompassing competition for political office in free, fair and frequent elections, in which all adults may participate, with sufficient guarantees of political and civil rights to ensure a legitimate political process. By concentrating solely on the institutions of democracy Diamond can assert that the US “made a difference in the early 1960s” by providing aid to the “new democracies” of Colombia and Venezuela.⁷⁵ Although Diamond does not spell out why he considers these two states to have been democratic, we can presume that it is because elections took place and the whole adult population was entitled to vote. Unfortunately, his choice of Colombia merely serves to illustrate the inadequacy of procedural definitions of democracy. There were elections, but they were of a very unusual kind. In 1958, an agreement known as the National Front was reached between the Liberal and Conservative parties to “alternate the presidency every four years and to divide equally the seats in all legislative bodies.”⁷⁶ Other parties were simply barred from participating. Moreover, state of siege restrictions have been commonplace in Colombia, while human rights abuses by the security forces became commonplace from the 1970s onwards. These facts notwithstanding, other democracy promotion scholars have likewise seen fit to deem Colombia in the 1960s a democratic state. Hence Laurence Whitehead’s claim that “democracy did flower...in Colombia and Venezuela since 1958.”⁷⁷ This tendency to describe countries as democratic on the basis of the presence of the political institutions of democracy is characteristic of mainstream writings on the subject, and represents a major weakness.

One mainstream writer who avoids the trap of associating democracy with elections and other political institutions is Thomas Carothers. He rightly points out that Washington has a habit of “focusing far too much on formal institutions as the essential elements of democratization at the expense of underlying values and processes.” Hence the tendency of US officials to “extol an election with little attention to the more complex

⁷⁴ Larry Diamond, Jonathan Hartlyn, Juan J. Linz, and Seymour Martin Lipset, eds., *Democracy in Developing Countries: Latin America* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 1999), p. viii.

⁷⁵ Diamond, “Promoting Democracy,” p. 31.

⁷⁶ Livingstone, *Inside Colombia*, p. 45.

⁷⁷ Laurence Whitehead, “The Imposition of Democracy: The Caribbean,” in Laurence Whitehead, ed., *The International Dimensions of Democratization: Europe and the Americas* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), p. 60.

realities of actual political participation.”⁷⁸ Discussing the “third wave” of democratic transitions at the end of the twentieth century, Carothers calls for an approach grounded in reality. Dismissing what he refers to as “the chimera of instantaneous democracy,” Carothers highlights the presence of “entrenched antidemocratic power structures” in these so-called new democracies.⁷⁹ Thus, in Latin America the issue “is not whether democracy can be maintained in form but whether it can be achieved in substance,” which would entail extending political participation beyond elites, reducing corruption and embedding the rule of law.⁸⁰ Ultimately, Carothers argues, “Helping countries turn democratic forms into democratic substance is a deep, broad task,” that requires “reducing entrenched concentrations of economic power,” broadening participation to include “poor, marginalized sectors,” and “rejuvenating stale, often deeply problematic, political elites.”⁸¹

Carothers is right to emphasise that bringing democracy to foreign countries is a very difficult task, a point also made by Francis Fukuyama, who asserts that the US “can be extremely helpful to an organic process of democratic transition, but it has little leverage in the absence of relatively strong domestic actors.”⁸² Discussing the reasons for the success of democracy promotion efforts in Yugoslavia, Ukraine and Georgia from 2000 to 2005, Fukuyama contends that while foreign democracy promotion bodies played an important part, what these examples show is that “the initiative has to come from within the society in question. Unless there are strong, unified indigenous groups willing to resist the former regime, regime change will not occur.” It is not surprising, then, that America’s “record in nation-building is mixed: there are a few successes and a large number of failures; and where the successes occurred, they required an extraordinary level of effort and attention.”⁸³ The argument that there must be strong pro-democracy internal actors for democratization to take place is borne out by the democratic openings in Guatemala, Argentina, South Korea and the Philippines in the 1980s. As Barry Gills, Joel Rocamora and Richard Wilson, who adopt a more critical attitude towards US

⁷⁸ Carothers, *Critical Mission*, p. 35.

⁷⁹ *Ibid*, pp. 166, 161.

⁸⁰ *Ibid*, p. 158.

⁸¹ *Ibid*, p. 263.

⁸² Fukuyama, *After the Neocons*, pp. 131-2.

⁸³ *Ibid*, pp. 137, 131.

democracy promotion, comment, “the overthrow of these authoritarian regimes was first and foremost the result of popular impetus.”⁸⁴

Notwithstanding their willingness to attribute noble motives to the United States, mainstream scholars are nonetheless aware that Washington has not always lived up to its rhetoric and has at times undermined democracy in foreign states. Mark Peceny, for example, has observed that Washington “has often allied itself with brutally repressive authoritarian regimes rather than with the liberal opponents of such regimes...In perhaps half a dozen nations, most prominently in Guatemala in 1954 and Chile in 1973, the United States used covert measures to help overthrow elected governments.”⁸⁵ Tony Smith, who speaks of Washington’s “century-old determination” to spread democracy, nevertheless accepts that its record in this respect is by no means perfect. In reference to Latin America, for instance, he comments that “whatever its intentions, American policy on balance may have done substantially more to shore up dictatorships in the region than to advance the cause of democracy.”⁸⁶

Scepticism regarding the pro-democracy credentials of the United States is certainly warranted, and it informs Thomas Carothers’ work. Carothers calls for a realistic appraisal of the efforts of the United States in this regard. He criticises what he sees as “inflated declarations by U.S. officials about America’s unbending commitment to supporting democracy worldwide,” noting “the often partial or conflicted place of democracy in America’s foreign policy.”⁸⁷ Carothers detects “a strong line of continuity” in United States democracy promotion since the presidency of George H.W. Bush, with American officials strongly endorsing this objective at the rhetorical level, but shelving it in practice when vital foreign policy goals were at stake. The US approach to foreign affairs, according to Carothers, is thus better understood as “semirealist.” This is evident from the fact that “Washington [has] almost always downplayed its democracy concerns” in cases “where policy makers saw strong economic or security reasons for staying on friendly terms with authoritarian or semi-authoritarian regimes.”⁸⁸ Still, while Carothers

⁸⁴ Barry Gills, Joel Rocamora and Richard Wilson, “Low Intensity Democracy,” in Gills et al, *Low Intensity Democracy*

⁸⁵ Peceny, *Democracy at the Point of Bayonets*, p. 2.

⁸⁶ Smith, *America’s Mission*, p. 29.

⁸⁷ Carothers, *Critical Mission*, p. 4.

⁸⁸ *Ibid*, p. 7.

does contend that Washington's desire to advance the cause of democracy abroad is often exaggerated by officials, this does not imply that he views US democracy promotion as nothing more than a cover for other foreign policy objectives. The Clinton administration, he writes, was "interested in promoting democracy abroad as an end in itself," for the simple reason that the president and his foreign policy team believed that "democracies tend to be more peaceful than nondemocracies."⁸⁹ Likewise, Carothers has emphasised that the administration of George W. Bush has made a "strenuous effort...to carry off a democratic transformation of Iraq" and has a "broader...commitment to supporting a democratic transformation of the Middle East."⁹⁰

As the quotes from Carothers imply, Clinton administration policymakers were believers in what is known in international relations theory as the democratic peace thesis. In the 1980s Michael Doyle drew attention to the absence of war between democracies, which he sought to explain by invoking the work of the nineteenth century German philosopher Immanuel Kant. Doyle claimed that Kant, in his essay *Perpetual Peace*, had foreseen "the ever-widening pacification of a Liberal pacific union," and he remarked that the "historical record of Liberal international relations seems to support Kant's speculations."⁹¹ Doyle argued that the democratic, or what he called the liberal peace, was the product of three factors. First, in a liberal state the decision to wage war requires the consent of citizens, which is hard to gain, as they are the ones who are obliged to bear the costs of conflict. Second, feelings of mutual respect subsist between citizens of liberal states; there is an awareness of shared values and principles, which makes liberal states appear less threatening than non-liberal states. Third, the ties of trade act as a further incentive to avoid conflict, for each side would suffer from a rupture in economic relations.⁹² Doyle's work has proved to be highly influential. "That democracies rarely

⁸⁹ Ibid, pp. 15, 19.

⁹⁰ Ibid, p. 1. It should be noted, however, that Carothers has called into question the Bush administration's self-proclaimed democracy promotion agenda. He has criticised the Bush administration for failing to exert pressure on authoritarian allies like Egypt, Saudi Arabia and Pakistan, arguing that this makes Washington appear "hypocritical." Moreover, he excoriates the Bush administration for "the staggering contradiction between its unapologetic proclivity to violate individual rights in the name of fighting terrorism and its preaching to others that liberty is an antidote to terrorism." See Thomas Carothers, "The Backlash against Democracy Promotion," *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 85, no. 2 (March/April 2006) (electronic version).

⁹¹ Michael Doyle, *Ways of War and Peace: Realism, Liberalism, and Socialism* (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1997), pp. 253, 258.

⁹² Ibid, pp. 280-4.

fight each other is now generally, if not universally, accepted,” comment two fellow proponents of the democratic peace thesis.⁹³

Doyle acknowledged that the peace subsisting between liberal states did not extend to their relations with autocracies and that the former could be extremely belligerent and war-prone when dealing with the latter. In short, the peacefulness of democracies only goes as far as their relations with fellow democracies. However, some scholars have gone further than Doyle and argued that democracies are in fact intrinsically more peaceable than authoritarian states. Bruce Russett and John Oneal, for example, have asserted that “democracies are in general more peaceful than other kinds of states.”⁹⁴ For advocates of the democratic peace thesis, then, there is considerable reason for optimism about the future of international politics, for the increasing prevalence of democratic rule around the world renders interstate conflict less likely. As Russett and Oneal have put it, “The emergence of new democracies in the last decade of the twentieth century presents the possibility for widespread peace in the international system.”⁹⁵

While there is strong empirical support for the contention that democracies do not fight each other, the democratic peace thesis has nonetheless come under attack from scholars who argue that its logical underpinnings are unconvincing. Sebastian Rosato, for example, has shown that there are flaws in the causal logic of the theory. He asserts that the argument made by Doyle (and others) that wary citizens exert a restraining influence on leaders in a democracy because they fear having to bear the costs of war, is erroneous. Rosato points out that if this were so, “then democracies would be more peaceful in their relations with all types of states, not just other democracies.” The improbability of publics restraining their leaders from entering into wars is due to three factors: first, the costs of war are met by a very small percentage of the population; second, nationalist sentiment among the public may override any fear of facing the burdens of war; third,

⁹³ Bruce Russett and John Oneal, *Triangulating Peace: Democracy, Interdependence, and International Organizations* (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 2001), p. 43.

⁹⁴ *Ibid*, p. 122.

⁹⁵ *Ibid*, p. 123.

democratic leaders have the ability to “cultivate nationalism” and may use it to build support for military action.⁹⁶

Rosato also questions the claim that there are feelings of mutual trust and respect subsisting between leaders of democracies, who will be disposed to externalize domestic norms of peaceful conflict resolution, ensuring that disputes do not escalate into war. “The available evidence suggests that democracies do not have a powerful inclination to treat each other with trust and respect when their interests clash,” he writes. To make his point Rosato invokes the record of the United States during the Cold War, when it used force covertly to destabilize numerous democracies with which it had clashes of interests, instead of trying to resolve disputes peacefully.⁹⁷ Kenneth Waltz has likewise drawn attention to occasions during the Cold War when the United States worked to effect the removal of elected leaders, citing the examples of the Dominican Republic in 1965 and Chile in the early 1970s. “American policy may have been wise in both cases,” Waltz remarks, “but its actions surely cast doubt on the democratic peace thesis.” Waltz’s underlying point is that, while there certainly seems to be an absence of war among democracies, this does not mean that democratic states will not attempt to subvert one another. Powerful democratic states do not always need to resort to war in order to achieve their objectives, he observes.⁹⁸ Waltz contends that the democratic peace cannot adequately explain the causes of war and peace, for it overlooks the way anarchy shapes state behaviour. He emphasises that as long as the international system is anarchic states cannot be certain that other states will not threaten or make war on them, regardless of whether they are democratic or not. So, while Waltz acknowledges that “Democracies rarely fight democracies,” he insists that we must “add as a word of essential caution that the internal excellence of states is a brittle basis of peace.”⁹⁹

As both Rosato and Waltz indicate, the history of United States foreign relations since the Second World War provides compelling evidence that the democratic peace

⁹⁶ Sebastian Rosato, “The Flawed Logic of Democratic Peace Theory,” *American Political Science Review*, vol. 97, no. 4 (November 2003), pp. 594-6.

⁹⁷ *Ibid*, pp. 590-1. Rosato lists seven democracies that were subverted by the US: Iran in 1953, Guatemala in 1954, Indonesia from 1957, British Guyana from 1961, Brazil in 1961 and 1964, Chile in 1973 and Nicaragua from 1984.

⁹⁸ Kenneth N. Waltz, “Structural Realism after the Cold War,” *International Security*, vol. 25, no. 1 (Summer 2000), p. 9.

⁹⁹ *Ibid*, p. 11.

thesis is flawed. Nonetheless, the fact remains that US policymakers have consistently embraced the concept of the democratic peace and used it as a rationale for spreading democracy abroad. As Deputy Secretary of State Strobe Talbott wrote in 1996, Bill Clinton had made democracy promotion “a priority of his administration’s diplomacy” because democracies were “less likely to threaten the peace.”¹⁰⁰ President Clinton himself stated in his 1995 State of the Union address that “ultimately, the best strategy to ensure our security and to build durable peace is to support the advance of democracy elsewhere.”¹⁰¹ Top officials in the George W. Bush administration have also subscribed to the theory that democracies do not make war on one another and are generally of a more peaceful persuasion than non-democracies. Paul Wolfowitz, who served as deputy secretary of defence in Bush’s first term, had a “warm embrace of the democracy-as-security-tool thesis,” writes Michael Mazarr, while Secretary of State Colin Powell in his confirmation hearings before the Senate “spoke glowingly about the progress of democracy – and its benefits for US security.” Mazarr sees a parallel between the foreign policy ideologies of George W. Bush and Reagan administrations, with both “adherents of the...notion of the ‘democratic peace.’”¹⁰²

Returning to the literature on United States democracy promotion, Larry Diamond is another believer in the US mission to spread democracy worldwide. He highlights what he sees as “the U.S. commitment to freedom and democracy,” which in his opinion is what “distinguishes America most as a people and a nation.” Diamond nevertheless accepts that Washington has not always matched words with deeds, as evidenced by his acknowledgment that “the Cold War obsession with communism often led U.S. policymakers to embrace dictators and even occasionally sabotage popularly elected governments.”¹⁰³ Abraham Lowenthal is yet another writer who has highlighted America’s commitment to foreign democracy, while at the same time noting that the historical record does not present the US in a uniformly favourable light. Lowenthal

¹⁰⁰ Strobe Talbott, “Democracy and the National Interest,” *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 75, no. 6 (November/December 1996), p. 47.

¹⁰¹ Quoted in James M. Scott and Carie A. Steele, “Assisting Democrats or Resisting Dictators? The Nature and Impact of Democracy Support by the United States National Endowment for Democracy, 1990-99,” *Democratization*, vol. 12, no. 4 (August 2005), p. 440.

¹⁰² Michael J. Mazarr, “George W. Bush, Idealist,” *International Affairs*, vol. 79, no. 3 (May 2003), p. 510-11.

¹⁰³ Diamond, “Promoting Democracy,” pp. 29, 43.

comments that Washington has “an underlying predisposition...to favor democratic politics throughout the Western Hemisphere (and the world, for that matter),” but this “U.S. bias for democracy is rarely sufficient to...give the promotion of democracy priority over the other goals of U.S. policy.” Its “frequent and fulsome rhetoric” notwithstanding, “the U.S. government has actively promoted Latin American democracy only on occasion,” and its “efforts have often been ineffective and sometimes counterproductive.”¹⁰⁴ In a similar vein, Steven Hook states that “the promotion of democracy has long served as a key vehicle for the promotion of US political ideals as well as for the pursuit of the country’s material self-interests.” However, he recognises that Washington has “routinely strayed from its declared principles toward a starker form of realism.”¹⁰⁵

Mainstream scholars point to three factors when accounting for Washington’s failure to convert its commitment to democracy promotion into practice, the first of which is Cold War anti-communism. During its decades-long struggle with the Soviet Union, the US was at times forced to shelve the goal of democracy promotion as this would have hindered the fight against communism. As Fukuyama has expressed it, before the mid-1980s “anticommunism...led Washington to support or at least acquiesce in the rule of a number of authoritarian states on the grounds that these governments were the lesser of two evils.”¹⁰⁶ Second, democracy promotion often loses out when a choice needs to be made between it and other policy objectives, a point made by Hook. “Regional security considerations...weighed heavily in U.S. foreign policy calculations” under Clinton, he observes. “In cases when these clashed with the policy of Building Democracy, most conspicuously in the Middle East, strategic concerns generally prevailed.” Likewise, economic interests usually trumped democracy promotion during Clinton’s presidency.¹⁰⁷ Finally, these scholars have asserted that the objective of democracy promotion often suffers from a lack of domestic political support in the US. To again quote Hook, Clinton’s policy of “democratic enlargement failed to resonate

¹⁰⁴ Abraham Lowenthal, “The United States and Latin American Democracy: Learning from History,” in Abraham Lowenthal, ed., *Exporting Democracy: The United States and Latin America* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1991), pp. 277, 279.

¹⁰⁵ Steven W. Hook, “Inconsistent U.S. Efforts to Promote Democracy Abroad,” in Peter J. Schraeder, ed., *Exporting Democracy: Rhetoric versus Reality* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 2002), p. 113.

¹⁰⁶ Fukuyama, *After the Neocons*, p. 134.

¹⁰⁷ Hook, “Inconsistent U.S. Efforts to Promote Democracy Abroad,” p. 122-3.

among the general public” and was met with deep scepticism by congressional Republicans, who “advanced a more limited role for the United States based on narrowly defined national self-interests rather than transnational concerns.”¹⁰⁸

Critical Approaches to American Democracy Promotion

The critical literature on United States democracy promotion is characterised by three shared beliefs. The first of these is that the United States, despite official rhetoric and the assertions of many commentators and academics, is not genuinely committed to promoting foreign democracy. These scholars contend that, at best, Washington seeks to advance highly attenuated, elite-based forms of democracy which they describe as “low-intensity democracies,” “elite democracies,” or “polyarchies.” In their view, these emasculated “democracies” are not worthy of the name. Second, although the US does not desire the advance of real democracy in foreign states, it has been promoting polyarchy or low-intensity democracy since the mid-1980s. Critical scholars argue that the shift to supporting limited forms of democracy abroad was occasioned by the realisation among US policymakers that the presence of authoritarian rulers in the developing world no longer served US interests: while Third World strongmen like Pinochet in Chile and Marcos in the Philippines had once been valuable allies of the United States, the fall of Somoza in Nicaragua and the Shah of Iran at the end of the 1970s provided powerful evidence that dictatorial forms of rule engendered massive social discontent, creating the conditions for revolution. This leads us to the third shared belief, that while the means for achieving US objectives have changed, the objectives themselves have not. The overriding goal of US foreign policy is still American dominance of an international capitalist economic system, and promoting polyarchy, rather than authoritarianism, is now seen as the most effective way of sustaining such an international order.

The work of William Robinson constitutes the most sophisticated attempt to develop a theory of democracy promotion from a critical perspective. Robinson, as we saw above, equates democracy with a high degree of political participation by citizens.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid, pp. 119-20.

Democratic forms like elections are only democratic to the extent that they allow the people to exercise political control. He disputes the notion that the United States seeks to advance genuine democracy in other countries. *Democracy promotion* is a highly misleading term, according to Robinson: “What US policymakers mean by “democracy promotion” is the promotion of *polyarchy*,” which he defines as “a system in which a small group actually rules and mass participation in decision-making is confined to leadership choice in elections carefully managed by competing elites”(italics in original).¹⁰⁹ Democracy promotion, as understood by “US policymakers and organic intellectuals”, in reality translates into “the *suppression* of popular democracy, in theory and in practice” (italics in original).¹¹⁰

Robinson claims that the move to a policy of promoting polyarchy occurred in the 1980s. Previously, Washington, in its efforts to ensure the durability of the US-dominated international capitalist system, relied on authoritarian regimes as “the most expedient means of assuring stability and social control in the Third World.” By the eighties, however, authoritarians could no longer be relied upon to carry out this role, as their use of repression and the existence of severe socio-economic inequality in the developing world engendered the emergence of “mass popular movements” that threatened the social order.¹¹¹ The examples of Nicaragua and Iran, where pro-US dictators were toppled in popular uprisings, were salutary lessons for US officials of the dangers of relying on autocrats for order and stability.¹¹² Polyarchy was adopted as a way of undercutting popular demands for a radical overhaul of the socio-economic system. The idea was to open the political system just enough to prevent revolution, but also to ensure that elites, rather than popular sectors, kept a tight grip on political power. As Robinson comments, “The intent behind promoting polyarchy is to relieve domestic pressure on the state from subordinate classes for more fundamental change in emergent global society.”¹¹³

United States democracy promotion thus aims “to preempt more radical political change, to preserve the social order and international relations of asymmetry.” This is the “immediate purpose” of the policy. However, at a deeper level, US democracy promotion

¹⁰⁹ Robinson, *Promoting Polyarchy*, p. 49.

¹¹⁰ Ibid, p. 62.

¹¹¹ Ibid, pp. 15-16.

¹¹² Ibid, p. 74.

¹¹³ Ibid, p. 66

also seeks the advance of unrestrained capitalism.¹¹⁴ Robinson argues that democracy promotion (as understood by US policymakers) is “inextricably linked to globalization,” a process that has brought about “a hitherto unseen integration of national economies.”¹¹⁵ In the highly globalised international economic system, political and economic power flows to a new “transnational elite” that is at the heart of the global economy.¹¹⁶ The objective of the transnational elite is “to promote the economic and political conditions around the world for the unfettered activity of transnational capital.” Authoritarian political arrangements are viewed as a barrier to the imposition of unbridled capitalism, as they cannot “manage the expansion of social intercourse associated with the global economy.” Polyarchy provides a more stable environment for transnational capital as it provides a means of co-opting popular opposition and resolving conflicts between elites. Therefore, Robinson contends that “polyarchy is better equipped in the new global environment to legitimize the political authority of dominant groups and to achieve a minimally stable environment, under the conflict-ridden and fluid conditions of emergent global society, for global capitalism to operate.”¹¹⁷

A similar critique to that offered by Robinson is set out by Barry Gills, Joel Rocamora and Richard Wilson. They too identify the 1980s as the moment the US turned from a policy of propping up authoritarian regimes deemed favourable to US interests to promoting “democracy” in the Third World. Again, though, they emphasise that the type of democracy the US has been supporting is not really worthy of the name, and they propose the term “low-intensity democracy” as a more accurate description. They argue that the low-intensity democracies that emerged towards the end of the twentieth century “have preserved ossified political and economic structures from an authoritarian past.”¹¹⁸ Other undemocratic features include militaries that remain powerful and independent, continued human rights abuses on a large scale and a failure to carry out socio-economic reform. Examples of low-intensity democracy include South Korea, the Philippines, Argentina and Guatemala following their shifts from authoritarianism to elected rule in

¹¹⁴ Ibid, p. 319.

¹¹⁵ Ibid, pp. 4, 32.

¹¹⁶ Ibid, p. 33.

¹¹⁷ William Robinson, “Promoting Capitalist Polyarchy: The Case of Latin America,” in Cox et al, *American Democracy Promotion*, p. 312.

¹¹⁸ Gills, Rocamora and Wilson, “Low Intensity Democracy,” p. 3.

the 1980s. In these states, democracy was “confined to the level of formal electoral participation,” while the military remained a highly influential political actor and human rights abuses remained a problem.¹¹⁹ Gills, Rocamora and Wilson assert that the change in US policy from backing authoritarians to supporting low-intensity democracies arose from “the realisation that authoritarianism could not sustain itself indefinitely and that democratisation was inevitable in the long term.” If Washington could, however, “gain a guiding influence in the process of democratisation” then it could prevent revolutionary outcomes detrimental to US interests along the lines of the collapse of the Somoza dictatorship in Nicaragua and the fall of the Shah’s regime in Iran.¹²⁰

The US recognised that authoritarianism was unsustainable, but it was leery of too much democracy appearing in its stead. Low-intensity democracy, which “could preempt more radical change by incorporating broad popular forces in electoral participation,” while at the same time ensuring policy continuity, was the solution.¹²¹ It was this belief in the benefits of attenuated forms of democracy that convinced Washington in the eighties to withdraw support from pro-American dictators in the Philippines, South Korea, Haiti, Chile and Paraguay.¹²² Gills, Rocamora and Wilson do not see the shift to promoting limited forms of democracy as a change in US foreign policy *objectives*; it is rather a different *means* to the same *end*. The end they identify is US leadership of an international capitalist economic order, with the developing world playing its traditional role as a provider of cheap resources and markets for the world’s industrialised states. This was, and remains, the goal of American foreign policy: “In the Old/New World Order, under the auspices of American hegemonic power, the Third World is subordinated in the international division of labour as a source of raw materials and cheaper manufactured commodities, and as a market.” The biggest threat to US economic objectives is the appearance of “any nationalistic regime responsive to popular demands for immediate improvement in standards of living.”¹²³ Genuine democracy is therefore forcefully opposed by the United States, as it is likely to run counter to its economic goals.

¹¹⁹ Ibid, p. 21.

¹²⁰ Ibid, p. 8.

¹²¹ Ibid, p. 8.

¹²² Ibid, p. 9.

¹²³ Ibid, p. 17.

Another critic of United States democracy promotion is Noam Chomsky. According to Chomsky, the principal objective of US foreign policy has long been US leadership of an international capitalist economic order, with the developing world acting as a source of raw materials and a market for the world's industrialised economies. Describing the US-financed reconstruction of Japan, Germany and Western Europe after World War 2, Chomsky writes that "the prime concern was to establish a state capitalist order under the traditional conservative elites, within the global framework of US power, which would guarantee the ability to exploit the various regions that were to fulfill their functions as markets and sources of raw materials."¹²⁴ The "various regions" to which he refers are the Third World. The international order favoured by the US, however, implies the generation of inequalities in wealth, between and within societies, which leads to social discontent and demands from marginalised sectors for different policies. Thus, Chomsky asserts that the United States is strongly opposed to genuine democracy, which he defines in substantive terms as "a system in which citizens may play some meaningful part in the management of public affairs,"¹²⁵ as poor majorities might well adopt policies that are at odds with US economic interests. It follows that "A persistent concern of Western elites is that popular organizations [in the Third World] might lay the basis for meaningful democracy and social reform, threatening the prerogatives of the privileged."¹²⁶ Such organisations need to be crushed, by force if necessary. Chomsky contends that history bears out his claim that Washington is opposed to real democracy: "Even a cursory inspection of the historical record reveals that a persistent theme in American foreign policy has been the subversion and overthrow of parliamentary regimes, and the resort to violence to destroy popular organizations that might offer the majority of the population an opportunity to enter the political arena."¹²⁷

Chomsky does not argue, however, that the US is antipathetic to democratic institutions like frequent, procedurally fair elections. Indeed, he emphasises that its "relations with the industrial world show clearly that the US government is not opposed

¹²⁴ Noam Chomsky, *Deterring Democracy* (London: Vintage, 1992), p. 348.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 331.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 362.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 331.

to democratic forms as such.”¹²⁸ Chomsky’s contention is that the United States is quite willing to tolerate the existence of the institutions of democracy, so long as the right people end up in power. The right people are “elements of the oligarchy, business community and military who understand and serve US priorities.” They are charged with keeping citizens of developing countries pliant and “under control.” He continues, “If these goals can be attained with democratic forms, that is fine, even preferable, if only for propaganda purposes. If not, then other ways must be found, and in the Third World domains there need be no delicacy about the choice of methods.”¹²⁹ In short, the US tolerates democratic forms, but it is nonetheless firmly against democracy in the more substantive sense. From the perspective of many policymakers in Washington, government should be the province of elites, who must be left to do their job without being troubled by the masses. These arguments are evident in Chomsky’s discussion of Washington’s attitude towards democracy in present-day Iraq. He argues that because of Iraq’s great economic significance, “authentic sovereignty and even limited democracy would be too dangerous to be easily accepted [by the United States]. If at all possible, Iraq must be kept under [American] control.”¹³⁰ Therefore, the only sort of democracy that “will be welcomed” by the US is “the conventional “top-down” form that leaves elites supportive of US goals in power.”¹³¹

Like the other critical writers mentioned above Steve Smith points out that Washington has an inglorious history of subverting elected regimes and supporting dictators in the Third World. This aversion to democracy “is most evident in the case of Latin and Central America, for whom there must be disbelief at the notion that the US has a long-standing commitment to the promotion of democracy.”¹³² In so far as the United States does promote democracy, it promotes “a very limited form,” which also happens to be “the type of democracy that best suits US economic interests.”¹³³ The US

¹²⁸ Ibid, p. 332.

¹²⁹ Noam Chomsky, “The Struggle for Democracy in the New World Order,” in Gills et al, *Low Intensity Democracy*, p. 83.

¹³⁰ Noam Chomsky, *Failed States: The Abuse of Power and the Assault on Democracy* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2006), p. 148.

¹³¹ Ibid, p. 162.

¹³² Steve Smith, “US Democracy Promotion: Critical Questions,” in Cox et al, *American Democracy Promotion*, p. 65.

¹³³ Ibid, pp. 72, 77.

advocates free trade and neoliberalism, which imply a reduced role for the state in economic affairs. Not coincidentally, the “low-intensity democracies” favoured by the United States have weak political institutions and a low level of popular control, and are consequently well-adapted to the neoliberal project promoted by Washington. More substantive forms of democracy would be far less welcome to the US, as “Such models would focus more on the values underlying democracy, and would therefore see political democracy as incompatible with [the] massive socioeconomic inequalities” caused by neoliberalism.¹³⁴ Democracy promotion should therefore be viewed as a tool employed by the US to advance its economic objectives, rather than as an end in itself. Smith’s emphasis on the primacy of American economic goals leads him to the conclusion that “there has been a considerable continuity in US policy, since the previous policies of shoring up authoritarian regimes was also done to protect and promote US economic interests.”¹³⁵

Conclusions

Neither of the approaches to US democracy promotion described above is entirely convincing. An obvious problem with the mainstream literature is that it is difficult to reconcile the widely-held view that the United States truly wants to promote foreign democracy with instances where Washington has clearly opposed popularly elected regimes. The cases of Guatemala in 1954, when a CIA-orchestrated invasion toppled the country’s elected president, Jacobo Arbenz, and Chile in the 1970s, when the CIA worked to remove the elected president, Salvador Allende, are well-known stains on Washington’s record. Nor has the US been averse to maintaining friendly relations with authoritarian regimes, a reality that should be plain to anyone who follows United States policy in the Middle East. Even presidents who have been portrayed as great champions of democracy have on occasion pursued antidemocratic policies. Woodrow Wilson, for instance, sent US Marines to occupy Haiti, where they proceeded to dissolve the country’s parliament due to its refusal to ratify a constitution drawn up by the US.

¹³⁴ Ibid, p. 80.

¹³⁵ Ibid, p. 78.

Democracy has in fact almost never had the slightest influence on US policy in Haiti. Yet, while criticism can be levelled at mainstream scholars for being overly credulous of the pro-democracy pretensions of American officials, there are certainly grounds for arguing that the critical literature exaggerates America's hostility towards democracy in foreign states. Washington has generally enjoyed good relations with the nations of Western Europe, a region which is home to many of the world's most democratic states, since the Second World War. The US relationship with the country to its north, Canada, provides further evidence that Washington is by no means invariably opposed to democracy in other countries.

The mainstream literature on United States democracy promotion also suffers from its reliance on a narrow definition of democracy. By defining the word in procedural terms, mainstream scholars of democracy promotion are liable to arrive at erroneous conclusions. We saw above how low is the threshold at which a state may be considered democratic. Colombia, a country beset by human rights abuses by the security forces and the infiltration of drugs mafias into the country's political institutions, has nonetheless been described as democratic on the basis of its regular elections. This inadequate conception of democracy leads mainstream scholars to the conclusion that by pushing for elections, no matter how flawed, the United States demonstrates support for democracy in other countries. An example, and one I will cover in more detail in the next chapter, is American policy towards El Salvador in the 1980s. The Reagan administration supposedly sought to promote democracy in this Central American nation by pressuring its allies in the Salvadorian military – the real locus of power - to hold elections. A very persuasive case can be made that Salvadorian democracy was by no means an American objective, however, for Washington was at the same time providing the Salvadorian security forces with considerable amounts of military aid, even as they and their allies in the right-wing death squads were murdering thousands of civilians. Human rights, a vital component of democracy, were clearly of low importance to the Reagan administration. The critical literature is superior in this respect. By defining democracy in substantive terms, critical scholars can provide a more rigorous test of US democracy promotion policies. El Salvador, for instance, is not viewed as a triumph for the Reagan administration, but as a human rights disaster that had terrible implications for democracy.

While critical scholars are to be applauded for employing a broader definition of democracy and for their scepticism regarding the importance attached to democracy promotion by American officials, their work suffers at times from an over-emphasis on economics as the principal factor guiding United States foreign policy. I do not deny that economic interests often shape American foreign policy. As we shall see in chapter four, economic concerns can even have an influence on US policy towards a state as economically insignificant as Haiti, where the Clinton administration was so eager to push through neoliberal economic reforms that it froze aid when the Haitians refused to privatise certain state enterprises. Nonetheless, it would be wrong to assume, as some critical scholars have, that the US under Clinton became so heavily involved in Haiti because it was determined to export neoliberalism to that state. The decision to send American forces to Haiti in 1994 was partly a function of Clinton's desire to promote democracy in Haiti, and also reflected his need to mollify those in the United States demanding a tougher approach to the Haitian junta. It was not a consequence of the administration's enthusiasm for spreading neoliberal economics. In short, then, while economic considerations usually inform US foreign policy to some degree, and at times dominate America's relations with another country, it does not follow that economics is always the primary factor governing policy.

We can therefore say that both approaches to the subject of United States democracy promotion, critical and mainstream, have something to offer, although both also suffer from limitations. Their main weakness lies in their exclusivity. My thesis corrects this flaw by assimilating the most persuasive arguments of both schools of thought. It is now time to move on to the case studies, the first of which concerns the Reagan administration's policies towards Nicaragua.

3. The Reagan Presidency: “Restoring” Democracy to Nicaragua

This first case study concerns President Ronald Reagan’s policies towards the Central American state of Nicaragua. The chapter is broken down into six parts. I shall begin by providing an outline of US-Nicaragua relations up to 1981, when Reagan took office, before moving on to consider the foreign policy perspective of the president and his top advisers. This is followed by a long review of US policy towards Nicaragua under Reagan’s stewardship. I devote the fourth part to the question of whether the United States succeeded in advancing democracy in Nicaragua during Reagan’s tenure; this is followed in the fifth section by a discussion of whether democracy promotion was in fact a significant US policy objective in Nicaragua. In the concluding part of the chapter I assess the Reagan administration’s overall record on democracy promotion.

Historical Background: US-Nicaragua Relations

The history of Nicaragua, like that of most of the states in Central America, has been strongly influenced by its interactions with the United States. During the second half of the nineteenth century Nicaragua was of interest to the US as a potential location for a canal linking the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans. While Panama was ultimately chosen as the site of the canal, Nicaragua nonetheless continued to attract the attention of Washington, as evidenced by the fact that the country was under almost permanent military occupation by the United States from 1912 to 1933. However, a rebellion led by the Nicaraguan nationalist Augusto César Sandino, starting in 1927, wore the US down and eventually persuaded policymakers in Washington that the costs of occupation were prohibitive. Sandino had little time to enjoy the fruits of victory, however, for he was murdered in 1934 by the US-trained National Guard (GN), the corrupt and brutal security force Washington left behind to maintain order in Nicaragua. The National Guard went on to become “the personal bodyguard of the Somoza family,” the dictatorial dynasty which ruled Nicaragua for over forty years until the revolution of July 1979.¹³⁶ For a

¹³⁶ Thomas W. Walker, *Nicaragua: Living in the Shadow of the Eagle*, 4th Edition (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2003), p. 27.

succession of American presidents and foreign policy officials the Somozas were handy, if disreputable, clients, who could be counted on to provide many useful services. The second Somoza, Luis Somoza Debayle, consented to the use of Nicaragua as the base for the CIA's disastrous surrogate invasion of Cuba in 1961, and they generally pursued a foreign policy that was "virtually indistinguishable" from that of the US.¹³⁷

By the 1970s, however, the Somoza dynasty was in serious trouble. The third Somoza, Anastasio Jr., also known as "Tachito," pocketed much of the massive inflow of international aid that was sent to Nicaragua in the aftermath of the December 1972 earthquake.¹³⁸ In so doing, Tachito managed to make enemies of many in the Nicaraguan business class, who were being deprived of a share of the action. A bold operation in 1974 by the left-wing revolutionaries of the Sandinista National Liberation Front (FSLN), which involved taking hostage a group of wealthy pro-Somoza figures at a Christmas party, enraged Tachito, who responded by announcing a state of siege and letting the National Guard loose on the population. The GN was merciless in its repression. As William LeoGrande has commented, "For two years, people in the northern provinces were subjected to a systematic campaign of torture, murder, and forced relocation."¹³⁹ This wave of violence did not go down well in Washington, where Jimmy Carter, who had taken over as president in January 1977, responded by suspending economic aid to Nicaragua.

Events began to spiral out of control in 1978. The popular opposition figure and journalist, Pedro Joaquín Chamorro, was murdered in January, precipitating riots, mass strikes and civil uprisings. The Sandinistas exacerbated Somoza's worries by launching assaults on a number of National Guard garrisons around the country. The regime retaliated with an orgy of violence, which included the aerial bombing of recalcitrant cities. In a two-week period in September, the GN killed three thousand Nicaraguans. The Carter administration was left between a rock and a hard place. While American policymakers knew that Tachito might fall, they were nevertheless loath to prod him into

¹³⁷ Ibid, p. 178.

¹³⁸ This outline of events leading up to the 1979 revolution is based on Ibid, pp. 31-40; William M. LeoGrande, *Our Own Backyard: The United States in Central America, 1977-1992* (Chapel Hill & London: The University of North Carolina Press, 1998), pp. 14-27; Karl Bermann, *Under the Big Stick: Nicaragua and the United States Since 1848* (Boston: South End Press, 1986), pp. 253-74.

¹³⁹ LeoGrande, *Our Own Backyard*, pp. 15-16.

stepping down, for his departure might herald the establishment of a government dominated by the guerrillas of the FSLN. As a consequence, the solution initially hit upon by Carter administration officials was to keep Somoza in office until elections scheduled for 1981. The bloodletting of September convinced Washington that this was impossible, however, so Carter fell back on an Organisation of American States (OAS) mediation effort, launched in October, which aimed at convincing Somoza to “turn over power to a transitional government headed by some figure within the regime who was not a member of the Somoza family.”¹⁴⁰ Somoza refused to take the bait, though, and the mediation effort collapsed. Notwithstanding this reversal, the US did not give up on the OAS as an instrument for solving the crisis in Nicaragua. Thus, when the Sandinistas launched their “final offensive” in May 1979 and made rapid gains, US Secretary of State Cyrus Vance called for intervention in the form of an OAS “peacekeeping force.” Unfortunately for Washington, Vance’s gambit “was widely condemned as a transparent effort to justify intervention against the FSLN,” and was summarily rejected by the other members of the OAS.¹⁴¹ As it finally dawned on the Carter administration that a Sandinista victory was inevitable they desperately sought guarantees that the National Guard would remain intact. This demand was refused, leaving Carter with no option but to accept defeat. On July 19, 1979, the insurgents of the FSLN entered the capital, Managua, and the five member Junta of National Reconstruction assumed power.

The Carter administration, although wary of the Sandinistas, did not adopt the overtly confrontational approach to the revolution that would later characterise Reagan’s presidency. In the words of Thomas Walker, Carter’s strategy was to use economic aid to “co-opt the revolution from within.”¹⁴² In late 1979, Carter asked the United States Congress for \$75 million for Nicaragua. Although Congress appropriated the full amount, the aid package came with “grossly insulting conditions,” like the stipulation that “none of the \$75 million was to go to health and education programs in which Cubans were involved.” Additionally, one percent of the aid “was to be spent on publicly advertising

¹⁴⁰ Bermann, *Under the Big Stick*, p. 268.

¹⁴¹ LeoGrande, *Our Own Backyard*, p. 24.

¹⁴² Thomas W. Walker, “Nicaraguan-U.S. Friction: The First Four Years, 1979-1983,” in Kenneth M. Coleman and George C. Herring, eds., *The Central American Crisis: Sources of Conflict and the Failure of U.S. Policy* (Wilmington, DE: Scholarly Resources Inc., 1985), p. 158.

the fact that the United States had given it.”¹⁴³ There were other, more clandestine, ways in which the administration attempted to influence the situation in Nicaragua. Carter authorised the CIA to channel money to so-called “moderates” in Nicaragua, namely the business group the Superior Council of Private Enterprise (COSEP), the newspaper *La Prensa* and two small trade unions.¹⁴⁴ The Carter administration also declined to use “its considerable influence” with the government of Honduras, Nicaragua’s northern neighbour, to bring about the closure of the scattered camps of exiled GN officers that had appeared along the Nicaraguan-Honduran border.¹⁴⁵ Then, in January 1981, Carter froze economic aid to Nicaragua after it was alleged that the Sandinistas were supplying arms to the Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front (FMLN) guerrillas in El Salvador, who were fighting to bring down that country’s government. The decision to suspend economic aid set the stage for the incoming Republican administration’s campaign to bring the Nicaraguan revolution to an abrupt end.

World View of the Reagan Administration

Unapologetic anti-communism was the order of the day once Ronald Reagan replaced Carter as president. Reagan and his senior foreign policy advisers were diehard Cold Warriors, who viewed détente as a strategic error, and who advocated the rollback of the Soviet empire. Their world view was simple: the Soviet Union, its satellites and other “communist” states were dedicated to disruption, terrorism and other forms of aggression and it was up to the United States and its allies - “the Free World” – to resist them. Reagan’s administration became a byword for fervent anti-communism.

Reagan and his advisers deemed the Carter years to have been a disaster for the United States: not only had steadfast American allies like the Shah of Iran and Nicaragua’s Somoza been overthrown, but the US itself bore a large part of the responsibility for such setbacks. According to the Reagan team, Carter had facilitated the ouster of these pro-US leaders by lecturing them on human rights when he should have been backing them unreservedly in their fights against their many opponents. Moreover,

¹⁴³ Walker, *Nicaragua*, pp. 189-90, 199n24.

¹⁴⁴ LeoGrande, *Our Own Backyard*, p. 542.

¹⁴⁵ Walker, “Nicaraguan-U.S. Friction,” p. 158.

Reagan and his colleagues castigated Carter for failing to stand up to the resurgent Soviets, who were accused of causing mayhem in the Third World, most obviously in Afghanistan, which Soviet forces had invaded in December 1979. Reagan lamented that while Carter was in office America “had seemed to accept as inevitable the advance of Soviet expansionism.” The new president was determined that this would change while he was in occupation of the White House and that the United States would recover its assertiveness and stand up to the Soviets. “As the foundation of my foreign policy,” Reagan later wrote, “I decided we had to send as powerful a message as we could to the Russians that we weren’t going to stand by anymore while they armed and financed terrorists and subverted democratic governments.” He wanted “to say some frank things about the Russians, to let them know there were some new fellows in Washington who had a realistic view of what they were up to and weren’t going to let them keep it up.” When the Russians carped about the new president’s hostile remarks Reagan told Secretary of State Alexander Haig to make it plain to the Soviet ambassador in Washington, Anatoly Dobrynin, that there was “a new management in the White House along with a new realism regarding the Russians, and until they behaved themselves, they could expect more of the same.”¹⁴⁶

Alexander Haig’s perspective on international affairs was practically indistinguishable from Reagan’s. He too believed that the 1970s had been calamitous for the United States, exemplified by the defeat in Vietnam and the fall of the Shah. The overthrow of the latter, a “steadfast ally,” had been “humiliating” for the US. These reversals meant that Reagan was taking over at a time when “deep doubts existed about the United States and its capacity to project its power in defense of its own interests.” Haig thought therefore that it was time to send “a plain warning” to the Soviets, America’s main rivals, “that their time of unresisted adventuring in the Third World was over, and that America’s capacity to tolerate the mischief of Moscow’s proxies, Cuba and Libya, had been exceeded.” In Haig’s eyes the Soviets only respected force, so “a credible show of will and strength” was necessary to convince them “to accommodate to

¹⁴⁶ Ronald Reagan, *An American Life* (London: Hutchinson, 1990), pp. 266-7, 269.

the United States and the West.”¹⁴⁷ Another important foreign policy official was UN ambassador Jeane Kirkpatrick, who had impressed the future president with her 1979 article “Dictatorships and Double Standards.” Kirkpatrick condemned Carter’s foreign policy for the same reasons as Haig and Reagan, claiming that his administration had “actively collaborated in the replacement of moderate autocrats friendly to American interests with less friendly autocrats of extremist persuasion.”¹⁴⁸ Like the president and the secretary of state, Kirkpatrick had no time for Carter’s human rights agenda. As William LeoGrande has explained, she believed that “Carter’s policy of promoting human rights and reform in the Third World was not only ineffectual but downright dangerous,” while the “idea that the United States could successfully promote democratic change was little more than an imperial conceit.”¹⁴⁹ In short, if US interests mandated backing unsavoury dictators, so be it. Kirkpatrick gained notoriety in December 1980 when she reacted to the rape and murder of four American nuns by members of El Salvador’s National Guard by stating that “The nuns were not just nuns. The nuns were also political activists...on behalf of the Frente [Revolutionary Democratic Front].”¹⁵⁰ In truth, the nuns had no connection to the Frente, although that would hardly have excused the horrific acts committed against them.

Reagan’s choice as director of the Central Intelligence Agency, William Casey, was another major player in administration foreign policy. Casey was an ardent anti-communist who wanted to use the CIA to lend support to insurgents around the globe that were waging war against communist regimes. According to George Shultz, who succeeded Haig as secretary of state in 1982, Casey was particularly exercised by the crisis in Central America. In his memoirs, Shultz claimed that Casey considered the region “by far the most important foreign policy problem confronting the nation.”¹⁵¹ Nicaragua, where anti-Sandinista armed bands were forming, seemed tailor-made for a CIA covert assistance campaign to unseat a “communist” government close to the southern border of the United States. Casey’s anti-communism was so extreme that he

¹⁴⁷ Alexander M. Haig, Jr., *Caveat: Realism, Reagan, and Foreign Policy* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1984), p. 96.

¹⁴⁸ Quoted in Holly Sklar, *Washington’s War on Nicaragua* (Boston: South End Press, 1988), p. 60.

¹⁴⁹ LeoGrande, *Our Own Backyard*, p. 54.

¹⁵⁰ Quoted in *Ibid.*, p. 63. The Revolutionary Democratic Front (FDR) was the FMLN’s political wing.

¹⁵¹ George P. Shultz, *Turmoil and Triumph: My Years as Secretary of State* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1993), p. 285.

was even disposed to look favourably upon the apartheid regime running South Africa. He saw the South Africans, who were embroiled in various wars in their region, as kindred spirits in the fight against communism and was eager to help their Angolan clients, the murderous rebel movement known as UNITA.¹⁵² Notwithstanding acts of terrorism by UNITA that included bombing hotels and the shooting down of civilian airliners, other Reagan administration officials also expressed admiration for the group and its leader, Jonas Savimbi. George Shultz spoke of UNITA's "courageous stand against Soviet aggression," while Jeane Kirkpatrick lauded Jonas Savimbi as "one of the few authentic heroes of our times."¹⁵³

Casey's obsession with Central America was shared by other figures in the administration, and was symptomatic of their worldview. The likes of Reagan and Haig saw the hand of the USSR and its allies in all of the world's crises, and Central America was no exception. In his memoirs, Haig wrote that the civil war in El Salvador was "a symptom of dangerous conditions in the Americas – Cuban adventurism, Soviet strategic ambition."¹⁵⁴ According to Haig, Reagan was "sympathetic" to his reading of the crisis and "understood the problem. He knew that Moscow and Havana were behind the troubles in Central America."¹⁵⁵ Reagan himself wrote after leaving office that "the Soviets and Fidel Castro were targeting all of Central America for a Communist takeover. El Salvador and Nicaragua were only a down payment. Honduras, Guatemala, and Costa Rica were next, and then would come Mexico."¹⁵⁶ This interpretation of the turmoil in Central America recalled the "domino theory" of previous US policymakers. When questioned whether this was indeed his view by the House Foreign Affairs Committee in March 1981, Haig said he preferred to call it "a hit list...for the ultimate takeover of Central America."¹⁵⁷ Given the region's proximity to the United States, and the fact that US supremacy had long been unchallenged in its "backyard," it was practically inevitable

¹⁵² Bob Woodward, *Veil: The Secret Wars of the CIA, 1981-1987* (London: Headline, 1988), pp. 320-1.

¹⁵³ The quote by Kirkpatrick is in Noam Chomsky, *Pirates and Emperors: International Terrorism in the Real World* (London: Pluto, 2002), p. 69; Shultz is quoted in James M. Scott, *Deciding to Intervene: The Reagan Doctrine and American Foreign Policy* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1996), p. 137.

¹⁵⁴ Haig, *Caveat*, p. 125.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 129.

¹⁵⁶ Reagan, *An American Life*, pp. 238-9.

¹⁵⁷ Quoted in Sklar, *Washington's War on Nicaragua*, p. 72.

that it would be here that the Reagan administration would make the “credible show of will and strength” alluded to by Alexander Haig.

George Shultz, who replaced the combative Haig in mid-1982, was often looked upon as the “moderate” in Reagan’s foreign policy team. Yet Shultz brought to Washington a very similar mind-set to the president and his predecessor as secretary of state. Like Haig and Reagan, Shultz believed that the Soviets were threatening stability around the world and that America was on the back foot. He later summed up the situation as he entered office in stark terms: “Moscow’s military might grew yearly. The nuclear arms race proceeded unharnessed. The Soviet army’s invading forces were grinding through Afghan villages. So much for détente.”¹⁵⁸ Shultz believed that Washington had to put the Soviets back in their place. “The Soviets,” he commented, “had to be made to realize that they could not succeed with aggression, nor could they win an arms race.” What was needed was “will and resolve” on the part of the US, in order “to contain Soviet aggression and challenge its ideology.”¹⁵⁹ Shultz, like the others, reckoned the Soviets were to blame for the upheavals in Central America. He considered the level of Soviet and Cuban influence in the region to be “alarming” and raised the spectre of the Soviets gaining a foothold in Nicaragua or El Salvador: “If the Soviets consolidated a Communist regime on the mainland of the Americas, they could tie us down and preoccupy us right on our southern border in the hope that we would not attend adequately to Soviet challenges in the farther reaches of the world.” And as Shultz put it, “anything rotten [in Central America] could infect the United States.”¹⁶⁰

US Policy towards Nicaragua under President Reagan

The Contras

There were very clear signs during Reagan’s first months in office that the US was preparing to confront the Sandinistas. In February, the State Department released a white paper entitled “Communist Interference in El Salvador,” which pinpointed

¹⁵⁸ Shultz, *Turmoil and Triumph*, p. 4.

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 6, 11.

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 7, 285.

Nicaragua as one of the states guilty of assisting the Salvadorian rebels. Economic aid to Nicaragua, which had been frozen by Carter in January, was terminated outright in April. Most significantly of all, in March 1981 Reagan secretly authorised a plan devised by CIA Director Casey to expand covert CIA operations in Central America. The main purpose was to bolster the floundering government of José Napoleón Duarte in El Salvador, an objective which had implications for Nicaragua, for Casey's scheme envisioned the creation of a paramilitary force that would curb the flow of arms allegedly moving from Nicaragua and Honduras into El Salvador. The plan also provided for continuation of the covert funding of the aforementioned "moderates" in Nicaragua. A presidential finding outlining the plan in vague terms was approved by the congressional intelligence committees.¹⁶¹

The March finding laid the groundwork for the policy towards Nicaragua that would be pursued throughout Reagan's presidency. Paradoxical as it might sound, establishing a paramilitary body to harass the Sandinistas became the administration's principal instrument for promoting democracy in Nicaragua. In December Casey was obliged to return to the intelligence committees to present another presidential finding, which this time focused entirely on Nicaragua. Casey explained to the committee members that his scheme was aimed at clamping down on the arms pipeline that the administration claimed was running from Nicaragua to the FMLN. The committees were told that the CIA proposed to employ a paramilitary force of no more than five hundred Nicaraguan exiles to accomplish this, and that the CIA's partners in this enterprise, the Argentine military dictatorship, had already set the ball rolling. Casey's message was that the CIA was "buying in" to an operation that was already far advanced.¹⁶² He assured the congressmen that the paramilitaries would not hit economic targets as part of their arms interception efforts.¹⁶³ What the committees were not aware of was that Reagan had signed National Security Decision Directive 17 (NSDD 17) the month before, which

¹⁶¹ LeoGrande, *Our Own Backyard*, pp. 114-5.

¹⁶² Christopher Dickey, *With the Contras: A Reporter in the Wilds of Nicaragua* (London: Faber and Faber, 1986), p. 112.

¹⁶³ Peter Kornbluh, "The Covert War," in Thomas W. Walker, ed., *Reagan versus the Sandinistas: The Undeclared War on Nicaragua* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1987), p. 24.

authorised “a much broader set of covert operations than was indicated in the Finding.”¹⁶⁴ Included within the scope of this expanded operation were “political and paramilitary operations against the Cuban presence and the Cuban-Sandinista support structure in Nicaragua,” along with an effort to create “popular support...for an opposition front that would be nationalistic, anti-Cuban and anti-Somoza.”¹⁶⁵

The arrangement with Argentina was for the US to put up the money while the Argentines provided the training and managed paramilitary operations. The third country involved in the anti-Sandinista campaign was Honduras, which was to provide the base for the force of Nicaraguan counter-revolutionaries, known more commonly as “contras.” The Argentines were already training Nicaraguan exiles in Buenos Aires and Honduras and had also provided their clients with hard cash, with ex-National Guardsman Enrique Bermúdez, the leader of a nascent rebel group called the 15th of September Legion and a man who would later serve as a senior contra commander, a notable recipient.¹⁶⁶ The Argentines, along with the CIA, leaned on Bermúdez’s group and another faction to merge their organisations, the upshot of which was the formation of the Nicaraguan Democratic Forces (FDN) in August 1981.¹⁶⁷ Edgar Chamorro, who served on the FDN’s political directorate, a body put together by the CIA, from 1982 to 1984, described the abject state of the exile groups prior to the merger in written testimony for the World Court. He declared that “the ex-national guardsmen were divided into several small bands operating along the Nicaragua-Honduras border...The bands were poorly armed and equipped, and thoroughly disorganized. They were not an effective military force and represented no more than a minor irritant to the Nicaraguan government.”¹⁶⁸ The relationship between the US and Argentina was to disintegrate following Argentina’s ill-fated invasion of the Falkland Islands in 1982, and the Argentines ultimately ended their involvement with the contras in 1984.

¹⁶⁴ Peter Kornbluh and Malcolm Byrne, eds., *The Iran-Contra Scandal: The Declassified History* (New York: The New Press, 1993), p. 1.

¹⁶⁵ These quotes, from the NSDD 17 planning papers, are in Kornbluh and Byrne., *The Iran-Contra Scandal*, p. 1.

¹⁶⁶ Roy Gutman, *Banana Diplomacy: The Making of American Policy in Nicaragua, 1981-1987* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1988), p. 53.

¹⁶⁷ Edgar Chamorro, “World Court Affidavit,” in Peter Rosset and John Vandermeer, eds., *Nicaragua: Unfinished Revolution* (New York: Grove Press, 1986), p. 237; Dickey, *With the Contras*, p. 119.

¹⁶⁸ Chamorro, “World Court Affidavit,” p. 237.

President Reagan would later eulogise the contras as “freedom fighters struggling to bring democracy to their country,” a strange description in light of their origins as protégés of the Argentine military junta.¹⁶⁹ The neo-fascist military rulers of Argentina had after all waged a ruthless war on home-grown enemies after taking power in 1976, although these opponents were mostly of the unarmed variety: students, teachers, journalists, trade unionists and other suspected left-wingers. Up to 30,000 people are believed to have been killed by the junta.¹⁷⁰ However, the Reagan administration was not ill-disposed towards the Argentine generals. “A few officials in the Reagan administration displayed a certain admiration for the efficiency with which the Argentine military had solved the problem of leftist insurgency,” notes William LeoGrande.¹⁷¹ UN ambassador Jeane Kirkpatrick was a notable member of this group, along with the president himself. Reagan had given a radio broadcast in August 1979 in which he declared that “Argentina is at peace, the terrorist threat nearly eliminated.” He accepted that “the process of bringing stability to a terrorized nation” had resulted in some being “caught in the crossfire, among them a few innocents,” but his reading of the situation was that “the average Argentine-in-the-street” would probably be “pleased, not seething, about the way things are going.”¹⁷² It should be noted that when Reagan spoke of “the terrorist threat,” he was not referring to the terrorism of the junta, but that of the left-wing rebels who had fought in the 1970s. The contras themselves seem to have had fewer illusions about the nature of their Argentine masters. One of the more prominent contra civilians, Aristides Sánchez, once remarked that “a lot of them were Nazis.”¹⁷³

Another important, and unpleasant, figure in the contra war was the Honduran Gustavo Álvarez, a man who once said that “Everything you do to destroy a Marxist regime is moral.”¹⁷⁴ Álvarez was a graduate of the Argentine military academy and he shared their anti-communist fervour. While he was head of the public security forces,

¹⁶⁹ Ronald Reagan, “Address to the Nation on the Situation in Nicaragua,” 16 March 1986, in *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: Ronald Reagan, 1986, Book 1* (Washington, D.C.: United States Government Printing Office, 1988), p. 353.

¹⁷⁰ Ian Black, “Thirty Years on Argentina still tries to come to terms with its ‘dirty war,’” *The Guardian*, 22 March 2006.

¹⁷¹ LeoGrande, *Our Own Backyard*, p. 291.

¹⁷² Quoted in Sklar, *Washington’s War on Nicaragua*, p. 61.

¹⁷³ Quoted in Walter LaFeber, *Inevitable Revolutions: The United States in Central America*, 2nd Edition (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1993), p. 283.

¹⁷⁴ Quoted in Dickey, *With the Contras*, p. 115.

Hondurans began to disappear, a disturbing trend that increased when Álvarez took control of the military in early 1982. Several hundred people were killed by the Honduran security forces in the early 1980s.¹⁷⁵ Álvarez was, like the Argentines, a valued ally of the US in the war against the Sandinistas. US Ambassador to Honduras John Negroponte praised Álvarez as “a model professional,”¹⁷⁶ and it was pressure from the CIA that induced Honduran President Roberto Suazo to nominate him as armed forces chief in 1982.¹⁷⁷ He was the key Honduran in the contra campaign: as long as Álvarez occupied a senior position in the army, Washington could be assured of Honduras’ support for the war.

The congressional intelligence committees had signed up to the Reagan administration’s covert initiative for Nicaragua in the belief that they were approving the creation of a force of 500 paramilitaries who would be intercepting arms travelling between Nicaragua and El Salvador. They soon deduced that William Casey hadn’t told them the whole story. The size of the force supposedly engaged in arms interdiction had shot up far above its supposed ceiling, with contra numbers reaching 4,000 just a year after NSDD 17.¹⁷⁸ In addition, the arms interception rationale was looking decidedly shaky. In December 1982, the FDN’s military leader, Enrique Bermúdez, publicly disavowed the goal of seizing weapons: “It is not acceptable to us to carry out missions to interdict Cuban and Russian supply lines to El Salvador. We are Nicaraguans and our objective is to overthrow the Communists.”¹⁷⁹ Such statements were unhelpful, as was “the fact that as of late 1983 no arms whatsoever had been intercepted.”¹⁸⁰ Worse still, the US government’s own intelligence agencies produced reports that directly contradicted the administration’s claims about the contra program. A July 1982 report by the Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA) listed various actions carried out by the contras, including the “Sabotage of highway bridges and attempted destruction of fuel tanks,” “the assassination of minor government officials and a Cuban adviser,” “attacks against small military patrols,” and the “Burning of a customs warehouse, buildings belonging to

¹⁷⁵ Ibid, pp. 115-6; LeoGrande, *Our Own Backyard*, pp. 299, 656 n.69.

¹⁷⁶ Quoted in LeoGrande, *Our Own Backyard*, p. 393.

¹⁷⁷ Ibid, pp. 298-9.

¹⁷⁸ Kornbluh, “The Covert War,” p. 26

¹⁷⁹ Quoted in Walker, “Nicaraguan-U.S. Friction,” p. 169.

¹⁸⁰ Ibid, p. 169.

the Ministry of Construction, and crops.”¹⁸¹ These actions were clearly at odds with the assurance Casey had given to the intelligence committees that the contras would not attack economic targets, and obviously had nothing to do with intercepting arms.

The facts mentioned above made Democrats in the House of Representatives suspicious of Reagan administration claims that the contras were doing no more than capturing weapons moving from Nicaragua to El Salvador. Their response was the first “Boland Amendment” of December 1982, named for its sponsor, Representative Edward Boland, which forbade the US government from providing military support to any group seeking to overthrow the Sandinistas or provoke a conflict between Honduras and Nicaragua.¹⁸² The idea was to limit the operation to arms interdiction, a curious concept given the absence of any evidence that arms were in fact going from Nicaragua to El Salvador. It was passed 411-0 by the House, but would only apply for a year, and proved to be an ineffectual measure. As long as the Reagan administration denied that the war was aimed at unseating the Sandinistas and affirmed the arms interdiction rationale, support for the contras could, and did, continue.

The CIA instructed the new FDN political directorate, which it had hastily assembled in December 1982, to propagate the arms interdiction myth. Edgar Chamorro, who was one of the seven individuals hand-picked by the Agency to serve on the directorate, testified to the World Court that after the Boland Amendment became law in December 1982, “the CIA instructed us that, if asked, we should say that our objective was to interdict arms supposedly being smuggled from Nicaragua to El Salvador.” According to Chamorro, however, both the FDN and the CIA knew this was a fraud. He explained that “our goal, and that of the CIA as well (as we were repeatedly assured in private), was to overthrow the government of Nicaragua...It was never our objective to stop the supposed flow of arms, of which we never saw any evidence in the first place.” As for the “public statements by United States government officials about the arms flow,” he was told by the CIA that these “were necessary to maintain the support of the Congress and should not be taken seriously by us.”¹⁸³

¹⁸¹ The DIA report is quoted in Kornbluh, “The Covert War,” p. 25.

¹⁸² The Boland Amendment is quoted in Kornbluh and Byrne, *The Iran-Contra Scandal*, p. 2.

¹⁸³ Chamorro, “World Court Affidavit,” p. 240.

FDN offensives aimed at capturing an area of “liberated” territory in 1982 and 1983 ended in failure. In fact, the contras proved to be an inept fighting force, and they fell back on the easier option of terrorising civilians. As Peter Kornbluh has put it, “The contras proved adept at vanquishing undefended villages and killing unarmed civilians, but they were incapable of establishing themselves as a viable guerrilla force.”¹⁸⁴ Notwithstanding the high-flown words of President Reagan, the CIA’s proxies were not “freedom fighters” but rather ruthless killers, whose odd brand of patriotism allowed for the deliberate murder of Nicaraguan non-combatants. The respected human rights organisation Americas Watch painted a grim picture of the rebels, concluding in a report published in 1985 that “contra forces have systematically violated the applicable laws of war throughout the conflict. They have attacked civilians indiscriminately; they have tortured and mutilated prisoners; they have murdered those placed hors de combat by their wounds...and they have committed outrages against personal dignity.”¹⁸⁵ With regard to the FDN, Americas Watch accused them of making “deliberate use of terror tactics to disrupt the coffee harvest.” Destroying the coffee crop had been the FDN’s “primary objective” from late 1984; the other contra groups were also reproached for hitting economic targets. Americas Watch noted that the “FDN has been responsible for a variety of attacks on unarmed civilians, including kidnappings and murders, and has attacked humanitarian vehicles clearly marked as such.” There was also “credible testimony” that the FDN had “finished off” wounded adversaries. One incident cited in the report involved an FDN raid on a state farm in the department of Jinotega in November 1982. After overcoming resistance from a score of armed civilians, the FDN proceeded to “kill the wounded defenders with their bayonet knives. In all, 14 armed civilians died there.”¹⁸⁶

The FDN’s military hierarchy was packed with former members of Somoza’s despised National Guard. Its military chief, the aforementioned Enrique Bermúdez, was a

¹⁸⁴ Kornbluh, “The Covert War,” p. 28.

¹⁸⁵ Americas Watch, *Violations of the Laws of War by Both Sides in Nicaragua, 1981-1985* (New York: Americas Watch, 1985), p. 6.

¹⁸⁶ *Ibid*, pp. 5, 39-41. Americas Watch also condemned the Sandinistas for having committed “major abuses...in December 1981 when its forces massacred 14 to 17 Miskitos at Leimus, and in 1982 when its forces massacred some 7 Miskitos at Walpa Siksa and when they caused some 70 Miskitos to disappear.” *Ibid*, p. 4. The Miskito Indians lived in the remote north-eastern part of the country, and many were initially very hostile to the Sandinista Revolution.

GN veteran who had served as Somoza's military attaché in Washington prior to the dictator's downfall.¹⁸⁷ As for the contra civilians, the chairman of the FDN political directorate, Adolfo Calero, was a long-standing CIA asset and a defender of attacks on civilian targets. Calero once declared that "There is no line at all, not even a fine line, between a civilian farm owned by the government and a Sandinista military outpost."¹⁸⁸ Internal documents reveal that US officials themselves were privately unimpressed with their underlings. One such doubter was Robert Owen, who served as Oliver North's liaison with the contras after North became the principal US official involved in the contra operation. According to Owen, Calero exercised total control over the other civilians. He told North that Calero was "the strong man and the only one who counts in the FDN; what he says is law." He described Calero not as an authentic nationalist but as "a creation of the USG [United States Government]." As for those "who he keeps around him," "they are liars and greed and power motivated. They are not the people to rebuild a new Nicaragua. In fact, the FDN has done a good job of keeping competent people out of the organization."¹⁸⁹

Edgar Chamorro, who supervised FDN public relations and served on the group's political directorate, was candid about the contras' deplorable human rights record. Part of his job involved attempting "to improve the image of the FDN forces," a task he considered "challenging," for "it was standard FDN practice to kill prisoners and suspected Sandinista collaborators." According to Chamorro, the CIA "did not discourage such tactics" and "the agency severely criticized me when I admitted to the press that the FDN had regularly kidnapped and executed agrarian reform workers and civilians."¹⁹⁰ Chamorro also revealed that while some Nicaraguans signed up to join the FDN of their own volition, many others "were recruited forcibly." The recruitment process went like this: "FDN units would arrive at an undefended village, assemble all the residents in the town square and then proceed to kill – in full view of the others – all persons suspected of working for the Nicaraguan government or the FSLN...In this

¹⁸⁷ Gutman, *Banana Diplomacy*, p. 40.

¹⁸⁸ Quoted in Noam Chomsky, *Turning the Tide: U.S. Intervention in Central America and the Struggle for Peace* (Boston: South End Press, 1985), p. 11.

¹⁸⁹ TC (Robert Owen), Memorandum to BG (Oliver North), "Overall Perspective," March 17, 1986, in Kornbluh and Byrne, *The Iran-Contra Scandal*, pp. 53-4.

¹⁹⁰ Chamorro, "World Court Affidavit," p. 244.

atmosphere, it was not difficult to persuade those able-bodied men left alive to return with the FDN units to their base camps in Honduras and enlist in the force.” This, according to Chamorro, “was, unfortunately, a widespread practice that accounted for many recruits.”¹⁹¹

In light of the above, it is surprising that the contras were portrayed as a democratic movement and the main means by which the United States planned to bring democracy to Nicaragua. The esteem in which the contras were held by the administration is evident from Reagan’s description of them as “our brothers” and “the moral equal of our Founding Fathers and the brave men and women of the French Resistance.”¹⁹² Interestingly, the president claimed that the US was not just helping the contras to bring democracy to Nicaragua, but to “restore” democracy there. This was an odd choice of words, for it implied that what existed before the Sandinistas took power, namely the dictatorial Somoza dynasty, was a democracy. He told two journalists from the *New York Times* that the US had “made it plain to Nicaragua” that American support for the contras would cease “when they keep their promise and *restore* a democratic rule and have elections”(my italics).¹⁹³ The idea of using the contras as a tool for bringing democracy to Nicaragua was also underlined by Secretary of State George Shultz. In his memoirs, Shultz wrote that the rebels “were ready to put military pressure on the regime in Managua and hoped to force it at least to hold honest elections.” They constituted “a source of pressure to further our true objectives: democracy in Nicaragua and peace in Central America,” he added.¹⁹⁴ And yet there can be no doubt that administration officials were aware that the contras were responsible for appalling atrocities. The July 1982 DIA briefing revealed as much, and there were countless reports in the media and by human rights groups detailing abuses.

The contras’ military inadequacies necessitated a heightened role for the CIA and in mid-1983 the Agency decided to attack Nicaragua’s oil infrastructure. To carry out the

¹⁹¹ Ibid, p. 238.

¹⁹² Ronald Reagan, “Remarks at the Annual Dinner of the Conservative Political Action Conference,” 1 March 1985, in *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: Ronald Reagan, 1985, Book 1* (Washington, D.C.: United States Government Printing Office, 1987), pp. 228-9.

¹⁹³ Ronald Reagan, “Interview with Steven R. Weisman and Francis X. Clines of the New York Times on Foreign and Domestic Issues,” 28 March 1984, in *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: Ronald Reagan, 1984, Book 1* (Washington, D.C.: United States Government Printing Office, 1986), p. 434.

¹⁹⁴ Shultz, *Turmoil and Triumph*, pp. 289, 961.

sabotage of Nicaragua's oil facilities, the CIA used commandos known as UCLAs (Unilaterally Controlled Latino Assets). UCLAs blew up the oil pipeline at Puerto Sandino in September and again in October. They also destroyed five oil storage tanks in the port city of Corinto, an action that forced the evacuation of 25,000 residents.¹⁹⁵ Not content with these acts of destruction, Reagan approved in December a plan to mine Nicaragua's harbours.¹⁹⁶ In the first three months of 1984, UCLAs planted mines the harbours of Nicaragua's main ports, the intention of which was "to severely disrupt the flow of shipping essential to Nicaraguan trade during the peak export period," NSC staffers Oliver North and Constantine Menges told their boss, National Security Adviser Robert McFarlane.¹⁹⁷ As per instructions, the FDN and another contra organisation, the Costa Rica-based Democratic Revolutionary Alliance (ARDE), duly claimed responsibility for the minings.¹⁹⁸ The decision to lay the mines backfired badly, however. As word of the CIA's role leaked, the administration was condemned in Congress. According to the Intelligence Oversight Act of 1980, it was Casey's responsibility to keep the intelligence committees informed about planned CIA actions, but he neglected to inform the House committee about the mining until January 31, roughly four weeks after the first mines were laid. Casey waited until March, some two months after the operation started, before apprising the Senate committee and even then he was hardly forthcoming, failing as he did to mention that the mines had been placed by CIA agents.¹⁹⁹

The Reagan administration's duplicity had caused a great amount of anger in Congress, even before the mining controversy. As noted above, the House had tried in December 1982 to restrict the contra war to its stated objective of arms interdiction. During 1983, numerous senators and representatives came to the accurate conclusion that the administration was deceiving them, and that the contras were doing a lot more than intercepting arms, if indeed they were doing that at all. In January 1983, Senator Patrick Leahy, a Democrat, travelled to Central America on behalf of the Senate Intelligence

¹⁹⁵ Kornbluh, "The Covert War," p. 29.

¹⁹⁶ Ibid, p. 30.

¹⁹⁷ Oliver North and Constantine Menges, Memorandum for Robert McFarlane, "Special Activities in Nicaragua," 2 March 1984, in Kornbluh and Byrne, *The Iran-Contra Scandal*, p. 18.

¹⁹⁸ Sklar, *Washington's War on Nicaragua*, pp. 165-6.

¹⁹⁹ Theodore Draper, *A Very Thin Line: The Iran-Contra Affairs* (New York: Touchstone, 1991), pp. 20-1.

Committee. The contras' Honduran cheerleader, General Álvarez, told Leahy that "We're going to be in Managua by Christmas," while the CIA's Ray Doty, who was running the contra operation on the ground, informed the senator that "If [the Sandinistas] fall of their own weight, we don't care."²⁰⁰ Leahy "returned to Washington convinced that the contra operation violated the spirit if not the letter of the Boland amendment."²⁰¹ Other members of Congress shared Leahy's view, and in July the House voted to terminate the contra aid program; during the debate, Boland described the CIA's activities in Nicaragua as "illegal." Boland's assessment was shared by Daniel Patrick Moynihan, the ranking Democrat on the Senate Intelligence Committee, who asserted that there was "evidence every night on television" that the administration was breaking the law.²⁰² The Senate was unwilling to shut off aid, however, forcing House Democrats to agree to a compromise whereby the administration would get US\$24 million for its war in Nicaragua, a significantly smaller figure than hoped for by the president and his advisers.²⁰³

To mollify his critics in Congress, Reagan signed a new presidential finding in September 1983. Although it was more detailed than the finding presented to the intelligence committees in December 1981, the listed objectives were mostly the same: arms interdiction, pressuring the Sandinistas to negotiate, inducing Cuba and the Sandinistas to stop supporting regional insurgencies. However, the new finding differed from its predecessor by making democracy in Nicaragua an official policy goal. It stated that US aid to the contras would cease "at such time as it is verified that...the Government of Nicaragua is demonstrating a commitment to provide... nondiscriminatory participation in the Nicaraguan political process by all Nicaraguans."²⁰⁴ Although the new finding was sufficient to ensure that Congress appropriated the \$24 million, it by no means guaranteed long-term congressional support. For in the wake of the revelations about CIA involvement in the mining of Nicaragua's harbours, congressional backing for the contras atrophied. The House again voted down

²⁰⁰ Álvarez and Doty are quoted in Gutman, *Banana Diplomacy*, p. 153.

²⁰¹ LeoGrande, *Our Own Backyard*, p. 311.

²⁰² The quotes from Boland and Moynihan are in *Ibid*, pp. 320, 322.

²⁰³ *Ibid*, p. 324.

²⁰⁴ Ronald Reagan, "Presidential Finding on Covert Operations in Nicaragua," September 19, 1983, in Kornbluh and Byrne, *The Iran-Contra Scandal*, pp. 13-15.

contra aid in May 1984 and the Senate this time did not come to the administration's rescue. Under the terms of the second Boland Amendment, which was signed into law in October 1984, no funds available to the US government could be used to provide support to any group conducting military or paramilitary operations in Nicaragua, including the contras. Thus, as Boland himself said, the bill "clearly ends U.S. support for the war in Nicaragua."²⁰⁵ Or at least it should have.

The 1984 Elections

The Reagan administration demonised the Sandinistas for their supposed refusal to hold elections, which was put forward as firm evidence of Nicaragua's totalitarian character. US officials often justified their backing of the contras by arguing that they were only trying to pressure the Sandinistas into "restoring" democracy, and democracy couldn't exist without the ballot box. In March 1984, Reagan said that the US would rein in the contras if the Sandinistas would only "keep their promise and restore a democratic rule and have elections." George Shultz likewise asserted that the insurgents were fighting the Nicaraguan government "to force it at least to hold honest elections." The charge that the FSLN would not submit itself to electoral competition was a staple of the president's speeches. In a showpiece address on US policy in Central America that was shown live on American TV in May 1984, he berated the Sandinistas for their "outright refusal to hold genuine elections, coupled with the continual promise to do so."²⁰⁶ The problem confronting the Reagan administration, however, was that the Sandinistas had in fact been saying for years that they intended for such a contest to eventually take place. As Andrew Reding has observed, "the Nicaraguan junta never wavered from plans to hold national elections," plans that had been spelled out as early as 1979, with 1985 set as the provisional date for the contest. To show that they were serious, the Nicaraguan legislature spent two years discussing a Law of Political Parties which, when passed in August 1983, enshrined the right to form political parties of any hue, "apart from a prohibition on advocating the return of a Somoza-style dictatorship," and which

²⁰⁵ Quoted in *Ibid*, p. 24.

²⁰⁶ Ronald Reagan, "Address to the Nation on United States Policy in Central America," 9 May 1984, in *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: Ronald Reagan, 1984, Book 1*, p. 661.

“recognized the right of all such parties to contend for power.” Special commissions were sent to the US, Europe and Latin America for advice on electoral laws, and the information they gathered was used to write the Electoral Law passed in March 1984.²⁰⁷ The Reagan administration’s assertion that the Sandinistas were adamantly opposed to the holding of elections was thus clearly unfounded.

As the date of the ballot, which was brought forward to November 1984, approached, US officials resorted to disparaging the upcoming contest. President Reagan went on the offensive very early on, telling the *New York Times* in March that “there isn’t anything yet to indicate that that election will be anything but the kind of rubberstamp that we see in any totalitarian government.”²⁰⁸ His disdain for the Nicaraguan elections was again in evidence in July when he gave a speech in which he warned the Sandinistas that “No person committed to democracy will be taken in by a Soviet-style sham.”²⁰⁹ To complement this strategy of publicly deriding the approaching elections, the United States set about building up the Coordinadora Democrática (Democratic Coordinator), a pro-US and pro-contra conservative opposition group, which administration officials planned to depict as the *only* opposition in Nicaragua. Having talked up the Coordinadora, the US would then convince them to nobly refuse to participate, thereby discrediting the contest. This would not be difficult, for the leading figures in the Coordinadora were themselves unwilling to compete. Portraying the Coordinadora as a significant political force was, however, extremely disingenuous. It consisted of the business confederation COSEP, four political parties, one of which was not even legally registered, and two tiny trade unions that encompassed a mere 2% of organised Nicaraguan workers.²¹⁰ According to Dennis Gilbert, the four political parties were “weak, some existing only on paper, others compromised by their performance under the old regime.” The conclusion of the US-based Latin American Studies Association (LASA), which sent observers to

²⁰⁷ Andrew A. Reding, “The Evolution of Governmental Institutions,” in Thomas W. Walker, ed., *Revolution and Counterrevolution in Nicaragua* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1991), pp. 24-5.

²⁰⁸ Reagan, “Interview with Steven R. Weisman and Francis X. Clines of the New York Times on Foreign and Domestic Issues,” p. 434.

²⁰⁹ Quoted in Gutman, *Banana Diplomacy*, p. 239.

²¹⁰ Sklar, *Washington’s War on Nicaragua*, p. 194; LeoGrande, *Our Own Backyard*, p. 543; Latin American Studies Association (LASA), “The Electoral Process in Nicaragua: Domestic Sources and International Influences,” in Rosset and Vandermeer, *Nicaragua: Unfinished Revolution*, p. 79.

the Nicaraguan elections, was that “there was never any credible evidence that...the Coordinadora had a broad popular following in Nicaragua.”²¹¹

In 1984 Arturo Cruz was barely known in Nicaragua, due to the fact that he had spent many years in the United States. He had at one time been a part of the Sandinista government, but he quickly became disenchanted and headed back to the US. Cruz, who was on the CIA payroll,²¹² signed on as the Coordinadora’s candidate in July 1984. He only arrived in Nicaragua on July 22, and promptly endorsed the Coordinadora’s nine demands for participation in the elections, a few of which were considered “killers” by US Assistant Secretary of State for Inter-American Affairs Craig Johnstone.²¹³ Johnstone’s belief that the nine points were sure to be rejected by the Sandinistas was shared by a senior US diplomat in Central America who was interviewed by LASA; his view was that “the content of that statement showed that they had already decided not to participate. These were things that the Sandinistas would never accept.”²¹⁴ It was not at all surprising that the Sandinistas rejected these conditions, for they were not merely aimed at ensuring a fair vote but also included demands for “major changes in the political system and reorientation of the FSLN government’s policies, *before* the elections”(italics in original).²¹⁵ One of the Coordinadora’s most unrealistic demands was that the government open negotiations with the contras. Just days after his arrival, Cruz withdrew from the presidential race, while opting to carry on campaigning nonetheless. However, after a series of rallies that witnessed clashes between pro-Sandinista mobs and Cruz loyalists, Cruz “returned to Washington, and for five weeks suspended his campaign.”²¹⁶ When he returned to Nicaragua it was to conduct fruitless eleventh-hour negotiations with high-level Sandinista officials on the Coordinadora’s participation, but these talks ended in October in mutual recrimination.

²¹¹ Dennis Gilbert, *Sandinistas: The Party and the Revolution* (New York and Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1988), p. 122; LASA, “The Electoral Process in Nicaragua,” p. 104.

²¹² Cruz was seen by some US officials as a lackey of the CIA. In an internal communiqué from Oliver North to Robert McFarlane in February 1985 on the subject of possibly taking Cruz off the CIA payroll, North remarked that CIA Director “Casey decided that they would prefer to keep him. Their rationale is based on being able to *control* [Cruz] because he is, as you know, the key to our [deleted] program” (my italics). Quoted in Kornbluh, “The U.S. Role in the Counterrevolution,” p. 334.

²¹³ LASA, “The Electoral Process in Nicaragua,” p. 86; Johnstone is quoted in Gutman, *Banana Diplomacy*, p. 238.

²¹⁴ Quoted in LASA, “The Electoral Process in Nicaragua,” p. 87.

²¹⁵ LASA, “The Electoral Process in Nicaragua,” p. 86.

²¹⁶ Gutman, *Banana Diplomacy*, p. 243.

The evidence suggests that the Reagan administration had no intention of allowing Cruz to go forward and face almost certain defeat. This was made clear by a US official who told the *New York Times* in October that “the administration never contemplated letting Cruz stay in the race, because then the Sandinistas could justifiably claim that the elections were legitimate, making it much harder for the United States to oppose the Nicaraguan Government.”²¹⁷ Still, according to Roy Gutman, there were some US policymakers who wanted Cruz to participate, albeit with reservations, but they were fighting a losing battle within the administration. Craig Johnstone and the State Department apparently thought “Cruz should run if he could get fair conditions.” Administration “hard-liners” like William Casey, Constantine Menges and Oliver North had no time for elections of any sort, though, believing that “force was the only way to bring about democracy in Nicaragua...They supported Cruz in the expectation he would not participate in the elections, thereby discrediting them.”²¹⁸

The administration’s strategy for derailing the elections also included pressuring the six non-Sandinista political parties that had registered to compete into withdrawing. Virgilio Godoy, the presidential candidate of the Independent Liberal Party (PLI), was visited repeatedly by US officials. He withdrew from the contest on October 21, a day after receiving US Ambassador to Nicaragua Harry Berghold at his house. Although Godoy denied that his decision had been influenced by the hostility of the United States towards the elections, he did say that Berghold had told him that “this was not the best time to hold elections.” A friend of Godoy’s told LASA that “I think he was subject to terrible pressure from the Embassy.”²¹⁹ The PLI split into abstentionist and non-abstentionist factions, with the latter group competing on November 4. Charges of US foul play were also made by Clemente Guido, the presidential candidate of the Democratic Conservative Party (PCD), who claimed that the US embassy had bribed his campaign manager to bow out of the contest. Guido himself chose to remain in the race.²²⁰ US efforts to disrupt the elections came in other forms as well. To deprive the vote of international legitimacy, the State Department leaned on other countries not to

²¹⁷ Quoted in Reding, “The Evolution of Governmental Institutions,” p. 27.

²¹⁸ Gutman, *Banana Diplomacy*, pp. 235, 237.

²¹⁹ LASA, “The Electoral Process in Nicaragua,” p. 105.

²²⁰ *Ibid*, p. 106.

send observers to monitor the balloting, while the US military “during the week before the election began daily supersonic overflights of Nicaragua,” causing “loud sonic booms across much of the national territory and a sense of near panic among the population.”²²¹

When election day arrived, Reagan dismissed it as “a phony,” while George Shultz’s spokesman called it “The Sandinista electoral farce.”²²² The reality, however, was rather different. As Andrew Reding has remarked, in this “farce” Nicaraguans “were offered a range of choices as broad as those available in Western Europe, ranging from the Far Left to the PCD, whose platform coincided in many respects with that of the CDN [the Coordinadora], and some of whose candidates openly expressed sympathy for the armed counterrevolution.”²²³ Many voters did indeed cast ballots for parties other than the FSLN. The Sandinistas won 67% of the vote, a result which, as the Latin American Studies Association observed, was “a far cry from a totalitarian political system that has frozen out all legitimate opposition.”²²⁴ The three parties to the right of the FSLN won a 29.2% share, while the three parties to the Sandinistas’ left picked up a dismal 3.8%. In spite of their miserable performance, the three left-wing parties were all awarded seats in the National Assembly, beneficiaries of an electoral system designed to promote pluralism. According to the Electoral Law, the threshold for party representation in the National Assembly was just 1 percent of the overall vote, enabling the small parties to make it into the legislature,²²⁵ an outcome that would not have occurred in many respected democracies. Turnout was also impressive at 75%, but was hampered in the north of the country by the ongoing war. Those international delegations that braved the State Department’s wrath and travelled to Nicaragua to observe the polling “agreed that the process through which the votes had been cast and counted on election day was beyond reproach.”²²⁶ These facts suggest either that the US government was simply misinformed or, more likely, that it was wilfully misrepresenting what had occurred.

It is true that the 1984 electoral process suffered from certain deficiencies, not the least of which was the fact that the contras endeavoured to sabotage it. They killed a total

²²¹ Gutman, *Banana Diplomacy*, p. 253; LASA, “The Electoral Process in Nicaragua,” p. 101.

²²² The quotes are in Gutman, *Banana Diplomacy*, p. 254. In his memoirs Shultz denounced the elections as “illegitimate” and “rigged.” Shultz, *Turmoil and Triumph*, p. 421.

²²³ Reding, “The Evolution of Governmental Institutions,” pp. 27-8.

²²⁴ LASA, “The Electoral Process in Nicaragua,” p. 84.

²²⁵ Reding, “The Evolution of Governmental Institutions,” p. 25.

²²⁶ Walker, *Nicaragua*, p. 157.

of eight election workers, one of whom was murdered on polling day.²²⁷ They also issued death threats to potential voters: “From a radio station in Costa Rica, the *contras* were broadcasting a very clear message: people who vote, and their families, would be marked for killing by the *contras*.”²²⁸ The state of emergency also remained in place, although it was eased. There was some press censorship, but “a high level of freedom of the press and free speech prevailed overall.”²²⁹ No restrictions were placed on Nicaragua’s 39 radio stations, and each political party was provided with free and uncensored radio and television time. Each party also received an equal amount of funding from the government with which to conduct its campaign.²³⁰ Furthermore, “With the exception of the disturbances around Cruz,” who was not even a real candidate, “the campaign proceeded virtually without incident.”²³¹ In conclusion, LASA stated that “by Latin American standards,” the Nicaraguan elections were “a model of probity and fairness.”²³² And yet to the Reagan administration it was as if they had never taken place. In a speech given by the president in April 1985, just five months later, the Sandinistas were denounced as “a Communist dictatorship” ruling a “police state.”²³³ Reagan continued to describe “our goal” and that of the “freedom fighters” as well as “a democracy in which the people of Nicaragua choose their own government.”²³⁴ The fact that they had done so in November 1984 had been swept under the carpet.

²²⁷ Sklar, *Washington’s War on Nicaragua*, p. 200; Central American Historical Institute, “Nicaragua 1984: Human and Material Costs of the War,” in Rosset and Vandermeer, *Nicaragua: Unfinished Revolution*, p. 265.

²²⁸ LASA, “The Electoral Process in Nicaragua,” p. 102.

²²⁹ Susanne Jonas, “Elections and Transitions: The Guatemalan and Nicaraguan Cases,” in John A. Booth and Mitchell A. Seligson, eds., *Elections and Democracy in Central America* (Chapel Hill and London: The University of North Carolina Press, 1989), p. 143.

²³⁰ LASA, “The Electoral Process in Nicaragua,” p. 92; Reding, “The Evolution of Governmental Institutions,” p. 26.

²³¹ Reding, “The Evolution of Governmental Institution,” p. 27.

²³² LASA, “The Electoral Process in Nicaragua,” p. 107.

²³³ Ronald Reagan, “President Reagan’s View of Nicaragua” (speech before the Nicaraguan Refugee Fund on 15 April 1985), in Rosset and Vandermeer, eds., *Nicaragua: Unfinished Revolution*, pp 10, 13.

²³⁴ Reagan, “Address to the Nation on the Situation in Nicaragua,” p. 356.

As congressional funding for the contras dried up in 1984 and it became apparent that no more money would be forthcoming, management of the operation was transferred from the CIA to the staff of the National Security Council, with Lieutenant Colonel Oliver North the key figure. In early 1984, National Security Adviser Robert McFarlane was tasked by Reagan with keeping the contras together “body and soul.” He relayed this message to his subordinate North,²³⁵ who apparently gave the FDN an “assurance of continued United States government support, notwithstanding the refusal of the Congress to appropriate more funds.”²³⁶ In a meeting in early 1984 attended by various CIA officials and “a contra leader,” CIA Director Casey emphasised first that the administration would not leave its Nicaraguan proxies high and dry were Congress to terminate aid, and second, that North would be the principal figure in this new contra support effort. Casey informed those present that Reagan himself had agreed to this plan. In meetings with North and two top CIA officials, Duane Clarridge and Vincent Cannistraro, FDN chief Adolfo Calero was apprised of the shake-up: North was taking the place of the CIA.²³⁷

The task given to North was demanding, to say the least. He had to find sources of funding for the contras, ensure that they continued to receive arms, and provide them with intelligence. There was no way he could do this alone, so he hired numerous individuals from outside the government, many of whom had military or CIA backgrounds, to assist him. On Casey’s advice, North approached retired US Air Force General Richard Secord and asked him to purchase arms for the contras. Secord used arms dealers in Canada and Portugal to procure the weapons and also undertook the job of moving the arms to Central America. By mid-1985, Secord had bought US\$9 million of weapons on behalf of the contras, with a tidy profit of US\$2.3million for himself and his business partner, Albert Hakim, into the bargain.²³⁸ In July 1985, North, who had grown tired of the contras’ incompetence and corruption, gave Secord and Hakim the

²³⁵ LeoGrande, *Our Own Backyard*, p. 400.

²³⁶ Chamorro, “World Court Affidavit,” p. 244.

²³⁷ Draper, *A Very Thin Line*, pp. 35-6.

²³⁸ Kornbluh and Byrne, *The Iran-Contra Scandal*, pp. 123-124; Draper, *A Very Thin Line*, p. 37.

added responsibility of taking care of the contras' finances; he also instructed Secord to organise airdrops to the contras in the field. It was this air resupply operation that eventually led to the exposure of North's secret network, which Secord and Hakim had named "the Enterprise."²³⁹

Secord turned to another ex-US Air Force man, Richard Gadd, to provide the planes and men for the air resupply. Gadd had been of use to Secord previously, moving arms bought by the Enterprise to Central America.²⁴⁰ At the same time he was working for Secord, Gadd was also flying nonlethal "humanitarian" supplies to the contras on behalf of the US State Department's Nicaraguan Humanitarian Assistance Office (NHAO). The NHAO had been set up following Congress' decision in July 1985 to provide the contras with US\$27million in so-called "humanitarian aid," like food, clothes, and medicine. In a coup of truly remarkable proportions, North had succeeded in arranging for Gadd's company Air Mach, which had no planes, to deliver the supplies. NHAO was thus co-opted by the Enterprise. Air Mach would fly nonlethal supplies to Central America for the NHAO before turning to the task of supplying the contras with weapons.²⁴¹ The Salvadorian military was talked into allowing its base at Ilopango to be used as the Enterprise's air resupply hub. To "smooth relations with the Salvadoran military," the Enterprise enlisted the services of Colonel James Steele, commander of the US Military Group in El Salvador.²⁴²

Several US officials in Costa Rica were implicated in a scheme to extend the resupply operation to contra groups based in that country, a plan which necessitated the building of an airstrip in the north of the country. The US Ambassador to Costa Rica, Lewis Tambs, was heavily involved in this effort. Internal CIA documents reveal that after becoming ambassador in 1985 Tambs quickly reached an agreement with Costa Rican President Luis Alberto Monge for Costa Rica to "clandestinely support the resupply."²⁴³ The ambassador made further contributions to the project. The land chosen for the airstrip was owned by an American, Joseph Hamilton, who agreed to sell it to an

²³⁹ Kornbluh and Byrne, *The Iran-Contra Scandal*, p. 126; LeoGrande, *Our Own Backyard*, pp. 402-3.

²⁴⁰ LeoGrande, *Our Own Backyard*, p. 403; Draper, *A Very Thin Line*, p. 39.

²⁴¹ Draper, *A Very Thin Line*, p. 49; Kornbluh and Byrne, *The Iran-Contra Scandal*, p. 125.

²⁴² LeoGrande, *Our Own Backyard*, p. 405

²⁴³ CIA Office of the Inspector General, Cole Black and George Jameson, "CIA Interview with Joseph Fernandez," 24 January 1987, in Kornbluh and Byrne, *The Iran-Contra Scandal*, p. 156.

Enterprise front called Udall Research Corporation, whose “directors” were North, Secord and a man named William Haskell, who had served with North in Vietnam.²⁴⁴ Hamilton was suspicious of Haskell, obliging Tambs to call Hamilton and offer “his personal assurances” as to the latter’s integrity.²⁴⁵ Other US officials who knew about the airstrip were the CIA’s top man in Costa Rica, Joseph Fernandez, Assistant Secretary of State for Inter-American Affairs Elliott Abrams, and Alan Fiers, the head of CIA operations in Central America.²⁴⁶ The airfield was ready by May 1986, but was not in service for very long due to the exposure of the secret air resupply effort in October 1986.

Following the passage of the second Boland Amendment the US government was forced to turn to other countries for money to keep the contras going. However, soliciting aid from third countries was of dubious legality and was therefore kept from Congress. The search for alternative sources of funding began even before the aid cutoff of October 1984 and the matter was debated at a meeting of the National Security Planning Group (NSPG), attended by Reagan’s top foreign policy advisers, on 25 June 1984. Several of those present underscored the urgency of securing funds for the contras from abroad. Jeane Kirkpatrick, for instance, remarked that “If we can’t get the money for the anti-Sandinistas [from Congress], then we should make the maximum effort to find the money elsewhere.” William Casey was of the same opinion, arguing that while the administration should certainly continue to pressure Congress to finance the contras, they should also focus on “trying to help obtain funding for the anti-Sandinistas from other sources.” Secretary of Defence Caspar Weinberger likewise deemed that the administration “should facilitate third country support for the anti-Sandinista groups.”²⁴⁷ Although Casey expressed confidence that soliciting funds for the contras from third parties was above board, his interpretation was by no means shared by all. Secretary of State Shultz declared that Reagan’s chief of staff, James Baker, had “said that if we go out and try to get money from third countries, it is an impeachable offense.”²⁴⁸ Baker was not present at this meeting, but he testified before the Senate committee investigating the

²⁴⁴ Draper, *A Very Thin Line*, pp. 99-100; Kornbluh and Byrne, *The Iran-Contra Scandal*, p. 128.

²⁴⁵ “CIA Interview with Joseph Fernandez,” p. 158.

²⁴⁶ According to Fernandez, he discussed the airstrip with Abrams while the latter was on a visit to Costa Rica in the autumn of 1985. See *Ibid*, p. 157.

²⁴⁷ “Minutes, National Security Planning Group Meeting on Central America,” 25 June 1984, in Kornbluh and Byrne, *The Iran-Contra Affair*, pp. 77, 79-80.

²⁴⁸ *Ibid*, p. 77.

Iran-Contra affair that “it was my view that we could not do indirectly what we could not do directly.” As Theodore Draper comments, this “suggests that Baker had serious doubts” about the legality of asking for contributions from third parties.²⁴⁹ It appears that the president himself also had concerns. In response to McFarlane’s comment at the NSPG meeting that “I certainly hope none of this discussion will be made public in any way,” Reagan remarked that “If such a story gets out, we’ll all be hanging by our thumbs in front of the White House until we find out who did it.”²⁵⁰

As Theodore Draper has observed, Reagan’s remark was “peculiar,” and “has seemed in need of interpretation.” According to Draper, “The point would seem to be that third-country support in place of congressional appropriation needed unusual secrecy because it was constitutionally or politically dubious or even indefensible.”²⁵¹ The question of third-country funding was referred to the office of the US attorney general, William French Smith. His assistant Mary Lawton gave the opinion that solicitation of money for the contras from third countries was legally acceptable providing it was not accompanied by “any monetary promises or inducements from the United States.” Smith concurred, asserting that a third country funding the contras “could not look to the United States to repay that commitment in the future.”²⁵² The legal view was therefore that the administration could approach other countries about supporting the contras, but it could not offer a “quid pro quo.” In other words, those countries choosing to back the contras could not expect anything from the US in return.

Although the administration was now armed with legal opinions that at least gave it a case that requests for third country funding were permissible, these evidently did not dispel the doubts. In the summer of 1985 reports appeared in the US media alleging continued US government involvement in the contra war. In an effort to get some answers, Lee Hamilton, the chairman of the House Intelligence Committee, and Michael Barnes, who headed the House Subcommittee on Western Hemisphere Affairs, wrote letters to McFarlane. In his reply to Hamilton, dated 5 September, McFarlane lied that “We did not solicit funds or other support for military or paramilitary activities [in

²⁴⁹ Draper, *A Very Thin Line*, p. 76.

²⁵⁰ “Minutes, National Security Planning Group Meeting on Central America,” p. 82.

²⁵¹ Draper, *A Very Thin Line*, pp. 77-8.

²⁵² Kornbluh and Byrne, *The Iran-Contra Scandal*, pp. 61, 65n8.

Nicaragua] either from Americans or third parties.”²⁵³ He assured Barnes on 12 September that “none of us has solicited funds,” or “facilitated contacts for prospective potential donors” for the contras.²⁵⁴ McFarlane had in fact already approached Prince Bandar bin Sultan, the Saudi ambassador in Washington, for money. He had met Bandar in May 1984 and told him that Reagan was facing “defeat” in Congress on contra appropriations, a reversal that “would represent a substantial loss for the President.” Bandar informed McFarlane that the Saudis would give the contras US\$1 million a month.²⁵⁵ In early 1985, McFarlane once again asked Prince Bandar for help, a request that produced results when the Saudi monarch, King Fahd, told President Reagan during a meeting in Washington that he would double the amount of money the Saudis were paying the contras.²⁵⁶ As Theodore Draper notes, both Reagan and McFarlane avoided asking the Saudis outright for money. McFarlane later claimed that the message he wanted to transmit to Bandar was that “if anyone with any gumption could manage without being led or asked, then a contribution would have been welcome.” He continued, “I think it became pretty obvious to the ambassador that his country, to gain a considerable amount of favour...would provide the support when the Congress cut it off.”²⁵⁷ As for Reagan, he stated that while he wanted third countries to help the contras, “I didn’t want to be on record as doing it.”²⁵⁸

Another official, Elliott Abrams, tapped a foreign donor for money for the Nicaraguan rebels. In August 1986, Abrams, who was using an alias, met the foreign minister of Brunei in a park in London. He asked for US\$10 million for the contras and told him that Brunei could expect something in return: “The President will know of this, and you will have the gratitude of the secretary [of state] and the president for helping us out in a jam.” Although the foreign minister agreed to hand over the money, there was a foul up with the bank account number and the contras never received a dime.²⁵⁹ Abrams wanted to keep the transaction a secret. In November 1986, he lied to the Senate

²⁵³ Quoted in Draper, *A Very Thin Line*, p. 117.

²⁵⁴ Quoted in Kornbluh and Byrne, *The Iran-Contra Scandal*, p. 189. These lies later backfired on McFarlane, who was found guilty in 1988 on criminal charges of withholding information from Congress.

²⁵⁵ Gutman, *Banana Diplomacy*, pp. 202-3.

²⁵⁶ Draper, *A Very Thin Line*, pp. 79-80.

²⁵⁷ Quoted in *Ibid*, p. 80.

²⁵⁸ Quoted in *Ibid*, p. 82.

²⁵⁹ Kornbluh and Byrne, *The Iran-Contra Scandal*, p. 63; Gutman, *Banana Diplomacy*, pp. 328-9.

Intelligence Committee about the administration's fund-raising activities, declaring before the senators that "we're not in the fundraising business." He added that "the State Department's function in this has not been to raise money, other than to try to raise it from Congress."²⁶⁰ Abrams, like McFarlane, was later convicted of withholding information from Congress.²⁶¹

In his memoirs, Reagan wrote the following in relation to his administration's approaches to third countries: "I knew that there must be among our allies other countries that shared our concern about the threat to democracy in Latin America...Several countries responded and extended help – a case of friendly nations believing we all had a stake in fighting for democracy."²⁶² The idea that Saudi Arabia, Brunei and Taiwan (which donated US\$2 million) doled out money for the contras out of "concern about the threat to democracy in Latin America" is perverse, although it does perhaps underline the hollowness of Reagan's conception of democracy. About the only thing these states had in common was their authoritarian character. Why did these three states hand over money for the contras? Theodore Draper offers as good an answer as any: "The money was an investment in the gratitude of President Reagan and Secretary Shultz, because the three countries did not have the slightest interest or stake in the fate of Nicaragua."²⁶³

The Reagan administration needed more than just foreign money to keep the contras alive after Congress terminated aid, however. Prosecuting the war necessitated the involvement of Nicaragua's neighbours. Guatemala, which is separated from Nicaragua by Honduras, provided numerous valuable services, the most important of which was the provision of end user certificates for contra weapons purchases. In a memo

²⁶⁰ Quoted in Kornbluh and Byrne, *The Iran-Contra Scandal*, p. 190.

²⁶¹ Abrams and McFarlane were not the only US officials convicted on criminal charges relating to the secret war. CIA chief of operations for Latin America Alan Fiers was found guilty of withholding information from Congress; CIA Deputy Director for Operations Clair George was convicted on charges of lying to Congress; North and Poindexter were found guilty on multiple counts, although their convictions were later overturned. The rest were ultimately pardoned by President George H. W. Bush. See Kornbluh and Byrne, *The Iran-Contra Scandal*, pp. xxv, xxviii.

²⁶² Reagan, *An American Life*, p. 484.

²⁶³ Draper, *A Very Thin Line*, p. 369. The administration also raised funds for the contras domestically. Potential donors, lined up by Carl "Spitz" Channell, who had established a number of organisations dedicated to raising money for the contras, were invited to the White House on several occasions where they were given briefings by North, Abrams, White House Director of Communications Pat Buchanan, and Reagan. These administration figures made sure they didn't actually ask for money directly; this was left to Channell, who then channelled the contributions into Enterprise bank accounts. Channell's efforts brought the contras an additional \$2.7 million. He was convicted of conspiracy to defraud the United States in 1987. See *Ibid*, pp. 54-70.

written in March 1985, Oliver North informed McFarlane that end user certificates provided by Guatemala had been used to buy “nearly \$8 million worth of munitions to be delivered to the FDN.” Arms destined for the contras were shipped to Guatemala, where they were transferred to contra representatives.²⁶⁴ Guatemala’s military even provided security for the journey through Guatemala, which had its own problems with leftist guerrillas. A noteworthy example was when the contras ordered a batch of anti-aircraft missiles from China, which presumably did not know that by arming the contras it was “promoting democracy.” This deal had been helped along by North, who met a Chinese official in November 1984 in an effort to cajole the Chinese into going through with the sale. North’s intervention met with success and the missiles were sent to Guatemala. The army then “provided helicopters and an armed escort to trek the missiles all across Guatemala so that they would not fall into the hands of Guatemalan guerrillas.”²⁶⁵

Guatemala expected some kind of compensation in return for its part in the secret war. This is clear from US government documents, which reveal that McFarlane went to Central America in January 1985 “to discuss with his counterparts in those countries their continued willingness to support the [Nicaraguan] Resistance.” He “was advised before his departure that Guatemala would continue to support the Resistance, provided that it received a quid pro quo from the United States in the form of foreign assistance funds or credits, diplomatic support or other forms of assistance.”²⁶⁶ North alluded to the need to “compensate the Guatemalans for the extraordinary assistance they are providing to the Nicaraguan freedom fighters” in his aforementioned March 1985 memo to McFarlane. He included in his memo a “wish list” of goods sought by Guatemala for its war against the guerrillas and any others deemed subversive.²⁶⁷ Guatemala was indeed rewarded when, “In May 1985, President Reagan personally approved increased U.S. special support to Honduras and Guatemala for joint programs with these countries.”²⁶⁸ Another state that contributed to the contra cause was El Salvador, which, as we saw above, allowed the contras and the Enterprise to use the air force base at Ilopango. As with

²⁶⁴ Oliver North, Memorandum for Robert McFarlane with Attachments, “Guatemalan Aid to the Nicaraguan Resistance,” 5 March 1985, in Kornbluh and Byrne, *The Iran-Contra Scandal*, p. 100.

²⁶⁵ Draper, *A Very Thin Line*, p. 108.

²⁶⁶ Court Document, “U.S. Government Stipulation on Quid Pro Quos with Other Governments as Part of Contra Operations,” 6 April 1989, in Kornbluh and Byrne, *The Iran-Contra Scandal*, p. 90.

²⁶⁷ North, “Guatemalan Aid to the Nicaraguan Resistance,” p. 100.

²⁶⁸ Court Document, “U.S. Government Stipulation on Quid Pro Quos,” p. 92.

Guatemala, there were rewards for the Salvadorians for these services. In May 1986, Reagan wrote letters to Salvadorian President José Napoleón Duarte and his Honduran counterpart, José Azcona Hoyo, “thanking them for their support for the Resistance.” In his letter to Duarte, “Reagan announced that he would propose legislation that Duarte had sought extending U.S. participation in an international trade agreement of benefit to El Salvador.”²⁶⁹

Peace Processes

The Reagan administration’s war in Nicaragua co-existed with regional efforts to bring that conflict, and others in El Salvador and Guatemala, to a halt. Despite paying lip service to the objective of peace in Central America, the United States government spent years attempting to thwart such initiatives. One of the clearest examples of this trend was the administration’s campaign to sabotage the Contadora peace process, which had begun in January 1983 when the foreign ministers of Panama, Mexico, Colombia and Venezuela met on the Panamanian island of Contadora. They issued “an urgent appeal to all Central American countries to reduce tensions,” and called on “all nations to abstain from actions which could worsen the situation and create the danger of a general conflict which could extend throughout the region.”²⁷⁰ By September 1984, the Contadora states had produced a final treaty, which Nicaragua announced it would sign. Nicaragua was denounced by the US for having done so, although Reagan himself was on record as stating that “The United States fully supports the objectives of that process.” Once the US had made clear its hostility to the September 1984 treaty, its regional allies, which had initially backed the document, did an about turn and demanded revisions.²⁷¹ A similar tale unfolded in 1986. In the face of an anti-Sandinista rhetorical offensive led by the president the House of Representatives in June voted to appropriate US\$100 million for the contras, of which US\$70 million was lethal aid. The House vote came “five days after Nicaragua had

²⁶⁹ Ibid, p. 95.

²⁷⁰ Quoted in Sklar, *Washington’s War on Nicaragua*, p. 301.

²⁷¹ Noam Chomsky, *The Culture of Terrorism* (Boston: South End Press, 1988), p. 134; LeoGrande, *Our Own Backyard*, pp. 360-2; Reagan quote in Reagan, “Address to the Nation on United States Policy in Central America,” p. 660.

accepted the latest draft of the Contadora treaty, rejected by the U.S. and its clients.”²⁷² The Senate, which had been more or less steadfast in its support of Reagan on Nicaragua, approved the aid package in August.

One of the tools employed by the administration to derail regional peace negotiations was to insist upon democratization in Nicaragua, which proved to be a very convenient way of undermining peace talks, for it quickly became apparent that there was nothing the Nicaraguan government could do to satisfy the United States in this respect. This was clear from the administration’s refusal to judge the 1984 elections on their merits. The administration was playing with fire, however, for there was always a chance that the Nicaraguans might sign up to a peace agreement that contained language regarding democratization. This is precisely what occurred in August 1987, when Nicaragua and its neighbours signed a peace accord known as the Esquipulas agreement, which called on the five states “to promote an authentic democratic, pluralist and participatory process” and “to carry out...those measures leading to the establishment, or...the improvement of representative and pluralist democratic systems.”²⁷³ The Esquipulas agreement did not go down at all well within the Reagan administration, for it made the assertion that the Sandinistas were opposed to democracy even more implausible. According to George Shultz, his plan to send peace envoy Philip Habib to Central America to follow up on the accord “met a storm of opposition [inside the administration] as the hard-liners caught their breath and tried to reverse course.” Elliott Abrams was totally opposed to the accord, and he enlisted Secretary of Defence Weinberger and National Security Adviser Frank Carlucci to persuade Reagan to denounce it.²⁷⁴ The president declined to endorse Shultz’s scheme, prompting Habib to hand in his resignation. Habib hadn’t understood that he was, in Abrams’ words, “just a symbol.”²⁷⁵

The administration’s disdain for the Esquipulas agreement was evident both in the public statements of administration officials and their actions. Reagan derided the agreement as “fatally flawed,” and emphasised that there “should be no uncertainty of our

²⁷² Chomsky, *The Culture of Terrorism*, p. 12.

²⁷³ Quoted in Sklar, *Washington’s War on Nicaragua*, p. 402.

²⁷⁴ Shultz, *Turmoil and Triumph*, p. 961; Gutman, *Banana Diplomacy*, pp. 350-1.

²⁷⁵ Quoted in Gutman, *Banana Diplomacy*, p. 353.

unswerving commitment to the contras.”²⁷⁶ In September, the administration asked Congress to appropriate US\$270 million for the contras to cover a period of 18 months. By taking this step, the administration was announcing its intent to ignore the terms of the accord, which demanded an end to all aid to “irregular forces or insurrectionist movements” in the region. Terminating such assistance was described in the agreement as “an indispensable element for achieving a stable and lasting peace in the region.”²⁷⁷ Of the five signatories “only Nicaragua made a serious effort to implement the accords,”²⁷⁸ a fact that was conveniently overlooked by the Reagan administration. Guatemala’s attitude was encapsulated by defence minister Héctor Gramajo’s remark that the accord “does not apply to our country.”²⁷⁹ However, notwithstanding the Reagan administration’s antipathy towards the Esquipulas agreement, and the ambivalence of the likes of Guatemala, the accord did not collapse and the regional peace process persisted after Reagan left Washington in 1989.

Democracy Promotion in Nicaragua: Success or Failure?

Reagan left office in January 1989 with the Sandinistas still in power. The following year, however, saw the electoral defeat of Nicaraguan President Daniel Ortega by Violeta Barrios de Chamorro, whose victory finally brought an end to the contra war. Chamorro’s was a hollow triumph, though, for the country had been ruined by the conflict. More than 30,000 Nicaraguans, several thousand of whom were civilians, had died as a result of the war, a loss of life equivalent to 0.9% of the population. Nicaragua is of course a small country, with a population of just a few million, so a comparison with the United States provides some perspective: “An equivalent loss for the United States would be 2.25 million or over thirty-eight times the U.S. death toll in the entire Vietnam War.”²⁸⁰ The economy was in tatters. By 1987, “property destruction from CIA/contra

²⁷⁶ The quotes from Reagan are in Sklar, *Washington’s War on Nicaragua*, p. 377.

²⁷⁷ Quoted in *Ibid*, p. 403.

²⁷⁸ Walker, *Nicaragua*, p. 195.

²⁷⁹ Quoted in Chomsky, *The Culture of Terrorism*, p. 145.

²⁸⁰ Walker, *Nicaragua*, p. 56.

attacks totaled \$221.6 million; production losses, \$984.5 million.”²⁸¹ The devastation directly attributable to the war was exacerbated by the implementation of an embargo by the US in 1985, the inability of the Sandinistas to borrow from international financial institutions, due to US vetoes, and the fact that other nations were pressured by Washington not to give aid to the Sandinistas. This left Nicaragua the poorest country in Latin America.

If we apply the democracy metric outlined in chapter two we can see that Nicaragua’s performance was, at least in terms of elections, actually fairly commendable. The elections of 1984 were contested by seven parties, whose ideologies extended across the political spectrum. Several international monitoring groups witnessed the vote and concluded that it was not fraudulent. Citizens aged sixteen and over were granted the right to vote and had at least some means to make an informed decision, as each political party was provided with free and uncensored radio and television time, while Nicaragua’s many radio stations were able to broadcast freely. Other forms of campaigning also went ahead. “At the height of the campaign even minor opposition parties were able to hold street rallies and demonstrations with fewer impediments than such activity would encounter in the United States,” notes Karl Bermann, who witnessed the election.²⁸² Admittedly, the ability of citizens to make a well-informed choice was hampered by the dearth of newspapers, especially unbiased newspapers, in Nicaragua. “Only the independent pro-Sandinista paper *Nuevo Diario* made a serious effort to devote space to all parties” in its coverage of the 1984 electoral process, writes Bermann.²⁸³ Furthermore, all three papers had a very small circulation: the stridently anti-Sandinista *La Prensa*, which had the largest circulation, “printed only about 55,000 copies daily for a nation of nearly three million people.”²⁸⁴ The election undoubtedly failed to meet the final criteria of a genuinely free and fair contest, that it be free of intimidation. The contras killed election workers and issued threats to voters, while the US military conducted overflights

²⁸¹ Peter Kornbluh, “The U.S. Role in the Counterrevolution,” in Walker, ed., *Revolution and Counterrevolution in Nicaragua*, p. 345.

²⁸² Bermann, *Under the Big Stick*, p. 288.

²⁸³ *Ibid.*, p. 289.

²⁸⁴ John Spicer Nichols, “The Issue of Censorship,” in Rosset and Vandermeer, *Nicaragua: Unfinished Revolution*, p. 111.

of Nicaragua in the run-up to polling day, causing sonic booms which terrorised the population.

In terms of human rights, the 1987 constitution enshrined all the rights necessary for democracy: the rights to vote, to life, to freedom of expression, to freedom of association, to freedom of assembly, to education and to an adequate standard of living, specifically the rights to housing and of protection against hunger. However, although the government made great strides in some areas, it was unable to guarantee several of these rights in practice, and its overall record on civil and political rights was not impressive. The right to life was seriously compromised, with thousands of civilians killed as a consequence of the government's war against the contras. The contras bear most of the responsibility for this loss of life, as they had a deliberate policy of targeting civilians, although government forces also committed atrocities, the most serious of which were against the Miskito Indians in 1981 and 1982. As we have seen, citizens were able to exercise their right to vote, but strict limits were placed on the freedoms of speech, assembly and association due to the exigencies of fighting the war. *La Prensa* was repeatedly censored and even shut down, although, in mitigation, it was by no means an objective publication. Prior to the 1984 vote, *La Prensa* "only printed articles attacking the electoral process as a whole" and "even refused to give coverage to the opposition parties that were participating, portraying them as Sandinista puppets – something they clearly were not." Its editor came out in open support of the contras in 1986.²⁸⁵ Nevertheless, Nicaragua still "had one of the freest presses in Central America," with political parties and Nicaragua-based human rights groups free to publish reports and newsletters uncensored.²⁸⁶

The Sandinistas could point to major advances in social and economic rights while they ruled Nicaragua, although their achievements proved unsustainable. In terms of education, the 1980 Literacy Crusade saw the rate of adult literacy soar from a pre-revolutionary level of 50 percent to 88 percent. There was a dramatic increase in school enrolment, with the number of children attending primary and senior school almost

²⁸⁵ Bermann, *Under the Big Stick*, p. 289; Linfield, "Human Rights," p. 280.

²⁸⁶ Linfield, "Human Rights," pp. 279, 281.

doubling between 1978, the year before the Somoza dynasty fell, and 1984.²⁸⁷ The government also built many new schools, and “gave special attention to underserved rural areas and to the construction of secondary schools in underserved areas of the interior.”²⁸⁸ However, as the war wore on, these achievements proved hard to sustain. “Government-sponsored school construction came to a complete halt in the late 1980s,” notes Thomas Walker, and by 1991, the year after the Sandinistas were defeated in elections, just 70 percent of children were enrolled at primary school.²⁸⁹ The government also made efforts to improve the standard of living of poor Nicaraguans. For example, it “placed a high priority on making basic staples available to all at reasonable prices,” and by 1983 could point to some successes, for consumption of rice had risen by 66 percent compared to the 1977 level, while “the intake of eggs, cooking oil, and poultry were up 21, 30, and 80 percent, respectively.”²⁹⁰ Thousands of new houses were built, and the government introduced policies aimed at “facilitating housing for the very poor.”²⁹¹ As with education, though, these advances proved unsustainable due to the war. “Urban housing programs were overwhelmed and incapacitated by hundreds of thousands of destitute war refugees who poured into the cities to seek safety and a better life,” while “basic food distribution programs were ended in the late 1980s.”²⁹² Nonetheless, in light of the Sandinistas’ early accomplishments, one scholar has concluded that “if we include under fundamental human rights a person’s right to the necessities of life – food, shelter, health care – then the Sandinista record was better than that of almost any other Latin American or Third World country.”²⁹³

Nicaragua fulfilled the third condition of genuine democracy outlined in chapter two. The government and the legislature emerged from elections that met five of the six criteria of genuinely free and fair elections, and were not in thrall to any unelected actors. They were therefore legitimate.

²⁸⁷ The combined figures were, respectively, 468,514 in 1978 and 821,741 in 1984. See “Educational Conditions Pre- and Post-1979,” in Rosset and Vandermeer, *Nicaragua: Unfinished Revolution*, p. 424.

²⁸⁸ Harvey Williams, “The Social Impact in Nicaragua,” in Walker, *Reagan versus the Sandinistas*, p. 253.

²⁸⁹ Walker, *Nicaragua*, p. 129; UNESCO Institute for Statistics, “Education in Nicaragua,” <<http://stats.uis.unesco.org>>

²⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 123.

²⁹¹ Williams, “The Social Impact in Nicaragua,” p. 254.

²⁹² Walker, *Nicaragua*, p. 130.

²⁹³ Linfield, “Human Rights,” p. 276.

Nicaragua's limited democratic achievements were emphatically not assisted by the United States government. The Reagan administration strove to derail the 1984 elections. As for human rights, the United States' contribution amounted to backing a brutal rebel force that murdered civilians, in addition to wrecking the economy and forcing the Sandinistas to divert money from socio-economic programs to defence. Nonetheless, some scholars have still argued that the Reagan administration deserves some, and perhaps much, credit for promoting democracy in Nicaragua. This facile argument rests on the view that the Sandinistas were forced by the US into holding elections in 1990. To quote Abraham Lowenthal, "The Nicaraguan presidential elections of 1990...took place to a significant extent because of U.S. pressure, and it is therefore commonly cited as an example of Washington's successful promotion of democracy."²⁹⁴ Tony Smith has written that "the administration could claim that the Reagan Doctrine directly aided the expansion of democracy in Central America, by forcing the Sandinistas to hold elections in early 1990, which they lost."²⁹⁵ Such a conclusion does not reflect the facts. The Sandinistas had already held credible elections in 1984, so it is misleading to suggest that they converted to the concept in the latter part of the decade under American coercion. In addition, the scheduling of elections for 1990 corresponded to the timetable established by the Nicaraguan constitution of 1987, which stipulated that they would be held every six years. Again, this had nothing to do with the actions of the United States.

Thomas Carothers has also found at least an element of truth in the claim that the US successfully promoted democracy in Nicaragua. Like Smith, Carothers focuses on the 1990 elections, and posits the question of who was responsible for convincing the Sandinistas to hold the elections that led to their ouster. He outlines two possible responses: either the US, due to its support of the contras and its use of economic sanctions, deserves the credit, or it should go instead to Costa Rican President Oscar Arias, the driving force behind the Central American peace process. According to Carothers, "the answer lies somewhere in between." While "Arias certainly deserves credit for forging the regional peace process," and for insisting that Nicaragua agree to elections, his contribution to Nicaraguan democracy was complemented by the policies of

²⁹⁴ Lowenthal, "The United States and Latin American Democracy: Learning from History," p. 273.

²⁹⁵ Smith, *America's Mission*, p. 301.

the Reagan administration. In Carothers' words, the Sandinistas "entered into the regional peace negotiations with other Central American governments, and ultimately agreed to hold elections, primarily as a way of ending U.S. pressure against Nicaragua."²⁹⁶ Carothers, however, asks the wrong question. As we saw above, the Sandinistas had always planned to engage in electoral competition, regardless of the demands of the United States and Oscar Arias.²⁹⁷

Even if it were true that the Sandinistas caved in to American intimidation in 1990 and scheduled a vote in response, it would still strain credibility to argue that the Reagan administration successfully promoted democracy in Nicaragua. The United States practically destroyed Nicaragua in the 1980s. Not only was this morally reprehensible, it also had serious implications for Nicaraguan democracy. Citizens cannot enjoy their political rights if they do not have the right to life, and this is precisely what was threatened in Nicaragua, because the United States government was funding terrorists who targeted civilians. The Reagan administration also realised its objective of ruining the Nicaraguan economy, thus preventing the Sandinistas from carrying forward their socio-economic programs, which had achieved impressive results in their early years in power. The US was culpable of making the lives of Nicaraguans less secure, which can only have negative implications for democracy. Citizens who are barely subsisting or who must worry about their physical safety are less likely to play a part in political life, as they have more urgent concerns to attend to. In short, then, it defies logic to assert that the United States furthered democracy in Nicaragua while Reagan was president.

Democracy Promotion in Nicaragua: An Important US Policy Objective?

The historical overview of US-Nicaragua relations at the start of the chapter showed that the state of democracy in Nicaragua was traditionally of minimal importance to the United States. Still, this does not preclude the possibility that the Reagan

²⁹⁶ Thomas Carothers, *In the Name of Democracy: U.S. Policy Toward Latin America In the Reagan Years* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1991), pp. 104-5.

²⁹⁷ Carothers ultimately concludes that while a case can be made that Reagan's policy had positive political effects in Nicaragua, this does not justify the policy. In his words, the "many costs, particularly the human and economic costs to Nicaragua, outweighed whatever political benefits to Nicaragua one might attribute to the policy." Ibid, p. 108.

administration turned policy on its head. As we have seen, Reagan administration officials were at pains to cast their Nicaragua policy in pro-democracy terms, so perhaps they genuinely meant what they said. However, in light of the facts, and by using the criteria outlined in chapter two, we can say with some certainty that democracy promotion was not a factor in US policy towards Nicaragua in the 1980s.

It will be remembered that the first strand of democracy promotion involves supporting legitimate electoral processes. The first question to ask in this respect is did the US assist political parties, NGOs, trade unions and other civil society organisations in Nicaragua? Actually, it did, although in a wholly partisan manner. “Virtually every element of the opposition – the press, the church, the private sector, trade unions, and political parties – received financial support from the CIA.” In addition to the CIA, which provided about \$10 million a year to these groups in the mid-1980s, the National Endowment for Democracy “funnelled about \$2 million into Nicaragua between 1984 and 1988,” with the newspaper *La Prensa* receiving half the money and the rest going to “the constituent groups of the opposition coalition that boycotted the 1984 election.”²⁹⁸ This aid was aimed at bringing about the ouster of the government, and cannot be viewed as evidence that the US was genuinely trying to promote democracy in Nicaragua. Another test of a government’s commitment to promoting democracy is whether or not it supported election monitoring bodies in the country in question. In Nicaragua, the US failed this test, for the State Department actively sought to prevent observer groups from monitoring the 1984 contest. As for intimidation of voters or candidates during these elections, the Reagan administration and its contra allies *themselves* engaged in intimidatory practices, including deafening overflights of Nicaraguan territory by US aircraft and death threats broadcast over the radio by the contras. The US also failed to treat the election on its merits. US officials ridiculed the contest as a “farce” and a “phony,” notwithstanding ample evidence pointing to the opposite conclusion. As for the final test of a state’s support for free and fair elections, that it highlight evidence of fraud, this is not applicable in the case in question, as the elections were not fraudulent.

The second test of a state’s democracy promotion credentials is whether it opposes any practices that undermine the legitimacy of a state’s political institutions.

²⁹⁸ LeoGrande, *Our Own Backyard*, pp. 542-3.

This is not applicable here, as the Nicaraguan government and legislature were legitimate. Nor is the question of whether the US attached democracy-related conditions to any aid relevant in this case, for the Reagan administration terminated all aid to Nicaragua in April 1981.

We can, however, determine whether or not the US sought to promote citizens' enjoyment of the political, civil, and socio-economic rights that are crucial to democracy. The evidence suggests that advancing human rights was far from being a priority of the Reagan administration. While President Reagan made a habit of chiding the Sandinistas for assorted human rights abuses, some of which the administration had simply invented,²⁹⁹ his government nonetheless saw fit to rally support for, fund and direct the contras. These rebels were not pro-democracy "freedom fighters" but vicious killers who, in the words of Americas Watch, "attacked civilians indiscriminately," "tortured and mutilated prisoners" and "murdered those placed hors de combat by their wounds." Nicaraguans engaged in health and education were among their favourite targets. "One hundred and thirty teachers, 40 doctors and nurses, 152 technicians and 41 other professionals were killed" by the contras, notes Thomas Walker.³⁰⁰ President Reagan, however, denied outright that the contras had even committed such outrages, dismissing in a speech in April 1985 the "so-called atrocities" attributed to the rebels.³⁰¹ In light of the above, we can conclude that promoting the right to life of Nicaraguans was clearly not an objective of the US. Still, it could be argued that through its funding of the opposition newspaper *La Prensa* and two tiny trade union federations, the US sought to promote free speech and freedom of association in Nicaragua. However, as we saw above, *La Prensa* was not an objective publication. Indeed, "the traditional goal of *La Prensa* always was to overthrow the existing political order."³⁰² Financing it therefore did not signal America's desire to advance free speech; the intention was rather to use it as

²⁹⁹ A minor example was Reagan's claim that the Nicaraguan government had "engaged in anti-Semitic acts against the Jewish community." In response, Americas Watch stated that "There is not a policy of anti-Semitism" and dismissed the more general charge of religious persecution as "without substance." See Reagan, "Address to the Nation on United States Policy in Central America," p. 661; Americas Watch, "Human Rights in Nicaragua: Reagan, Rhetoric, and Reality," in Rosset and Vandermeer, eds., *Nicaragua: Unfinished Revolution*, p. 127.

³⁰⁰ Walker, *Nicaragua*, p. 129

³⁰¹ Reagan, "President Reagan's View of Nicaragua," p. 12.

³⁰² Nichols, "The Issue of Censorship," p. 111.

another means of effecting the downfall of the Sandinistas. The same logic applied to US funding of other elements of the Nicaraguan opposition. “Most Reagan officials... [viewed] CIA support for the civic opposition... [as] an ancillary part of the contra war,” remarks William LeoGrande.³⁰³

The final test of a state’s commitment to promoting democracy, whether or not it sought to effect the replacement of a dictatorial regime with an elected one, is again not applicable in this case. The Sandinistas from as far back as 1979 emphasised that they planned to hold elections, and did so five years later.

There are further, context-specific, reasons to believe that the United States under President Reagan was not serious about promoting democracy in Nicaragua. The Reagan administration opposed the Esquipulas agreement of 1987, the terms of which required the signatories, including Nicaragua, “to promote an authentic democratic, pluralist and participatory process.” The opposition of the US to this agreement is hard to reconcile with its self-professed commitment to Nicaraguan democratization. Furthermore, in its desperation to bring down the government of Nicaragua the Reagan administration resorted to illegal means that undermined the democracy of the United States itself. The administration ignored the first Boland Amendment of December 1982, which forbade US support for any group seeking to overthrow the Nicaraguan government, and continued to aid the various contra organisations. As contra leader Edgar Chamorro later testified, while the contras were told by their CIA handlers after the Boland Amendment was passed to emphasise that they were trying to intercept arms, “our goal, and that of the CIA as well (as we were repeatedly assured in private), was to overthrow the government of Nicaragua.” When Congress tried to terminate US involvement in the war in October 1984, the administration secretly transferred control of the contra support effort from the CIA to the NSC staff, which was far less visible and not subject to congressional oversight. To keep the contras going senior US officials, including the president, solicited money from third countries and agreed to quid pro quos with various Central American states to ensure their collaboration, actions which were of doubtful legality. The likes of Elliott Abrams and Robert McFarlane lied to Congress about the continuing US role in the war. This pattern of deception and disdain for the democratic procedures of the

³⁰³ LeoGrande, *Our Own Backyard*, p. 543.

United States raises doubts about the administration's commitment to advancing democracy abroad, for why should a government that exhibits so little respect for democracy in its own country care about the state of democracy elsewhere?

Notwithstanding the fact that the Reagan administration tried to sabotage the Nicaraguan elections of 1984, undermined human rights in that country, rejected a peace agreement signed by the Sandinistas which included language committing them to democratization, and showed disdain for the democratic procedures and the laws of the United States while conducting its Nicaragua policy, certain scholars have nonetheless asserted that democracy promotion was a real goal of the United States. Thomas Carothers has argued that while it is "probably correct" that the administration's "democracy rationale" was in the early part of the decade "a cynical, rhetorical cover for a militant anticommunist crusade," from the mid-1980s the "pro-democracy rhetoric associated with the policy grew more intense and began to take on some real meaning." According to Carothers, "many of the U.S. officials involved in the Nicaragua policy from roughly 1984 on sincerely believed that the policy was increasing the chances of democracy." While Carothers does add that these officials "were misguided in their understanding of how to promote democracy and were motivated primarily by anticommunism," they nevertheless "believed the policy was prodemocratic."³⁰⁴ This conclusion is hard to credit, however. Given the attitude of the administration to the 1984 elections and its support for the contras, it is difficult to believe that these officials were guided by the objective of furthering Nicaraguan democracy. A more reasonable conclusion has been offered by Laurence Whitehead, according to whom the "policy of intimidation [against Nicaragua] was motivated by a variety of considerations, among which concern over the quality of democratic governance in Nicaragua was not, to put it mildly, always foremost."³⁰⁵ President Reagan's policies in Nicaragua were designed to bring down the Sandinista government, and had nothing to do with effecting that country's democratization.

³⁰⁴ Carothers, *In the Name of Democracy*, pp. 103-4.

³⁰⁵ Whitehead, "The Imposition of Democracy: The Caribbean," p. 78.

Democracy Promotion under Reagan: The Overall Record

In June 1982 Reagan announced “a crusade for freedom” before the British parliament. “For the sake of peace and justice, let us move toward a world in which all people are at last free to determine their own destiny,” he proclaimed.³⁰⁶ By the end of his presidency, there seemed to be considerable evidence to suggest that Reagan’s “crusade for freedom” had reached fruition, notwithstanding the Nicaraguan debacle, for the Soviet Union was on its last legs and dictators the world over were falling like dominoes. As George Shultz put it in his memoirs, “Ronald Reagan from his first day in office and I from the day I became secretary of state a year and a half later were consistent advocates of political and economic freedom... [We] heralded the march toward democracy that occurred during the Reagan presidency, in our hemisphere and beyond.”³⁰⁷ Numerous scholars have indeed acclaimed Reagan as a great promoter of global freedom and democracy. G. John Ikenberry, for example, has remarked that Reagan “pursued policies that reflected a strong commitment to the expansion of democracy, markets, and the rule of law. The Reagan administration’s involvements in El Salvador, the Philippines, Chile, and elsewhere all reflected this orientation.” Reagan, he adds, adopted “a human rights and democracy promotion agenda,” premised on the belief that “the regime type of other states matters, and if they are democracies they will be less threatening to the United States.”³⁰⁸ In the estimation of Tony Smith, “No administration since [Woodrow] Wilson’s has been as vigorous or as consistent in its dedication to the promotion of democracy abroad as that of Ronald Reagan.”³⁰⁹

Let us consider the three cases mentioned by Ikenberry, cases “that reflected a strong commitment to the expansion of democracy.” The first of these was El Salvador, which received several billion dollars of US aid during Reagan’s tenure, much of which was intended for the Salvadorian military and police, which fought a war against the FMLN guerrillas throughout the 1980s. The Salvadorian security forces received this

³⁰⁶Quoted in Lou Cannon, *President Reagan: The Role of a Lifetime* (New York: Public Affairs, 2000), p. 272.

³⁰⁷ Shultz, *Turmoil and Triumph*, p. 982.

³⁰⁸ Ikenberry, “America’s Liberal Grand Strategy: Democracy and National Security in the Post-War Era,” p. 125.

³⁰⁹ Smith, *America’s Mission*, p. 304.

windfall despite a truly horrific record of human rights violations. In 1981, Reagan's first year in office, at least 13,000 people were killed as a result of the war in El Salvador, with most of these deaths attributable to the security forces and the death squads with which they were associated. By the time the conflict ended in 1992, "some 80,000 people [had] died, most of them innocent civilians killed by the military and the government's security forces, armed and bankrolled by Washington."³¹⁰ Evidently, therefore, human rights were not the Reagan administration's top priority in El Salvador.

Despite the horrific death toll, Reagan in 1984 lauded El Salvador as a country that "has made great progress toward democracy." The president made this judgement on the basis that El Salvador "has held three elections."³¹¹ The US did indeed pressure its Salvadorian allies to hold elections, but these contests were flawed. The March 1982 vote for a constituent assembly took place in "the absence of an opposition press, free speech, or freedom of assembly, not to mention the military's close watch on individual voting in the ballot places."³¹² Leftist candidates did not participate for fear that they would be killed. Furthermore, the US saw a role for itself in determining the winner. The CIA provided the Christian Democrats with US\$2 million to help their cause, not enough to sway the result, as it turned out, for a coalition of right-wing parties emerged victorious. At that point, US Ambassador to El Salvador Deane Hinton was forced to intervene, convincing the army to impose a president acceptable to themselves and the US on the political parties.³¹³ The 1984 contest was, in the words of Thomas Walker, an "unsavory example" of the Central American version of democracy. Voters were given numbered, translucent ballot papers which they were obliged to deposit in clear ballot boxes. In addition, "some voting booths were not fully curtained," while voters, who were legally required to vote, had their ID cards stamped to prove they had done so. The US provided Christian Democrat presidential candidate José Napoleón Duarte with US\$1.4 million to increase his hopes of victory, and this time the expenditure paid off.³¹⁴

³¹⁰ LeoGrande, *Our Own Backyard*, pp. 626n20, 583.

³¹¹ Reagan, "Address to the Nation on United States Policy in Central America," p. 663.

³¹² LaFeber, *Inevitable Revolutions*, p. 317.

³¹³ LeoGrande, *Our Own Backyard*, pp. 160, 164-5.

³¹⁴ Walker, *Nicaragua*, p. 158; LaFeber, *Inevitable Revolutions*, p. 318.

Walter LaFeber has written that “The ultimate test of a democracy is the protection of individual life and liberty.”³¹⁵ In light of the tens of thousands of deaths in Nicaragua and El Salvador, Tony Smith’s assertion that “the Reagan Doctrine did indeed serve the end of bringing about democracy in Central America”³¹⁶ is therefore questionable. Smith of course restricts his understanding of democracy to “free elections,” but even if we accept such a definition, there is scant evidence to support his conclusion. President Reagan and his foreign policy team opposed elections in Nicaragua, and the contests they promoted in El Salvador were clearly flawed. In short, the Reagan Doctrine did not bring about meaningful democracy in Central America, and was instead a major reason for the destruction and upheaval in the region in the 1980s. LaFeber offers a far more realistic summation of what occurred in Central America in that decade, observing that “the years from 1979 to 1991 turned out to be the bloodiest, most violent, and most destructive era in Central America’s post-1820 history.” Noting that a minimum of 200,000 people were killed in the region’s various wars and that millions were displaced or became refugees, he concludes that it was a “catastrophe.”³¹⁷

Tony Smith has commended the Reagan administration for its “unparalleled Wilsonianism in its commitment to the promotion of democracy worldwide.”³¹⁸ This is hard to support, and not just because of US policy in Nicaragua and El Salvador. The administration also supported the government of Guatemala, which, like its counterpart in El Salvador, slaughtered tens of thousands of its own citizens as part of its war against Guatemala’s own leftist guerrillas. Reagan was an admirer of the Guatemalan generals. On a visit to Latin America in December 1982, he described the leader of the Guatemalan military dictatorship, General Ríos Montt, as “a man of great personal integrity” and affirmed that he was “inclined to believe that [the generals had] been given a bum rap” on human rights.³¹⁹ This regime in the early eighties “unleashed one of the most vicious counterinsurgency campaigns in Latin American history.”³²⁰ Reagan’s government also had good relations with Panama, a country the US president considered one of “Central

³¹⁵ LaFeber, *Inevitable Revolutions*, p. 365.

³¹⁶ Smith, *America’s Mission*, p. 303.

³¹⁷ LaFeber, *Inevitable Revolutions*, p. 362.

³¹⁸ Smith, *America’s Mission*, p. 304.

³¹⁹ Quoted in LeoGrande, *Our Own Backyard*, p. 180; and Richard Wilson, “Continued Counterinsurgency: Civilian Rule in Guatemala,” in Gills et al, *Low Intensity Democracy*, p. 144.

³²⁰ Wilson, “Continued Counterinsurgency: Civilian Rule in Guatemala,” p. 131.

America's democratic neighbors,"³²¹ despite the holding of a fraudulent election in 1984. Panama was ruled by a strongman, General Manuel Antonio Noriega, who was himself the target of a later US democracy promotion effort in 1989-90. In the early and mid-eighties, however, Noriega was a very useful American ally and a CIA asset of many years, whose services in aid of the contras were particularly well received in Washington. Noriega had rigged the vote in 1984 to ensure victory for his candidate, Nicolás Ardito Barletta. The US knew the election had been stolen, but George Shultz attended Barletta's inauguration nonetheless.³²² The administration also maintained very cordial relations with assorted authoritarian rulers and regimes further afield, like Saudi Arabia's King Fahd, Egypt's Hosni Mubarak, Zaire's Mobutu Sese Soso, and the Kuomintang in Taiwan.

Returning to the three cases of democracy promotion cited by Ikenberry, the administration's policies towards the Philippines and Chile offer more support for Ikenberry's claims. Reagan was very close to Ferdinand Marcos, the dictator of the Philippines, and relations were very good early on in Reagan's tenure. When Marcos attempted to steal the 1986 election from his opponent, Cory Aquino, Reagan was loath to cast off his embattled friend. When questioned about the electoral fraud Reagan opined that it might have occurred "on both sides."³²³ By this stage, however, most of his administration had come to accept that Marcos was an embarrassment and had to go, and the president was eventually brought round to the realisation that Marcos needed to step down. As Francis Fukuyama has remarked, the US ended up playing "a critical role in easing Ferdinand Marcos out of office." As for Chile, President Reagan had considerable respect for the Chilean leader, General Augusto Pinochet. Reagan liked him on the grounds that he was a zealous anti-communist, so zealous in fact that he was willing to "disappear" suspected subversives. Indeed, "the administration warmly supported Pinochet until persistent unrest in Chile and Pinochet's unyielding response raised concerns of a long-term polarization of Chilean society."³²⁴ In light of these fears, "in 1988 Washington quietly dropped its support for...Pinochet when he unexpectedly called

³²¹ Reagan, "Address to the Nation on United States Policy in Central America," p. 660.

³²² Carothers, *In the Name of Democracy*, p. 168.

³²³ Quoted in Smith, *America's Mission*, p. 282.

³²⁴ Carothers, *In the Name of Democracy*, p. 194.

for a referendum on his rule, and pressed him to accept the results of the “no” vote.³²⁵ This policy shift occurred despite the reluctance of Reagan to distance the US from Pinochet.³²⁶ The Reagan administration also backed democratic transitions in erstwhile allies South Korea, Paraguay, and Haiti in the mid- and late-1980s. In sum, then, the record of the Reagan administration was mixed, although its policies towards the likes of Nicaragua and El Salvador show that the assertions of Tony Smith and Ikenberry are undoubtedly overblown.

³²⁵ Fukuyama, *After the Neocons*, p. 135.

³²⁶ Towards the end of his presidency, and long after numerous members of the administration began advocating the Chilean dictator’s ouster, Reagan told a group of officials that “Pinochet saved Chile from communism” and that “we should have him here on a state visit.” Quoted in *Ibid*, p. 156.

4. The Clinton Presidency: “Upholding” Democracy in Haiti

This chapter concerns the role of democracy promotion in President Bill Clinton’s foreign policy. The chapter is divided into seven parts. The first section consists of an overview of Haitian history up to and including the tumultuous events that occurred in the early 1990s, while George H.W. Bush was in the White House. This is followed by a look at the world view of the incoming Clinton foreign policy team. The third part of the chapter involves a review of US policy towards Haiti up to the reinstatement of the exiled Haitian president, Jean-Bertrand Aristide, in October 1994, with the fourth section continuing the story up until Clinton’s departure from Washington in January 2001. In the next part I discuss whether the administration’s attempts to further democracy in Haiti were successful; this is followed by some conclusions regarding the relative importance of democracy promotion in Clinton’s Haiti policy. In the final section I broaden the analysis to Clinton’s foreign policy as a whole.

Historical Background: US-Haiti Relations

Considering Haiti’s present woes (incompetent and self-interested leaders, a feeble state, mass unemployment, deforestation, soil erosion, drugs running, endemic corruption, extreme levels of poverty, and an AIDS crisis), it is remarkable that during the eighteenth century it was the richest colony in the world.³²⁷ The French overlords of Saint Domingue, as the western third of the island of Hispaniola was then known, established a plantation economy based on sugar, cotton, coffee and other products, generating fabulous riches. This wealth was only achievable through the ruthless exploitation of the slave workforce, which the French imported from West Africa and literally worked to death. A successful slave revolt put an end to French rule, with Haitian independence declared in 1804. The new state was treated as an international

³²⁷ Haiti’s troubles are pithily summed up by President Clinton’s second secretary of state, Madeleine Albright, in her memoirs: “Perhaps 75 percent of its people are ill-fed, ill-housed, ill-clad, or just plain ill. Its population is seven million and rising; experts say its land can support a population of three million. Most of its trees were long ago burned for charcoal.” Madeleine Albright, *Madam Secretary: A Memoir* (London: Pan Books, 2004), p. 156.

outcast, however, due to its unique status as a country of freed slaves in a world dominated by slave-owning nations, and its future financial misery was set in motion when “Haiti agreed, in 1825, to pay its old colonial master a ‘compensation’ of some 150 million francs for the loss of its slaves...and to grant punishing commercial discounts.”³²⁸ Needless to say, these payments, which could only be made by borrowing from French banks and which continued until 1947,³²⁹ “had a catastrophic effect on the new nation’s delicate economy.”³³⁰

Politics in Haiti in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries was marked by severe instability, and it was with the avowed aim of putting an end to such chaos that the United States invaded in 1915. One of US President Woodrow Wilson’s ostensible attempts to teach those south of the border “to elect good men,” the nineteen year US occupation was in fact characterised by some deeply undemocratic actions. Notwithstanding his pro-democracy pretensions, Wilson, who was a racist,³³¹ “sent in a High Commissioner to directly rule the country, which became not a mere protectorate, but an outright colony.” In addition to “excluding all blacks from public life,” the American occupiers also dissolved the Haitian parliament when it refused to ratify a constitution drawn up by the US, and reinstated forced labour.³³² As the occupation came to an end in 1934, responsibility for law and order passed from the occupiers to the US-trained Haitian army, an institution which, like the National Guard in Nicaragua, became notorious for its corruption and proclivity for employing wanton violence against the country’s inhabitants.

In 1957 François “Papa Doc” Duvalier became president of Haiti and established “a despotic tyranny,” in which “Fear occasioned by state-sponsored terrorism was the order of the day.”³³³ In order to shield himself from potential overthrow by the army and

³²⁸ Peter Hallward, “Option Zero in Haiti,” *New Left Review*, vol. 27 (May/June 2004), p. 26.

³²⁹ *Ibid*, p. 26.

³³⁰ Paul Farmer, *The Uses of Haiti*, 3rd Edition (Monroe, ME: Common Courage Press, 2006), p. 67.

³³¹ The historian Margaret MacMillan has commented, with some understatement, that “Wilson...was not especially enlightened when it came to race.” Wilson’s distaste for blacks was evident from the fact that he “refused to allow black combat troops to fight alongside white Americans in the [first world] war, preferring to place them under French command.” Margaret MacMillan, *Paris 1919: Six Months that Changed the World* (New York: Random House, 2003), p. 319.

³³² Farmer, *Uses of Haiti*, p. 81; Robinson, *Promoting Polyarchy*, pp. 264-5.

³³³ Jean-Germain Gros, “Haiti: The Political Economy and Sociology of Decay and Renewal,” *Latin American Research Review*, vol. 35, no. 3 (2000), p. 216.

to carry out the violent repression of real or imagined opponents, Duvalier established his own body of thugs known as the Tonton Macoutes. Some 50,000 Haitians are believed to have killed by François Duvalier and his son Jean-Claude,³³⁴ who also went by the sobriquet “Baby Doc,” and who took over as “president for life” in 1971 aged nineteen. Notwithstanding their callous disdain for the lives of their subjects, the Duvaliers were considered useful Cold War allies by Washington, for regardless of their flaws, they were at least staunch anti-communists.³³⁵ US aid, both military and economic, played an important role in shoring up the Duvalier family dynasty, although it should be mentioned that “relations between the Duvaliers and Washington became highly strained at certain moments, particularly in the early years of Kennedy’s Alliance for Progress and under Jimmy Carter’s “human rights” policy.”³³⁶

The elder Duvalier’s rule witnessed the political ascendancy of a small section of the majority black population, who pushed aside the traditionally dominant mulatto minority.³³⁷ Under “Baby Doc,” however, this newly empowered black bourgeoisie was supplanted by mulatto “technocrats,” arousing the enmity of erstwhile supporters of the regime. “Baby Doc” launched an ill-fated economic liberalisation program in the 1970s, precipitating an economic crisis which was only made worse by the president-for-life’s rash decision to embark on a tentative political opening. As dissident voices appeared Duvalier inevitably resorted to harsh repression, eventually leading to nationwide protests in 1985. With the military and the Haitian elite fearing that the continued existence of the state, rather than simply the regime, was imperilled, they withdrew their support for Duvalier, and he fled into exile in February 1986.³³⁸ The Reagan administration, which for several years had viewed Jean-Claude Duvalier “as a net positive” on the basis of his

³³⁴ Robinson, *Promoting Polyarchy*, p. 268.

³³⁵ François Duvalier passed laws which deemed “Communist activities” to be “crimes against the security of the state, in whatsoever form,” and which stipulated further that “The authors and accomplices of these crimes shall be sentenced to death.” Quoted in Farmer, *Uses of Haiti*, p. 94.

³³⁶ Robinson, *Promoting Polyarchy*, p. 269.

³³⁷ The mulattoes comprise about 10% of the Haitian population. Although they relinquished political control under François Duvalier, they nonetheless “managed to keep a firm hold on the economy.” Robert Fatton, Jr., *Haiti’s Predatory Republic: The Unending Transition to Democracy* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 2002), pp. 55-6.

³³⁸ For an outline of the causes of Jean-Claude Duvalier’s fall, see *Ibid*, pp. 56-64.

anti-communism, was unprepared for his fall and waited until January 1986 before calling for his departure.³³⁹

Any hope that Haitians may have felt in the wake of Duvalier's exit was soon squashed by the reactionary military regimes that followed. Then, in 1990, elections were held, with former Salesian priest Jean-Bertrand Aristide trouncing his opponents to win the presidency with 67 percent of the vote. However, while Aristide was undoubtedly an icon of the impoverished majority he was by no means universally popular. His calls for social justice and defiant broadsides against the army and the bourgeoisie had earned him the hostility of these formidable sectors of Haitian society. Aristide was also deeply critical of the United States, which he considered an imperialist nation and which he referred to as the "cold country to the north."³⁴⁰ It should therefore come as no shock that policymakers in Washington were less than overjoyed at the prospect of Aristide governing Haiti, and chose to back presidential candidate Marc Bazin in 1990.³⁴¹ Bazin fared poorly at the polls, however, securing just 14% of votes cast. Amazingly, however, Haitian politicians later alleged that despite the voters' overwhelming endorsement of Aristide, and notwithstanding President George H.W. Bush's public endorsement of the goal of promoting democracy, "the United States had such a difficult time countenancing [Aristide's] 1990 victory that a delegation headed by Jimmy Carter asked him to desist in favor of Marc Bazin the very night of his electoral triumph."³⁴²

Aristide's presidency was destined to be short-lived, for in September 1991 the army staged a coup led by General Raoul Cédras, whom Aristide, displaying questionable judgment, had himself appointed to the position of army chief of staff. Aristide fled to Venezuela, then the United States, where he would spend three years agitating for international support for his return. Although the Bush administration publicly condemned Aristide's ouster, and voted at the Organisation of American States for an embargo against the newly installed Haitian junta, Washington's attitude towards the coup was in fact most ambiguous. Less than two weeks after the coup the *New York*

³³⁹ Carothers, *In the Name of Democracy*, pp. 183-4.

³⁴⁰ Alex Dupuy, *Haiti in the New World Order: The Limits of the Democratic Revolution* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1997), p. 89.

³⁴¹ Bazin was an economist who had the dubious distinction of having once spent five months as Jean-Claude Duvalier's finance minister. Robinson, *Promoting Polyarchy*, p. 287.

³⁴² Fatton, *Haiti's Predatory Republic*, p. 90.

Times reported that US officials had “signaled privately that they were moving away from their unequivocal support of Father Aristide in light of concerns over his human rights record.”³⁴³ Then, in February 1992, the Bush administration exempted US companies involved in the assembly sector in Haiti from the embargo, an action which, in David Malone’s words, “seriously undermined sanctions aimed at compelling [Aristide’s] return to Haiti.”³⁴⁴ Also, whereas other states ended all non-humanitarian aid to Haiti while the junta was in power, USAID “took the opportunity to work extensively and safely with pro-regime people and groups who were not part of the democratic movement,” prompting Oxfam America to complain to the House Appropriations Committee that “allegations have been made...that USAID funded projects have been knowingly or unknowingly...politically and financially manipulated by the military regime and its civilian supporters.”³⁴⁵ USAID was known to have qualms about Aristide, and had opposed his plan to raise the minimum wage, fearing this would undermine Haiti’s comparative economic advantage in ultra-cheap labour.³⁴⁶

One player in the US foreign policy bureaucracy that was working assiduously against Aristide’s return was the CIA. The Agency had long-standing links with senior figures in the Haitian military; indeed, Cédras and several of his co-conspirators had been paid CIA informants prior to the coup of 1991.³⁴⁷ In July 1992, the CIA’s Brian Latell, a specialist on Latin America, visited Haiti and on his return wrote a report praising Cédras as “a conscientious military leader who genuinely wishes to minimize his role in politics”; he also claimed that “there is no systematic or frequent lethal violence aimed at civilians,”³⁴⁸ despite abundant evidence to the contrary published in the media and by human rights groups. In the wake of the coup, the CIA recruited a man named Emmanuel

³⁴³ Quoted in Farmer, *Uses of Haiti*, p. 156.

³⁴⁴ Ibid, p. 166; David Malone, *Decision-Making in the UN Security Council: The Case of Haiti, 1990-1997* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1998), p. 161. The assembly industry “comprised most U.S. investments in Haiti.” See Morris Morley and Chris McGillion, “Disobedient Generals” and the Politics of Redemocratization: The Clinton Administration and Haiti,” *Political Science Quarterly*, vol. 112, no. 3 (1997), p. 366.

³⁴⁵ Jane Regan, “A.I.D.ing U.S. Interests in Haiti,” *Covert Action Quarterly*, no. 51 (Winter 1994-5), p. 56.

³⁴⁶ Lisa McGowan, “Democracy Undermined, Economic Justice Denied: Structural Adjustment and the Aid Juggernaut in Haiti,” (January 1997) <<http://www.developmentgap.org>>

³⁴⁷ Robinson, *Promoting Polyarchy*, pp. 279-80; Farmer, *Uses of Haiti*, pp. 183-4.

³⁴⁸ These quotes from Latell are in Fatton, *Haiti’s Predatory Republic*, p. 104 n.66; and David Grann, “Giving “the devil” his due,” *Atlantic Monthly* (June 2001) (electronic version). Around 5,000 Haitians are believed to have been murdered by the junta. See Charles Arthur, *Haiti in Focus: A Guide to the People, Politics and Culture* (London: Latin America Bureau, 2002), p. 25.

“Toto” Constant, who would go on to found the murderous Haitian paramilitary organisation FRAPH (Front for the Advancement and Progress of Haiti). According to David Grann, “Constant’s relationship with U.S. intelligence, according to both Constant and several CIA officials, continued undisturbed until the spring of 1994,” long after FRAPH had been implicated in numerous cases of murder, torture and rape.³⁴⁹

It is not at all surprising that Aristide’s overthrow engendered such mixed feelings within the US foreign policy bureaucracy. Although the US was officially committed to supporting democracy in the Western Hemisphere, Jean-Bertrand Aristide was just the sort of leftist leader that Washington had spent decades undermining during the Cold War. As John Shattuck, who headed the State Department’s human rights bureau under Clinton, has observed, “American Cold War arrangements lingered on in Haiti, shaping U.S. views about both the Aristide and Cedras camps.”³⁵⁰ There were as a result quite a few US officials who eyed Aristide with considerable suspicion. Any plans that president-elect Clinton had for promoting democracy in Haiti and restoring Aristide would face considerable opposition from powerful actors in the American foreign policy-making process.

World View of the Clinton Administration

As the first president to enter office after the end of the Cold War, Bill Clinton was faced with an international political environment that offered grounds both for optimism and concern. The implosion of the United States’ erstwhile rival, the USSR, meant that Washington now faced no state to rival its political and military power, offering American policymakers the opportunity to turn the new realities of the international system to America’s advantage. On the other hand, there still existed outposts of hostility to the United States, most notably in that perennial hotspot, the Middle East, as well as the danger that the ethnic conflict consuming the former Yugoslavia would spiral even further out of control. These ambiguities were emphasised

³⁴⁹ Grann, “Giving “the devil” his due.” There have been allegations that the CIA encouraged the formation of FRAPH. See Ibid; Farmer, *Uses of Haiti*, pp. 321-2.

³⁵⁰ John Shattuck, *Freedom on Fire: Human Rights Wars and America’s Response* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003), p. 79.

by Clinton's first secretary of state, Warren Christopher, in his confirmation hearings before the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations in January 1993. In his opening statement, Christopher emphasised that "we have arrived at a uniquely promising moment...The Cold War is over...The tide of democratic aspirations is rising from Tibet to Central America." Having explained his reasons for optimism Christopher then proceeded to temper this hopeful message, warning that the end of the Cold War had "lifted the lid on many cauldrons of long-simmering conflict." Furthermore, there remained a number of "ruthless and expansionist despots" hostile to the US, such as Iraqi President Saddam Hussein.³⁵¹

Christopher outlined what he called "three pillars" of American foreign policy under Clinton. These three foreign policy priorities included making "America's economic security...a primary goal" of foreign policy, maintaining America's military preponderance, and "promoting the spread of democracy and markets abroad."³⁵² Christopher's testimony corresponded to the message Clinton had presented during the 1992 presidential campaign, when "Clinton had outlined what he considered to be the three foreign policy priorities that the next commander in chief would confront: updating and restructuring American military and security capabilities, elevating the role of economics in international affairs, and promoting democracy abroad."³⁵³ More specific policy goals pinpointed by Christopher included aiding Russia's transition from failed communist behemoth to capitalist democracy, ensuring that NATO remained intact and relevant, getting tough with Serbia, which was seen as the villain in the conflict in the Balkans, and adopting "a vigilant stance toward both Iraq and Iran," which, Christopher asserted, "seem determined to sow violence and disorder throughout [the Middle East] and even beyond."³⁵⁴

³⁵¹ Warren Christopher, *In the Stream of History: Shaping Foreign Policy for a New Era* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1998), p. 23.

³⁵² *Ibid*, p. 28.

³⁵³ Douglas Brinkley, "Democratic Enlargement: The Clinton Doctrine," *Foreign Policy*, no. 106 (Spring 1997), pp. 111-2.

³⁵⁴ Christopher, *In the Stream of History*, p. 32. According to Richard Melanson, the Clinton administration's "fundamental strategic objectives" consisted of "nurturing Russia" and containing so-called rogue, or "backlash," states like Iran, Iraq and North Korea. Melanson argues that the crises in Bosnia, Somalia, and Haiti, all of which received considerable attention within the administration, were really "distracting sideshows" from its core foreign policy goals. Richard A. Melanson, *American Foreign*

There can be no doubt that pursuing American economic interests was at the heart of Clinton's foreign policy, which is hardly surprising when we consider the importance the president had attached to reviving the US economy while a presidential candidate. What is noteworthy is that Clinton and his foreign policy team believed that the pursuit of American economic objectives was entirely compatible with the goal of spreading democracy abroad. In fact, the two were considered mutually reinforcing: the US economic interests of promoting free trade and convincing other states to adopt free market principles were viewed as concomitants of democracy promotion. As Douglas Brinkley has put it, Clinton "advanced the view that democracy would prevail in the post-Cold War world through trade pacts as much as ballot boxes."³⁵⁵ The logic was that economic liberalisation would inevitably lead to a political liberalisation as well, which explains why the administration had such high hopes for democracy in authoritarian countries like China that were opening up their economies while still refusing to embrace democratization.

Democracy promotion occupied a central place in the Clinton administration's foreign policy strategy, rhetorically at least. Indeed, democratic "enlargement" was at times presented as *the goal* of Clinton's foreign policy, with the president's first national security adviser, Tony Lake, making the following statement in September 1993: "The successor to a doctrine of containment must be a strategy of enlargement – enlargement of the world's free community of market democracies."³⁵⁶ It was offered as a reason for which the United States might resort to military force: in October 1994, Lake gave a speech at Harvard University in which he outlined seven criteria for the application of force, one of which was to "preserve, promote and defend democracy, which in turn enhances our security and the spread of our values."³⁵⁷ As mentioned in chapter two, high-ranking members of the Clinton administration were adherents of the democratic peace thesis propounded by Michael Doyle, Bruce Russett and other scholars; they justified their declared commitment to democracy promotion by alluding to the alleged

Policy since the Vietnam War: The Search for Consensus from Nixon to Clinton, 2nd Edition (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 1996), p. 266.

³⁵⁵ Brinkley, "Democratic Enlargement: The Clinton Doctrine," p. 125.

³⁵⁶ Quoted in Karin Von Hippel, *Democracy by Force: US Military Intervention in the Post-Cold War World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), p. 10.

³⁵⁷ Quoted in Melanson, *American Foreign Policy since the Vietnam War*, p. 265.

security benefits that would derive from an international system full of democratic states. Democracies do not go to war with each other, administration officials asserted, so a world community of democratic states would be safer. This line of thinking was elucidated by Deputy Secretary of State Strobe Talbott in a 1996 article in *Foreign Affairs*. Talbott claimed that Clinton had made “the support of democracy a priority of his administration’s diplomacy in Latin America, Asia, Africa, Central Europe, and the former Soviet Union,” because he believed that democracies were “more likely...to be reliable partners in trade and diplomacy, and less likely to threaten the peace.”³⁵⁸ He argued that the presence of more democracies would make the US more prosperous and secure, as “democracies are demonstrably more likely to maintain their international commitments, less likely to engage in terrorism or wreak environmental damage, and less likely to make war on each other.”³⁵⁹ The theme was also highlighted by Secretary of State Christopher, who in June 1993 told the World Conference on Human Rights in Vienna that “Democracy is the best way to advance lasting peace and prosperity in the world,” with the promotion of democracy constituting “the front line of global security.”³⁶⁰

Embracing the goal of promoting democracy internationally had the additional advantage of dovetailing with the traditional US commitment to liberal and democratic values, although it should not be forgotten that Washington historically has been willing to sacrifice its ideals when its national interests have been at stake. Whatever the Clinton administration’s reasons for elevating democracy promotion to the top of the foreign policy agenda, it faced a serious test in this regard as soon as the new president took power. The test lay in Haiti, where a democratically elected president had been overthrown by a military junta that had then launched a wave of atrocities against the Haitian population, driving thousands to embark on perilous journeys over the water towards Florida. The Bush administration had shown little inclination to make a concerted effort to face down Haiti’s military rulers; time would tell whether Clinton would live up to his own pro-democracy rhetoric in Haiti.

³⁵⁸ Talbott, “Democracy and the National Interest,” p. 47.

³⁵⁹ Ibid, pp. 48-9.

³⁶⁰ Christopher, *In the Stream of History*, pp. 65, 67.

Clinton's Policy in Haiti up to the Reinstatement of Aristide

As a presidential candidate Clinton had castigated George H.W. Bush for his policy of forcibly repatriating Haitian boat people fleeing the violence in their country. Expectations were therefore high that policy would shift under the new president. However, even before his inauguration Clinton was obliged to perform an embarrassing volte-face, announcing in January 1993 that he would continue Bush's policy of returning Haitian refugees without processing their asylum requests.³⁶¹ According to John Shattuck, who served as Clinton's assistant secretary of state for human rights and humanitarian affairs, the president's change of heart was the result of "political realities": "According to seasoned Washington observers, December 1992 intelligence reports indicated that Clinton's campaign charge against Bush of coddling dictators had raised the hopes of Haitians that the United States would open its doors to refugees fleeing the Cedras regime." The intelligence warned that "hundreds of thousands" of refugees might head for Florida if Clinton didn't reverse his position.³⁶² Clinton has since tried to explain this about turn by alluding to humanitarian imperatives, claiming he "was concerned that large numbers of [Haitians] would perish in trying to get here in rickety boats on the high seas."³⁶³ Clinton's professed concern for the refugees' safety would have been more believable were it not for the fact that there was abundant evidence that "large numbers" of Haitians were perishing in Haiti at the hands of the junta, and the new president was sending them straight back to face more of the same. The decision was naturally quite controversial, so to soften the blow to the deposed Haitian president, "Clinton reportedly promised that he would eventually restore Aristide to power."³⁶⁴

In March 1993 Clinton held a meeting with Aristide at the White House. In a statement to the press afterwards, Clinton underscored his support for Aristide's return to

³⁶¹ Farmer, *Uses of Haiti*, pp. 172-3.

³⁶² Shattuck, *Freedom on Fire*, p. 82. Warren Christopher offers the same justification in his memoirs. See *In the Stream of History*, p. 175.

³⁶³ Bill Clinton, *My Life* (London: Hutchinson, 2004), p. 463. Madeleine Albright, who served as US ambassador to the UN in Clinton's first term, also invoked humanitarian motives to explain the decision: "By discouraging migrants from taking to sea in leaky rafts and overcrowded boats, we saved lives." Albright, *Madam Secretary*, p. 157.

³⁶⁴ Philippe R. Girard, *Clinton in Haiti: The 1994 U.S. Invasion of Haiti* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), p. 56.

Haiti as president: “To those who have blocked the restoration of democracy, I want to make it clear in the strongest terms that we will not now or ever support the continuation of an illegal Government in Haiti.” It was what he said next that was really significant, however. The president declared that “we want to step up dramatically the pace of negotiations to restore President Aristide under conditions of national reconciliation and mutual respect for human rights with a program of genuine economic progress.”³⁶⁵ While the word “reconciliation” sounded innocuous, it had important implications. “Translated, “reconciliation” meant an amnesty for and no popular reprisals against the coup leaders and those who killed, tortured, raped, and mutilated Haitian citizens during the three years of the junta,” notes Alex Dupuy.³⁶⁶ As for Clinton’s reference to “a program of genuine economic progress,” this was an anodyne way of saying that Aristide should consent to neoliberal economic reforms, which Washington and the main international lending agencies would later spend considerable time foisting on him. The important point is that although the US government publicly backed Aristide’s return, this support was not unequivocal. Human rights abuses by the junta were to be downplayed, and international lenders, rather than the Haitian government, were to decide upon economic policy if and when Aristide’s presidency resumed.

It is not at all surprising that the Clinton administration’s approach to the Haitian crisis was notable for its equivocation. As we saw above, when Bush was president various actors within the foreign policy bureaucracy had sought to prevent Aristide’s reinstatement. This hostility was carried over into the Clinton administration. As John Shattuck has observed, there existed “defense and intelligence interests inside the U.S. government that were aligned with the status quo in Haiti,” and who feared that any plan to restore the exiled president would jeopardise “U.S. military and intelligence ties to those in Haiti who opposed Aristide.”³⁶⁷ CIA analyst Brian Latell, relaying rumours concocted by the Haitian junta, told sympathetic members of the United States Congress that Aristide was mentally ill and had once been forced to seek psychiatric help. This confirmed the suspicions of Republican opponents of Aristide like Senator Jesse Helms,

³⁶⁵ Quoted in Malone, *Decision-Making in the UN Security Council*, p. 81.

³⁶⁶ Dupuy, *Haiti in the New World Order*, p. 141.

³⁶⁷ Shattuck, *Freedom on Fire*, pp. 85, 83.

who publicly denounced Aristide as “a psychopath.”³⁶⁸ The claims were in fact fabrications, but they served to discredit Aristide. The CIA and congressional Republicans were joined in their dislike of Aristide by the Pentagon, which was also extremely leery of efforts to restore the Haitian president, believing that parachuting a left-wing populist back into office was not the sort of goal US soldiers should be asked to risk their lives for.

Despite the opposition of powerful institutions like the CIA and the Pentagon, the Clinton administration nonetheless quickly distinguished itself from its predecessor by demonstrating a willingness to expend a considerable amount of effort searching for a settlement in Haiti. Shortly after taking office Clinton appointed Lawrence Pezzullo to serve as his special envoy to Haiti. Pezzullo, along with UN/OAS envoy Dante Caputo, set about fashioning a plan acceptable to both Aristide and the junta. In May 1993 Pezzullo and Caputo attempted to cajole the junta into accepting an international military and police presence in Haiti of between five hundred and one thousand soldiers and police; this force would help to ensure security during a transition back to civilian rule, with Aristide returning as president. Cédras, however, spurned the offer, infuriating the US government in the process.³⁶⁹ In the words of Alex Dupuy, “Clinton and members of his administration, who had believed that the junta wanted a deal, felt double-crossed and angered by its defiance.”³⁷⁰ Washington made its displeasure plain by strengthening its own sanctions against the Cédras regime with an asset freeze on the coup leaders and their most prominent supporters, and took the lead in pushing through UN Security Council Resolution 841 of 16 June 1993, which banned oil and weapons exports to Haiti.³⁷¹

The imposition of UN mandatory sanctions was enough to convince the Haitian dictatorship of the wisdom of participating in internationally mediated talks in New York at the end of June 1993. After a week of indirect contacts (Aristide wouldn’t meet Cédras in person),³⁷² the Haitian parties signed an accord which came to be known as the Governor’s Island Agreement. Under the terms of the accord Aristide was to nominate a

³⁶⁸ Quoted in Girard, *Clinton in Haiti*, pp. 82-3.

³⁶⁹ Malone, *Decision-Making in the UN Security Council*, pp. 83-4.

³⁷⁰ Dupuy, *Haiti in the New World Order*, p. 144.

³⁷¹ Farmer, *Uses of Haiti*, p. 175; Malone, *Decision-Making in the UN Security Council*, p. 84.

³⁷² Malone, *Decision-Making in the UN Security Council*, p. 86.

prime minister, who was to be approved by the Haitian parliament, after which UN sanctions would end, an international military and police force would be sent to Haiti, the coup-plotters would be granted amnesty for crimes committed after the president's ouster, and Aristide would be reinstated as president. A good deal of persuasion was required before Aristide agreed to put his name to the deal: US Vice-President Al Gore, Warren Christopher and Tony Lake all phoned the Haitian president in order to induce him to sign.³⁷³ The Governor's Island Agreement was subjected to withering criticism by human rights groups working in Haiti. Colin Granderson, the head of the UN/OAS International Civilian Mission in Haiti (MICIVIH), which was responsible for monitoring the military regime's human rights performance, later lamented the fact that MICIVIH had been excluded from the negotiations, and criticised the accord for having "made no mention of the need for the military to improve the human rights situation." Granderson added that "This political marginalization of the mission and human rights undoubtedly reinforced the military in its belief that human rights were not a priority for the international community."³⁷⁴

Granderson's doubts were very well-founded, for, as Paul Farmer has observed, "the Governor's Island agreement seemed only to trigger a rash of disappearances and summary executions as the military took advantage of their new-found legitimacy."³⁷⁵ When the US navy ship the *Harlan County* attempted to dock in the capital, Port-au-Prince, on October 11, 1993, carrying troops which were to form part of the international force provided for in the Governor's Island Agreement, ruffians from the paramilitary group FRAPH, led by CIA asset "Toto" Constant, hurled abuse and threats from the harbour. The prospect of a confrontation was too much for a US administration still recovering from the debacle in Somalia just days earlier, when eighteen American soldiers had been killed in another "humanitarian" operation, and the *Harlan County* was ordered to turn back. With such clear evidence that Cédras and his colleagues had no intention of living up to their side of the bargain reached in New York, the Clinton

³⁷³ Ibid, p. 219 n.66.

³⁷⁴ Colin Granderson, "Military-Humanitarian Ambiguities in Haiti," in Jonathan Moore, ed., *Hard Choices: Moral Dilemmas in Humanitarian Intervention* (Oxford: Rowman & Littlefield, 1998), pp. 103-4.

³⁷⁵ Farmer, *Uses of Haiti*, p. 178. The most notorious murder was that of the well-known pro-Aristide businessman Antoine Izméry, who was executed by soldiers on 11 September in broad daylight. See Ibid, pp. 179-80.

administration pushed for the restoration of UN sanctions, and secured the approval of the Security Council for a naval blockade of Haiti.³⁷⁶

The *Harlan County* incident was emblematic of the shambolic nature of US policy at this point. There was no consensus within the administration for sending US troops to Haiti, with the Defence Department and the CIA firmly against such a deployment. According to Shattuck, “In the first week of October, Secretary of Defence Les Aspin told Tony Lake and Warren Christopher that he was against taking any further steps to prepare the way for Aristide’s return,” on the basis of a CIA report indicating that Haiti’s military “did not intend to live up to their commitments and were preparing to disrupt U.S. military operations.”³⁷⁷ When the decision was finally made to send the *Harlan County* to Haiti the Pentagon delayed its departure without informing the State Department. As the *New York Times* reported: “Some State Department officials said that they felt the Pentagon was throwing up unnecessary roadblocks for a mission of which the US military is wary.”³⁷⁸ FRAPH leader Constant claimed that “he had informed his U.S. employers *ahead of time* that his organization was planning to demonstrate against the *Harlan County*, but that FRAPH members had no intention of fighting and would pose no threat whatsoever” (italics in original). Nonetheless, the CIA advised Washington that US troops would be at risk if they landed, “presumably to scare Clinton administration policymakers and thereby forestall the return of an Aristide they did not like.”³⁷⁹ As we saw above, the CIA was contemptuous of the exiled Haitian president and, according to former *Los Angeles Times* Caribbean bureau chief Kenneth Freed, who was interviewed by Philippe Girard, even planned to make Toto Constant president in his stead: “The CIA hoped that Constant had a chance of beating Aristide in a popularity contest and that he would one day replace Aristide as President of Haiti.”³⁸⁰

Numerous members of the Clinton administration had by this stage accepted that the Haitian military dictatorship was unlikely ever to relinquish power of its own volition. In his memoirs, Warren Christopher wrote that in the wake of the collapse of the Governor’s Island Agreement, “many of us began to understand that no matter what

³⁷⁶ Malone, *Decision-Making in the UN Security Council*, p. 92.

³⁷⁷ Shattuck, *Freedom on Fire*, p. 88.

³⁷⁸ Quoted in Malone, *Decision-Making in the UN Security Council*, p. 222 n.97.

³⁷⁹ Girard, *Clinton in Haiti*, p. 45.

³⁸⁰ Quoted in *Ibid*, p. 188 n. 46.

Cédras said, he would never leave power until forced to do so.”³⁸¹ Likewise, UN Ambassador Madeleine Albright has stated that the lesson of the *Harlan County* fiasco was that “the military leaders had no intention of keeping their word. If they were going to go, they would have to be pushed.”³⁸² It was sentiments such as these that led some officials in the days after the humiliation in Port-au-Prince to briefly advocate military action, before settling for sanctions and a naval blockade. To quote Philippe Girard: “On 14 October, according to interviews with participants, the White House was veering toward intervention at the instigation of Gore, Lake and Christopher.” However, as then-NSC Latin American affairs chief Richard Feinberg told Girard, “the military was dead against the use of force, so there was no invasion then.” Nonetheless, Feinberg added that the embarrassing retreat of the *Harlan County* was ultimately “critical”: “It resulted in tremendous political criticism and contributed to the decision to intervene a year later.”³⁸³

Following the *Harlan County*’s embarrassing failure to dock in Haiti the Clinton administration began to distance itself from the man it was ostensibly working to reinstate, President Aristide. In December 1993, the Haitian prime minister, Robert Malval, whom Aristide had nominated as part of the Governor’s Island Agreement, visited the US and outlined his scheme for ending the crisis, which involved holding a conference of interested parties in Haiti and advancing a solution based on the accord reached at Governor’s Island. Aristide rejected Malval’s plan, enraging officials in Washington. To quote David Malone, “The USA was intensely irritated that Aristide had torpedoed the initiative and was soon reassessing its support for the Haitian President, a move signalled in press leaks.”³⁸⁴ Aristide angered the US administration yet further in early 1994 when he dismissed out of hand the so-called “Monde Plan.” The Monde Plan was brought to Washington by a delegation from the Haitian parliament, and was named after one of its members, who was a founding member of the feared paramilitary organisation FRAPH.³⁸⁵ The delegation’s independence was compromised by the fact that its members had been selected by the US Embassy in Port-au-Prince. In addition, the plan itself had been drafted by the State Department, while the trip was paid for with

³⁸¹ Christopher, *In the Stream of History*, p. 175.

³⁸² Albright, *Madam Secretary*, p. 156.

³⁸³ Girard, *Clinton in Haiti*, p. 44.

³⁸⁴ Malone, *Decision-Making in the UN Security Council*, pp. 99-100.

³⁸⁵ Morley and McGillion, ““Disobedient Generals” and the Politics of Redemocratization,” p. 372.

money from USAID.³⁸⁶ Alex Dupuy has described this gambit as an attempted “coup” against Aristide: “The whole affair was a hoax designed by Pezzullo and the State Department to dupe Aristide into accepting a deal that neutralized him but protected the coup leaders.”³⁸⁷ Washington’s exasperation with the Haitian president was also evident from a draft UN Security Council resolution it put forward in February, which would have empowered the UN secretary general to lift the sanctions against Haiti “if he deemed that the military rulers showed signs of cooperation and Aristide did not.” The proposed resolution also called on Aristide to name a new prime minister “without any guarantee for his own return.”³⁸⁸

Having contemplated discarding Aristide entirely in late 1993 and early 1994, the Clinton administration swung its policy back the other way in the spring of 1994. Although there were important political constituencies vehemently opposed to the Haitian president, such as most Republicans in the US Congress, Clinton was also subjected to countervailing domestic pressure to end the forced repatriation of Haitian refugees and “restore democracy” to Haiti. The forty-member Congressional Black Caucus (CBC) denounced the president’s forcible repatriation of Haitian refugees and advocated military action to remove the military dictatorship and return Aristide. Clinton’s problems were compounded in April when Randall Robinson, the head of the lobbying group TransAfrica, began a hunger-strike in protest at Clinton’s treatment of the refugees. Clinton responded to this wave of discontent by removing Pezzullo, and making William Gray, the African-American president of the United Negro Fund, his special envoy to Haiti.³⁸⁹ The president also tightened US sanctions against the junta in May and June 1994; these actions coincided with the US taking the lead in securing approval of UN Security Council Resolution 917 of 6 May 1994, which banned air travel to and from Haiti, imposed an embargo on all trade except for food and medicine, and placed a travel ban on the Haitian military and plotters and supporters of the coup.³⁹⁰ The administration

³⁸⁶ Dupuy, *Haiti in the New World Order*, p. 155; Malone, *Decision-Making in the UN Security Council*, p. 226 n.31.

³⁸⁷ Dupuy, *Haiti in the New World Order*, pp. 153, 155.

³⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 156.

³⁸⁹ Girard, *Clinton in Haiti*, p. 66. Gray was a former head of the Congressional Black Caucus.

³⁹⁰ UN Security Council Resolution 917, <<http://www.un.org/Docs/scres/1994/scres94.htm>>.

also announced that month that all Haitian refugees would receive asylum hearings rather than being sent straight back home, bringing Robinson's hunger-strike to a close.³⁹¹

On 2 May 1994 Deputy Secretary of State Strobe Talbott emphasised in a senior staff meeting that "we are dead serious about getting Cedras out and Aristide in."³⁹² By this stage, a number of senior officials had concluded that the use, or at least the threat, of force was inevitable if this outcome were to be realised. Talbott was one such official, as was National Security Adviser Tony Lake. The president publicly refused to rule out the use of force, also on 2 May, while William Gray was equally vague, issuing a "thinly veiled threat" in June when he declared that "the military option is on the table."³⁹³ Nonetheless, there still existed considerable opposition within the government to such a policy, notably in the Defence Department, where officials "continued to see Haiti as another Mogadishu,"³⁹⁴ a reference to the botched operation in Somalia in October 1993 that saw 18 US combat deaths. Many members of Congress were likewise extremely leery of sending American soldiers to Haiti, with many Republicans mystified by Clinton's apparent willingness to put US forces in harm's way for the sake of Jean-Bertrand Aristide. According to Shattuck, the hostility exhibited by Congress and the Department of Defence was critical in persuading Clinton to delay military action.³⁹⁵

Despite the scepticism felt by many in the Pentagon and Congress, the administration was moving inexorably towards threatening, and if necessary, employing force to oust Haiti's military dictatorship. The junta was becoming even more recalcitrant around this time, as evidenced by its decision in July to expel MICIVIH. Meanwhile, Clinton's decision to relax immigration restrictions against Haitian refugees, combined with yet more state-sponsored repression in Haiti, had caused a flood of Haitian refugees to take to the seas. With other options exhausted, UN Ambassador Albright "spent most of July 1994 persuading the Security Council to authorize the use of "all necessary means – code for force – to restore Haitian democracy by moving Cedras out and Aristide back

³⁹¹ Malone, *Decision-Making in the UN Security Council*, p. 104.

³⁹² Quoted in Shattuck, *Freedom on Fire*, p. 100-1.

³⁹³ Girard, *Clinton in Haiti*, p. 48; Peceny, *Democracy at the Point of Bayonets*, p. 167.

³⁹⁴ Shattuck, *Freedom on Fire*, p. 101.

³⁹⁵ Clinton, he states, "felt stymied by opposition on Capitol Hill and in the Pentagon to the use of force to help Aristide." *Ibid*, p. 97.

in.”³⁹⁶ Her efforts met with success, and on 31 July 1994 the Security Council passed Resolution 940, which authorised the establishment of “a multinational force...to use all necessary means to facilitate the departure from Haiti of the military leadership” and effect “the prompt return of the legitimately elected President.”³⁹⁷ Still, the junta showed no signs of departing willingly, forcing the Clinton administration to come to a determination on whether or not to go ahead and send in US troops. Even at this point, there was no unanimity within the administration for an invasion. According to Clinton, most of his top foreign policy advisers favoured a military assault, but Secretary of Defence William Perry and the Pentagon were still not convinced. The president, however, “was fed up” with Cédras. “It was time to throw him out.”³⁹⁸

Clinton was nevertheless still chary of invading, in spite of the Haitian’s army’s total inability to resist any attack. His hesitancy at this late stage was induced by the vocal and widespread opposition in Congress to the proposed invasion.³⁹⁹ So, in order to drum up support for the planned attack on Haiti, Clinton went on national TV on 15 September to lay out his case. He excoriated “Cédras and his armed thugs” for carrying out “a reign of terror, executing children, raping women, killing priests,” and warned: “The message of the United States to the Haitian dictators is clear. Your time is up. Leave now, or we will force you from power.”⁴⁰⁰ In addition to the need to end the junta’s human rights abuses, Clinton offered a number of other reasons for the proposed invasion, including the refugee crisis and the need to demonstrate US credibility. However, as Philippe Girard has noted, Clinton was clear that “the need to restore democracy was the single most important explanation for his decision to invade Haiti.”⁴⁰¹ His tough talk notwithstanding, Clinton was, at the eleventh hour, looking for a way out of a seemingly unavoidable clash with Haiti’s feeble armed forces and he therefore agreed to former President Jimmy Carter’s suggestion that he lead a mission to Haiti to coax Cédras into

³⁹⁶ Albright, *Madam Secretary*, p. 157.

³⁹⁷ UN Security Council Resolution 940, <<http://www.un.org/Docs/scres/1994/scres94.htm>>.

³⁹⁸ Clinton, *My Life*, p. 616.

³⁹⁹ The president was likely also influenced by American public opinion: an ABC poll in early September revealed that 73% of respondents objected to an invasion of Haiti by US forces. However, as David Malone has observed, public opinion “proved fickle,” for according to a poll taken on October 15, after the deployment of American soldiers, 55% supported the operation. Peceny, *Democracy at the Point of Bayonets*, p. 168; Malone, *Decision-Making in the UN Security Council*, p. 233 n. 127.

⁴⁰⁰ Quoted in Farmer, *Uses of Haiti*, p. 315.

⁴⁰¹ Girard, *Clinton in Haiti*, p. 29.

stepping down without a fight. As Clinton described it in his memoirs, “Carter desperately wanted to avoid a forced invasion. So did I. Haiti had no military capability; it would be like shooting fish in a barrel.”⁴⁰² Carter duly persuaded Cédras and his colleagues to stand down within a month, in return for an amnesty. The junta pledged not to resist the deployment of US forces, while Carter guaranteed that the military activities of the US-led Multinational Force (MNF) would be coordinated with the Haitian army.⁴⁰³ The stage was thus set for Aristide’s return and the “restoration” of Haitian democracy.

The US-dominated military mission codenamed “Operation Uphold Democracy” began on 19 September 1994 with the arrival in Haiti of American soldiers, whose numbers quickly reached a peak of 21,000.⁴⁰⁴ US troops faced no resistance from the Haitian army (FADH – Armed Forces of Haiti) or indeed from paramilitary groups like FRAPH and were greeted as saviours by the downtrodden Haitian people. President Clinton foresaw a brief stay for the MNF, anticipating that it would soon be replaced by a smaller United Nations peacekeeping force. The president’s desire to pull the bulk of US forces out of Haiti as soon as possible reflected his awareness of the hostility within Congress towards the Haiti mission. Clinton’s concerns were written into Security Council Resolution 940, which stated that the MNF would “terminate its mission...when a secure and stable environment has been established” and at that point hand over responsibility to the United Nations force, UNMIH (United Nations Mission in Haiti).⁴⁰⁵ However, whereas those drafting Resolution 940 had assumed the MNF would have to subdue the Haitian army, and would consequently bear sole responsibility for maintaining security, the situation had changed following Carter’s agreement with the dictatorship, to the effect that US troops were now expected to work with Haitian soldiers. Notwithstanding the operation’s purported pro-democracy and human rights slant, American commanders were not averse to this arrangement. Operation Uphold Democracy’s military leadership was reluctant to jeopardise the safety of American soldiers, and they were thus content to leave police duties to the FADH.⁴⁰⁶ As the commander of US forces in Haiti, General Henry Shelton, put it, the FADH “could

⁴⁰² Ibid, p. 3; Clinton, *My Life*, p. 617.

⁴⁰³ The terms of the agreement are in Malone, *Decision-Making in the UN Security Council*, p. 112.

⁴⁰⁴ Malone, *Decision-Making in the UN Security Council*, p. 113.

⁴⁰⁵ UN Security Council Resolution 940.

⁴⁰⁶ Girard, *Clinton in Haiti*, p. 110.

provide...some amount of stability in the country...I had a personal interest in trying to keep the FAD'H from collapsing totally and complete anarchy taking over."⁴⁰⁷ While using the Haitian army to impose law and order was at variance with the declared goal of promoting democracy this contradiction was quickly overcome, for the FADH disintegrated in October.

US Policy following the Return of Aristide

Jean-Bertrand Aristide reappeared in Haiti on 15 October 1994, two days after General Cédras had fled the country. With foreign troops present in the country, the security situation improved dramatically. Paul Farmer, a critic of US policy and a resident of Haiti, wrote at the time that "the level of personal security was at an all-time high," an opinion reciprocated by UN Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali, who in January 1995 stated that "Haiti has not enjoyed this level of security for a very long time."⁴⁰⁸ With stability and security apparently achieved in Haiti, UNMIH peacekeepers were deployed and the MNF took its leave on 31 March 1995, allowing President Clinton to withdraw the vast majority of American soldiers.⁴⁰⁹ The US then turned its attention to a number of democracy promotion initiatives. One of these was helping to ensure the dramatic improvement in security was maintained. Citizens cannot exercise their political rights in conditions of dire insecurity, so the basis of any pro-democracy policy had to be maintaining the vastly more secure environment established by the MNF, with the deployment of over two thousand American soldiers as part of UNMIH a contribution to that end. Nonetheless, as mentioned above, the FADH had collapsed, necessitating the establishment of some Haitian police body. A temporary solution had been found while the MNF was still in Haiti, with Washington dispatching the US Justice Department's International Criminal Investigative Training Assistance Program (ICITAP) to train an

⁴⁰⁷ Quoted in *Ibid*, p. 112.

⁴⁰⁸ Farmer, *Uses of Haiti*, p. 330; Boutros-Ghali quoted in Malone, *Decision-Making in the UN Security Council*, p. 122.

⁴⁰⁹ At its peak, UNMIH comprised 6,106 soldiers and 874 international police, with an overall US contribution of around 2,300 men and women. Granderson, "Military-Humanitarian Ambiguities in Haiti," p. 113; Malone, *Decision-Making in the UN Security Council*, p. 123.

Interim Public Security Force (IPSF).⁴¹⁰ Most of the interim police were ‘rehabilitated’ soldiers, although there was reason to doubt that they had turned over a new leaf. As Farmer has commented, “The cornerstone of the rehabilitation seemed to be a six-day training course and the replacement of the soldiers’ hats with baseball caps.”⁴¹¹ 3,400 former soldiers were joined in the interim police force by 900 Haitian asylum seekers who had been held at the US military base at Guantánamo Bay in Cuba.⁴¹²

The IPSF was, as its name suggested, not a long-term solution. ICITAP was subsequently charged with setting up a new force, which was to be called the Haitian National Police (HNP). ICITAP oversaw “the recruitment, training and deployment of the new police force,” an effort that concluded in February 1996, by which time police numbers had reached about 5,000.⁴¹³ Again, however, large numbers of ex-soldiers found their way onto the supposedly reformed police force, so it should come as little surprise that the new police did not distinguish themselves. The limitations of the “reformed” police were in fact clear at a very early stage, with the *Washington Post* reporting in January 1996 that “the police have been accused of shooting unarmed civilians and taking part in political murders.”⁴¹⁴ One such incident occurred on 6 March 1996, when the HNP massacred 8 people in the Port-au-Prince slum of Cité Soleil.⁴¹⁵ In October 1997, new UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan, in a report to the Security Council, “made clear that the HNP was in no shape to stand on its own feet yet.”⁴¹⁶ By Clinton’s final year in office, Haiti’s police force was in a deplorable state. Human Rights Watch accused the HNP of effectively acting as a tool of the government by not intervening to stop violent demonstrations and attacks on opposition activists by supporters of the ruling Famni Lavalas party, in addition to arresting opposition figures on spurious charges. There were “sixty-six suspicious killings by the police in 1999, including several possible

⁴¹⁰ Girard, *Clinton in Haiti*, p. 124.

⁴¹¹ Farmer, *Uses of Haiti*, p. 323.

⁴¹² Girard, *Clinton in Haiti*, pp. 124-5.

⁴¹³ After the initial phase devoted to establishing the new force, ICITAP moved on to “the development of specialized capabilities” within the HNP, for example setting up anti-narcotics and SWAT units. ICITAP was assisted by the police component of UNMIH, as well as by Canadian advisers. Human Rights Watch, “The Human Rights Record of the Haitian National Police,” (1997) <<http://www.hrw.org/reports/1997/haiti/Haiti-04.htm>>; Girard, *Clinton in Haiti*, p. 125.

⁴¹⁴ Quoted in Malone, *Decision-Making in the UN Security Council*, p. 129

⁴¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 243 n. 110.

⁴¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 146.

extrajudicial executions,” while the police were also accused of carrying out beatings and torturing criminal suspects. Additionally, official figures from the Haitian government revealed that no fewer than 673 members of the HNP had been sacked since 1995 – an extremely high percentage – with human rights abuses “committed in at least 130 cases.”⁴¹⁷

“The promotion of free and fair elections was at the core of U.S. political strategy in Haiti,” argues Mark Peceny.⁴¹⁸ The Clinton administration was certainly eager to see elections held, as shown by the fact that the US government spent \$18.8 million in support of the 1995 contests.⁴¹⁹ However, the June 1995 legislative and local elections were marred by serious logistical difficulties: “Voter and candidate registration was chaotic and last-minute modifications to the candidate lists resulted in many errors in the ballots,” with some candidates omitted, while “some polling stations opened late, not at all, or were relocated unannounced.”⁴²⁰ In addition, a million electoral cards disappeared.⁴²¹ On the day of the vote, one candidate was killed, while a polling station was attacked in the capital. Human Rights Watch denounced an “electoral debacle” characterised by “chaos on election day,” while OAS Secretary-General César Gaviria, although conceding that “there was no evidence of organized fraud,” nonetheless asserted that “it is very difficult for us to say that this was free and fair.”⁴²² A presidential election followed in December 1995. Although constitutionally barred from a second successive stint as president, as the election neared Aristide began sending out mixed messages on whether he would leave office. The Clinton administration was very much opposed to Aristide standing again, and Clinton’s national security adviser, Tony Lake, was dispatched to Haiti, where he managed to persuade Aristide to abide by his earlier

⁴¹⁷ Human Rights Watch, *World Report 2001* (New York: Human Rights Watch, 2001), pp. 130-2.

⁴¹⁸ Peceny, *Democracy at the Point of Bayonets*, p. 151.

⁴¹⁹ United States General Accounting Office, “Haiti: U.S. Assistance for the Electoral Process,” July 1996, p. 2, <<http://www.gao.gov/archive/1996/ns96147.pdf>>

⁴²⁰ Malone, *Decision-Making in the UN Security Council*, pp. 125-6.

⁴²¹ Erin Mobekk, “Enforcement of Democracy in Haiti,” *Democratization*, vol. 8, no. 3 (2001), p. 175.

⁴²² Malone, *Decision-Making in the UN Security Council*, p. 126.

commitment not to seek another term.⁴²³ The few Haitians who turned out to vote delivered a crushing victory to Aristide's former prime minister, René Préval.⁴²⁴

The woefully low turnout by voters in December 1995, together with the highly imperfect June 1995 ballot, provided Republican opponents of Clinton with considerable evidence with which to deride the president's policy. Congressional Republicans "harshly criticized the June 1995 elections" and "questioned whether the December 1995 presidential elections were truly free and fair, given that less than 30 percent of the population voted and the winning candidate received 88 percent of the vote."⁴²⁵ The Clinton administration, however, had resolved to depict the flawed elections as positively as possible. J. Brian Atwood, the director of USAID and the head of the US observer mission that monitored the June 1995 elections, saluted the "truly impressive" achievement of a "peaceful balloting process...in a country where violence has so often marked past elections."⁴²⁶ As for the December 1995 presidential contest, Atwood, who again headed the US observer mission, called it "a crucial milestone in Haiti's progress toward an enduring democratic order." Regarding the embarrassingly low turnout, Atwood declared that it "does not in any way harm or destroy the legitimacy of this process."⁴²⁷ Robert Fatton has asserted that "the Clinton administration backed the results of both the presidential and legislative elections of 1995," the aforementioned flaws notwithstanding, on the "assumption...that President Préval and his government would implement the program of [economic] structural adjustment advanced by the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund and strongly supported by the United States," of which more later.⁴²⁸ The administration's unduly upbeat response to the elections was also a product of the need to deflect Republican attacks.

⁴²³ Jean-Germain Gros, "Haiti's Flagging Transition," *Journal of Democracy*, vol. 8, no. 4 (October 1997), pp. 98-9; Girard, *Clinton in Haiti*, p. 134.

⁴²⁴ Turnout was disputed, with the government claiming that 35% of Haitians had voted, the UN putting the figure at 15%, and the opposition estimating that 6-7% had turned out. Mobekk, "Enforcement of Democracy in Haiti," p. 176.

⁴²⁵ Peceny, *Democracy at the Point of Bayonets*, pp. 168-9.

⁴²⁶ Atwood did admit that "the process was affected by irregularities and administrative flaws that need to be addressed." Quoted in Douglas Farah, "Unanimity in Haiti: Elections Were Chaotic," *Washington Post*, 27 June 1995.

⁴²⁷ Quoted in Douglas Farah, "Haiti Gives Preval Wide Vote Margin," *Washington Post*, 19 December 1995.

⁴²⁸ Fatton, *Haiti's Predatory Republic*, pp. 122-3.

The administration's Haiti policy was strongly influenced and constrained by the Republican majority in Congress. Clinton, aware of Republican opposition to his policy, was keen to see UNMIH end in February 1996, as originally planned, and although the US did agree to the mission's extension, Clinton withdrew the last US peacekeepers from UNMIH in April 1996.⁴²⁹ As Daniel Erikson has commented, the president "made sure to scale back the U.S. presence in Haiti in time for the 1996 [US presidential] elections," in order to deprive the Republicans of the chance to attack him on the issue.⁴³⁰ Congressional Republicans were also able to restrict the president's room for manoeuvre on Haiti by using their control of the budget. In late 1995 Senate majority leader Bob Dole, who would run as the Republican candidate in the 1996 presidential election, proposed legislation terminating aid to Haiti unless Clinton certified to Congress that the Haitian government was making a serious effort to investigate a number of alleged political killings.⁴³¹ The so-called Dole Amendment became law in January 1996, and stipulated that, with the exception of humanitarian and electoral assistance, all aid to the Haitian government would be suspended unless Clinton provided the aforementioned certification, although the president could waive the restrictions if he deemed it to be "in the national interest of the United States."⁴³² Some \$65 million in aid was suspended.⁴³³ The administration also had to contend with the publication of inflammatory reports by Republican congressional staffers in April and October 1996, which implicated the Haitian government in politically-motivated murders and accusing the Clinton administration of covering up Haiti's obstruction of FBI efforts to investigate the killings.⁴³⁴

The withholding of funds under the Dole Amendment was not the first occasion the US had frozen aid to Haiti. In October 1995, US\$4.6 million in USAID support (as well as US\$100 million from the International Monetary Fund) was suspended when Aristide's government decided to back out of the planned privatisation of the state-owned

⁴²⁹ Malone, *Decision-Making in the UN Security Council*, pp. 240 n. 70, 244 n. 128.

⁴³⁰ Daniel Erikson, "The Haiti Dilemma," *Brown Journal of World Affairs*, vol. 10, no. 2 (Winter/Spring 2004), p. 291.

⁴³¹ Irwin P. Stotzky, *Silencing the Guns in Haiti: The Promise of Deliberative Democracy* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1997), p. 192.

⁴³² *Ibid.*, p. 194.

⁴³³ Malone, *Decision-Making in the UN Security Council*, p. 136.

⁴³⁴ Stotzky, *Silencing the Guns in Haiti*, pp. 195-6.

cement and flour companies. Aristide and his representatives had committed to these measures in Paris in August 1994 and January 1995, when international donors had pledged \$1.2 billion in aid to Haiti, so long as Aristide agreed to various neoliberal reforms, including the privatisation of nine state-owned companies. According to Lisa McGowan, by holding up this money Washington had fired “a shot across the bow of the Haitian government, warning it of the U.S. government’s unambiguous – one might even say obsessive – support for a fast-paced privatization process.”⁴³⁵ The Clinton administration was indeed a strong proponent of Haitian privatisation and had in been pushing such neoliberal economic reforms on Aristide since even before his return to Haiti in October 1994. In the words of Mark Peceny, the Clinton administration had, prior to the intervention by US forces, “extracted important concessions from Aristide,” one of which involved persuading him “to abandon his radical economic platform in favor of an IMF, World Bank, and AID-sponsored commitment to sound money, limited government intervention in the economy, and free trade.”⁴³⁶ US Vice-President Al Gore visited Haiti in October 1995 to extol the benefits of privatisation, while USAID awarded a US\$900,000 contract to a public relations firm “to “sell” the idea of privatisation to the Haitian public.”⁴³⁷

In his first term Clinton touted Haiti as a foreign policy success. By 1997, however, such claims were looking outlandish. Parliamentary elections in April 1997 proved a fiasco, with a mere 5% of voters turning out in a contest that was “plagued by irregularities and declared fraudulent by international observers.”⁴³⁸ Even the US government was losing patience with Haiti’s leaders: a June 1997 story in the *Washington Post* revealed that run-off elections had been “postponed...indefinitely” after “U.S. Ambassador [to Haiti] William Swing told Préval that unless the [electoral] council held a new vote in areas affected by fraud, the United States would not recognize the results.”⁴³⁹ That month Haiti’s prime minister, Rosny Smarth, who was wildly unpopular

⁴³⁵ McGowan, “Democracy Undermined, Economic Justice Denied.”

⁴³⁶ Peceny, *Democracy at the Point of Bayonets*, p. 152.

⁴³⁷ Girard, *Clinton in Haiti*, p. 142; McGowan, “Democracy Undermined, Economic Justice Denied.”

⁴³⁸ Mobekk, “Enforcement of Democracy in Haiti,” p. 176.

⁴³⁹ Michael Norton, “Aristide Reasserts His Past – Attributing Haiti’s Troubles to Imperialism,” *Washington Post*, 15 June 1997.

among Haitians for supporting neoliberal economic reforms,⁴⁴⁰ resigned, ushering in a prolonged period of political turmoil. The Haitian legislature continually refused to accept President Préval's nominees for prime minister, leaving Haiti without a government. One consequence of the political crisis was that by the end of the year \$120 million in foreign aid was being withheld by donors.⁴⁴¹ Matters did not improve the following year either. The continued political impasse (there was no government in Haiti until January 1999) brought US Secretary of State Madeleine Albright to the country in April 1998. She stated that "frankly, we have been disappointed that Haiti's political leaders have taken so long to resolve their differences," but nonetheless deemed US policy towards Haiti "a success."⁴⁴²

In August 1999 the US administration decided to pull out the 500 American troops who comprised the US Support Group in Haiti, which had been carrying out humanitarian tasks and public works projects since May 1996. The decision was unsurprising, given that General Charles E. Wilhelm, the commander of US forces in the region, had testified before Congress in March that "American forces have not been able to create stability in the volatile nation and are now at risk."⁴⁴³ Calls from Haitian businessmen for the US not to withdraw its soldiers were "overwhelmed by strong views at the Pentagon and among Republican leaders in Congress" in favour of the mission's termination.⁴⁴⁴ The Republicans had long objected to the presence of the Support Group in Haiti, as exemplified by an October 1997 letter from the chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, Jesse Helms, to Secretary of State Albright. Helms asserted that "I see little to be gained, and much to be risked, in leaving a relatively small number of US troops as a trip-wire in Haiti...to prop up an incompetent government and salvage a totally flawed policy."⁴⁴⁵ Congressional Republicans were also dismayed when President Préval moved to break the political deadlock in January 1999 by dissolving

⁴⁴⁰ "Haiti's suffering masses, encouraged by Mr Aristide, have reviled Mr Smarth for agreeing – however reluctantly – to a package of spending cuts and privatisation demanded by international donors." "Titide on top," *Economist*, 12 June 1997.

⁴⁴¹ Serge F. Kovaleski, "With U.N. Troops Departing, Haiti Faces Same Old Woes," *Washington Post*, 1 December 1997.

⁴⁴² The quotes are in Girard, *Clinton in Haiti*, p. 154; and Mobekk, "Enforcement of Democracy in Haiti," p. 177.

⁴⁴³ Douglas Farah, "General Calls for Pullout From Haiti," *Washington Post*, 13 March 1999.

⁴⁴⁴ Roberto Suro, "U.S. To Rotate Haiti Force," *Washington Post*, 27 August 1999.

⁴⁴⁵ Quoted in Malone, *Decision-Making in the UN Security Council*, p. 250 n. 220.

parliament and unilaterally appointing a government. As the *Washington Post* reported, “some Republicans, long leery of the initial occupation, decried the move as a step toward dictatorship.”⁴⁴⁶ The Republicans in fact had many reasons to doubt Clinton’s claims of “success” in Haiti, only one of which was Préval’s dissolution of the legislature: as the end of the year approached, hundreds of millions of dollars in international aid was still frozen due to the absence of a parliament and a budget, unemployment was presumed to be in the region of 50-70%, and the country was developing into a major transshipment point for cocaine.⁴⁴⁷ Such facts were hard to gloss over, so it was little wonder that William Swing’s successor as US ambassador in Port-au-Prince, Timothy Carney, should comment in September 1999 that “Haiti is a long way from getting democracy. It lacks nearly all of the elements that make up a democracy...Overall, our expectations were too high.”⁴⁴⁸

Under “enormous pressure” from the Clinton administration, Préval’s government finally held new parliamentary and local elections in May 2000.⁴⁴⁹ The fact that these elections had been postponed five times gives an indication of the gravity of the political crisis in Haiti at the time.⁴⁵⁰ The Clinton administration’s enthusiasm for new elections was not shared by many congressional Republicans, however, as demonstrated by the Republican-controlled Senate’s decision in March to suspend tens of millions of dollars in aid, including electoral support funds, an action taken “to punish the Haitian government for fining a U.S. firm caught illegally importing rice into [Haiti].”⁴⁵¹ The elections went ahead nonetheless, and were won handily by former president Aristide’s Famni Lavalas party. First reactions to the May 21 vote were remarkably upbeat, with a turnout of around 60 percent in generally peaceful conditions inducing international observer delegations to commend the poll as free and fair. However, when it emerged that Haiti’s Provisional Electoral Council (CEP) had used an illegal and unconstitutional method for counting the votes, thereby awarding undeserved first-round victories to a number of Famni Lavalas candidates for the Senate, the OAS, the United States, and

⁴⁴⁶ Farah, “General Calls For Pullout From Haiti.”

⁴⁴⁷ “Haitians turn their backs on President Preval – and politics,” *Economist*, 2 December 1999.

⁴⁴⁸ Quoted in Serge F. Kovaleski, “A Nation In Need,” *Washington Post*, 21 September 1999.

⁴⁴⁹ Michael Dobbs, “An Election Crossroads or Haiti,” *Washington Post*, 21 May 2000.

⁴⁵⁰ “Fear of the vote,” *Economist*, 11 May 2000.

⁴⁵¹ Greg Chamberlain, “Electoral Turmoil in Haiti,” *NACLA Report on the Americas*, vol. 34, no. 1 (July 2000) (electronic version); *Economist*, “Fear of the vote.”

other international actors backtracked, and demanded a recount. The aftermath of the election saw mob violence by Fammi Lavalas supporters, the arrests of thirty five opposition candidates and supporters “on flimsy pretexts,” and the flight from Haiti of the head of the electoral council, Léon Manus, who claimed to have received death threats after ultimately concluding that the elections were in fact fraudulent.⁴⁵²

The United States cut off funding for the Haitian government in the wake of the disputed elections of May 2000. Congress passed a bill stipulating that no aid would be provided unless new legislative elections were held and the US “drug czar” certified that Haiti was not providing a safe-haven for drug dealers. Around US\$70 million in aid would be set aside for Haiti, but would go through non-governmental organisations. Clinton signed the bill into law on 6 November 2000.⁴⁵³ In a further blow to the Clinton administration, a presidential election was due in Haiti that very month and there was only one candidate with a hope of victory: Jean-Bertrand Aristide. With only months to go before Clinton’s departure from the White House, the administration had come full circle: having risked the lives of American soldiers in 1994 to restore Aristide, Clinton administration officials had veered towards the Republicans’ position of feeling little but loathing for him. The *Washington Post* had reported in May that Aristide’s anticipated victory in the presidential vote was “being viewed with trepidation by U.S. officials,” in consequence of “his sometimes radical liberation theology and ambiguous record on condemning political violence.”⁴⁵⁴ The presidential election did indeed deliver a resounding triumph to Aristide, but in surreal circumstances. Most opposition parties decided against contesting the vote, leaving Aristide to battle it out with virtual unknowns. Aristide limited himself to a solitary public appearance during the campaign. Turnout was hotly disputed, with estimates varying from 5 to 60 percent. Assuming that the lower figure was more accurate, the poor turnout may have been the result of fear: over a dozen bombs went off in Port-au-Prince the week before polling day.⁴⁵⁵

⁴⁵² Chamberlain, “Electoral Turmoil in Haiti”; “Counted out,” *Economist*, 22 June 2000; Fatton, *Haiti’s Predatory Republic*, pp. 115-7; Human Rights Watch, *World Report 2001*, pp. 131-2.

⁴⁵³ Erikson, “The Haiti Dilemma,” pp. 291-2; “Aristide once again, in Haiti,” *Economist*, 30 November 2000; Nora Boustany, “U.S. Waits for Aristide’s Haiti to Deliver on New Promises of Reform,” *Washington Post*, 29 December 2000.

⁴⁵⁴ Michael Dobbs, “Aristide’s Party Leading in Haitian Vote,” *Washington Post*, 23 May 2000.

⁴⁵⁵ Michele Wucker, “Haiti: so many missteps,” *World Policy Journal*, vol. 21, no. 1 (Spring 2004) (electronic version); Scott Wilson, “Aristide Expected to Regain Presidency,” *Washington Post*, 26

Congressional Republicans made the most of Haiti's electoral woes. Three leading Republicans, including Jesse Helms, released a statement deploring Aristide's win as "a tragic day in Haiti's long and troubled quest for pluralism and representative democracy." It had been "a sham election with the sole purpose of delivering absolute control over Haiti's government to Mr. Jean-Bertrand Aristide," they declared.⁴⁵⁶ The White House was hardly more conciliatory, urging Aristide to come to terms with the defiant Haitian opposition grouping known as the Democratic Convergence, which had coalesced following the May 2000 elections and was demanding reruns of both the legislative and presidential elections. Clinton dispatched former national security adviser Tony Lake and the State Department's Donald Steinberg to meet with Aristide and demand that he "confirm in writing his commitment to creating a government of national consensus."⁴⁵⁷ Aristide did so, only to see the Democratic Convergence dismiss his proposals out of hand. As Clinton's presidency came to an end, therefore, Aristide was faced with an intransigent opposition, an almost certainly hostile incoming Republican administration in Washington, in addition to all of Haiti's manifold socioeconomic troubles.

Democracy Promotion in Haiti: Success or Failure?

It can be argued that in the short-term the Clinton administration made a substantial contribution to the cause of democracy in Haiti, and some scholars have indeed done so. In an article published in 1996, Robert Rotberg described Haiti as "the rare jewel in President Bill Clinton's foreign policy crown," basing his claim on Clinton's removal of Cédras and the huge decline in violence that followed the junta's exit, as well as Aristide's return and the peaceful and democratic transfer of the presidency to René Préval in 1996.⁴⁵⁸ Irwin Stotzky has also emphasised the significance of the handover from Aristide to Préval, pronouncing it an "incredible feat," "a milestone for democracy"

November 2000. Fatton considers the 60% figure "highly improbable"; he states that "most impartial observers estimated that participation did not exceed 20 percent but was not as low as the 5 percent bandied about by the opposition." Fatton, *Haiti's Predatory Republic*, p. 110.

⁴⁵⁶ Quoted in Fatton, *Haiti's Predatory Republic*, p. 143.

⁴⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 142.

⁴⁵⁸ Robert I. Rotberg, "Clinton was Right," *Foreign Policy*, no. 102 (Spring 1996), pp. 135-7.

in Haiti and “a clear success for U.S. policy.”⁴⁵⁹ Michael Mandelbaum, although a critic of Clinton’s foreign policy, was willing to attribute “modest success” to the president’s Haiti policy, on the grounds that at the end of 1995 Haitians “were better off, or at least less likely to be killed, than had been the case 15 months earlier.”⁴⁶⁰ There is clearly some evidence that the US successfully promoted democracy in Haiti during Clinton’s first term: the democratically elected president was reinstated thanks to US intervention, a brutal dictatorship was forced out, and as a result of the dramatically improved security situation Haitians were to a certain extent able to exercise their political rights. Moreover, as Robert Fatton has observed, these achievements were only possible because President Clinton dispatched United States military forces. As he has put it, “the U.S. intervention was the only means capable of ending the military dictatorship.”⁴⁶¹

We can form stronger conclusions about the level of democracy in Haiti by employing our democracy metric. Haiti failed to meet several of the criteria of genuinely free and fair elections. On the positive side, Haitians above the age of 18 had the right to vote, with the exception of prisoners,⁴⁶² and Haitians had many parties to choose from when casting their ballots, although it should be acknowledged that these parties were weak, divided and obscure. As Jean-Germain Gros wrote in 1997, Haitian parties were “wracked by petty infighting” and “lack[ed] appeal among ordinary voters.”⁴⁶³ Or, as Charles Arthur put it, “many of Haiti’s political parties are one-man bands created to serve the personal interests and ambitions of a wealthy individual.”⁴⁶⁴ There were issues relating to election monitoring. Although the majority of contests that were held during the period in question were observed by monitors from the Organisation of American States, the OAS refused to monitor the second round of legislative elections in 2000 and the subsequent presidential vote on the grounds that problems relating to the first round in 2000 had not been resolved satisfactorily. Another failing related to fraud, which marred elections in both 1997 and 2000. It was also difficult for Haitians to make an informed

⁴⁵⁹ Stotzky, *Silencing the Guns in Haiti*, p. 158.

⁴⁶⁰ Michael Mandelbaum, “Foreign Policy as Social Work,” *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 75, no. 1 (January-February 1996), p. 30. For a scathing early attack on Clinton’s Haiti policy, see John Sweeney, “Stuck in Haiti,” *Foreign Policy*, no. 102 (Spring 1996).

⁴⁶¹ Fatton, *Haiti’s Predatory Republic*, p. 107.

⁴⁶² I am grateful to Charles Arthur of the Haiti Support Group for providing this information.

⁴⁶³ Gros, “Haiti’s Flagging Transition,” p. 102.

⁴⁶⁴ Arthur, *Haiti in Focus*, p. 64.

judgement when voting. There was a serious absence of campaigning at times, notably before the 2000 presidential election when Aristide “remained in utter seclusion, and virtually never campaigned.”⁴⁶⁵ Print media was also in short supply and of no use to many citizens anyway. The US State Department’s report on human rights in Haiti in 2000 noted that the “written press is beyond the reach of many citizens, due to language differences, illiteracy, and cost.” The country’s two French newspapers had a circulation of below 20,000. These deficiencies were mitigated somewhat by the many private radio stations broadcasting in Haiti.⁴⁶⁶ A particularly serious weakness of Haiti’s elections was the intimidation and violence that accompanied election campaigns and voting. There was “a spate of assassinations” in the period leading up to the legislative elections held in May 2000, which “claimed the lives of at least 15 people, mainly opposition activists,” with the most notorious killing that of the respected radio journalist Jean Dominique.⁴⁶⁷ Other violence associated with the election included a gang setting fire to the headquarters of an opposition party, and an attack by thugs on the offices of another opposition party the day after the vote.⁴⁶⁸ There was “an overall climate of intimidation” in the lead-up to the presidential election won by Aristide later that year, with bombings in Port-au-Prince and attacks on opposition political meetings.⁴⁶⁹

Moving on to the second element of democracy, human rights, Haiti performed poorly. While the rights to life, to vote, to freedom of speech, to freedom of assembly, to freedom of association, to an education, and to an adequate standard of living were incorporated in the 1987 constitution, many Haitians did not benefit from these rights in practice. As the political death toll accompanying the elections in 2000 suggests, the Haitian government was not capable of guaranteeing the right to life of many Haitians. Although violence against the person had undoubtedly declined since the horrific situation that existed under the military dictatorship, security within Haiti was undermined by the incompetence and corruption of the new police force, mob violence, and “the proliferation of armed gangs involved in the trafficking of drugs and other

⁴⁶⁵ Fatton, *Haiti’s Predatory Republic*, p. 110.

⁴⁶⁶ United States Department of State, “Country Reports on Human Rights Practices 2000: Haiti,” <<http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2000/wha/795.htm>>

⁴⁶⁷ Dobbs, “An Election Crossroads for Haiti”; *Economist*, “Fear of the vote.”

⁴⁶⁸ Human Rights Watch, *World Report 2001*, pp. 131-2.

⁴⁶⁹ US Department of State, “Country Reports on Human Rights Practices 2000: Haiti.”

criminal activities.”⁴⁷⁰ The police proved “incapable of protecting citizens,” convincing wealthier Haitians to employ private security firms for their protection.⁴⁷¹ Freedom of speech was also significantly limited in practice. The US State Department reported that following the 2000 presidential elections “death threats proliferated against media figures who questioned the electoral process or outcomes...Three radio stations were forced to stop temporarily news programming for brief periods in late November and December as a direct result of threats against the stations for their coverage of the elections.”⁴⁷² Haitians were also at times unable to exercise their rights to freedom of assembly and association. For example, in September 2000 a unionist named Elison Merzilus “was taken from his home by a group of 10 armed men” and later found dead. “Around the same time, 10 other union members were informed that their names were blacklisted and spent several months in hiding.”⁴⁷³

In reality, large segments of the population did not possess crucial social and economic rights enumerated in the constitution. Article 22 “recognizes the right of every citizen to decent housing, education, food and social security,”⁴⁷⁴ but the reality of life in Haiti did not correspond to the constitutional ideal. For example, although article 32-3 of the constitution states that primary schooling is “compulsory,” just 56 percent of Haitian children were enrolled in primary schools in 1997, according to figures cited by Charles Arthur.⁴⁷⁵ The US State Department estimated the rate of adult literacy at “only about 20 percent.”⁴⁷⁶ Most Haitians did not, and still do not, have an adequate standard of living either. “Chronic malnutrition is widespread among the most vulnerable,” according to the World Food Programme, while “daily food insecurity affects 40 percent of Haitian homes.”⁴⁷⁷ As for housing, the World Bank reported in 1998 that “two-thirds of the population of Port-au-Prince lives in slums.”⁴⁷⁸

⁴⁷⁰ Fatton, *Haiti's Predatory Republic*, p. 152.

⁴⁷¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 152-3.

⁴⁷² US Department of State, “Country Reports on Human Rights Practices, 2000: Haiti.”

⁴⁷³ *Ibid.*

⁴⁷⁴ “1987 Constitution of Haiti,” <<http://pdba.georgetown.edu/constitutions/haiti/haiti1987.html>>

⁴⁷⁵ *Ibid.*; Arthur, *Haiti in Focus*, p. 95.

⁴⁷⁶ US Department of State, “Country Reports on Human Rights Practices 2000: Haiti.”

⁴⁷⁷ World Food Programme, “Where we work – Haiti,”

<http://www.wfp.org/country_brief/indexcountry.asp?country=332#Overview>

⁴⁷⁸ Arthur, *Haiti in Focus*, p. 11.

The political crisis that engulfed Haiti from 1997 onwards had serious implications for the legitimacy of Haiti's political institutions. With the legislature repeatedly refusing to approve President René Prével's nominations for prime minister the country was left without a government until January 1999, at which point Prével took the drastic step of dismissing the legislature, and unilaterally appointed a government that ruled by decree until the flawed elections of May 2000. While the dissolution of the legislature was defensible in a sense, as it enabled Prével to bring an end to the political deadlock that had left Haiti without a government, the president's action left Haiti with an illegitimate government, one that had not even been indirectly elected by Haitian voters. During this period, then, the third requirement of democracy was not satisfied in Haiti.

Democracy Promotion in Haiti: An Important US Policy Objective?

In answering this question it is useful to separate US policy into two parts: pre-October 1994, when Jean-Bertrand Aristide returned to Haiti, and post-October 1994. A strong case can be made that the US genuinely sought to promote democracy in Haiti prior to October 1994. In an effort to restore the elected Haitian president the Clinton administration employed diplomacy, tightened sanctions against the junta, and eventually dispatched American soldiers when it seemed that all other options had failed. Its policies therefore met the fifth criteria of genuine democracy promotion, which applies only when an authoritarian regime is in place. However, if we test the Clinton administration on its commitment to human rights in Haiti, the third criteria of genuine democracy promotion, the picture becomes more opaque. While the administration aimed to improve the desperate human rights situation in Haiti by removing the dictatorship, it displayed at the same time a cavalier attitude to the issue of justice, as evidenced by its repeated attempts to convince Aristide to sign up to an amnesty for the military dictatorship. We should also bear in mind that for a time in late 1993 and early 1994 the United States seriously considered jettisoning Aristide altogether, for at that time he was seen by many US officials as an obstacle to a resolution of the crisis. In other words, the reinstatement of

the president was considered less vital than securing an accord with Cédras that would see the junta stand down without the need for US military intervention.

The ambiguities evident in the Clinton administration's attitude towards Aristide's return were symptomatic of the complexities of the US foreign policy-making process. Whereas senior foreign policy officials like Tony Lake, Warren Christopher and Strobe Talbott firmly backed efforts to restore Aristide, important bureaucratic institutions like the CIA and the Pentagon were able to seriously impede their plans. While numerous policymakers no doubt shared Christopher's view that it "seemed...the ultimate in hypocrisy for the United States to claim that it supported democracy and not work to restore to office a man who had been elected with nearly 70% of the vote,"⁴⁷⁹ there were more than enough countervailing voices to impede Aristide's reinstatement. There was a profound lack of consensus within the administration over what to do about Haiti. The administration's policy was also subject to considerable pressure from two broad groups in Congress: Republicans who despised Aristide, and who disapproved of plans to restore him to office, especially if it meant using the American military, as opposed to the Congressional Black Caucus, whose members were strongly in favour of returning Aristide, including if necessary through the use of force.

Most scholars are unconvinced by the administration's pro-democracy pretensions, at least as regards what occurred prior to October 1994. "There can be little doubt that, while the restoration of democratic rule in Haiti was consonant with US policy towards the Western Hemisphere in the 1990s, Clinton did not act for this reason," argues David Malone.⁴⁸⁰ He contends that US policy towards Haiti "was driven principally by domestic pressures," with the concerted lobbying effort by the CBC and others in the spring of 1994 marking "a turning-point for Clinton" and US policy.⁴⁸¹ Jean-Germain Gros has asserted that "the Clinton administration probably had only two objectives in mind" when the decision was made to employ force, namely "stopping the flow of refugees into South Florida and achieving a foreign policy victory at minor human costs, especially in U.S. lives." Gros also emphasises the importance of proximity: "It is a safe bet that if Haiti were located further away from the U.S. mainland, Operation Restore Democracy would

⁴⁷⁹ Christopher, *In the Stream of History*, pp. 176-7.

⁴⁸⁰ Malone, *Decision-Making in the UN Security Council*, p. 180.

⁴⁸¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 160-1.

not have occurred.”⁴⁸² While acknowledging that domestic political pressures “contributed to the eventual decision to take military action,” Robert Fatton has highlighted the importance of placing the invasion “in the context of the emerging new international order.” He suggests that “the United States was bent on reasserting its credibility as the only remaining superpower” in the aftermath of the Cold War and the debacle in Somalia, and Haiti “provided an irresistible opportunity” for “a triumphant display of strength.”⁴⁸³ In a similar vein, Michael Mandelbaum has argued that Clinton resorted to force in Haiti “to bolster the administration’s political standing” after numerous embarrassing foreign policy reversals in 1993, including the aforementioned *Harlan County* incident.⁴⁸⁴

It has also been suggested that the 1994 intervention was motivated by economic factors. This argument is made by Alex Dupuy, who has written that the “primary reason for the military occupation of Haiti...was to ensure stability in Haiti and the implementation of Washington’s neoliberal agenda.”⁴⁸⁵ While Clinton and his advisers were certainly enthusiastic advocates of neoliberalism, and expended a great deal of effort endeavouring to convince Haiti’s leaders to sign up to neoliberal reforms, it would be wrong, however, to conclude that the 1994 intervention was guided by economic interests. After all, as one scholar has observed, “Haiti had little to no economic value for the United States,” with US exports to Haiti after Aristide’s return totalling around US\$500-600 million a year, far less than the US\$2.8 billion exported to the neighbouring Dominican Republic in 1994, itself a minor US trading partner.⁴⁸⁶ It is highly unlikely that the US would mount a military operation for economic reasons in a country where its economic interests are so limited. Moreover, as Philippe Girard has commented, “Aristide was the archetypal nationalistic, anti-American, left-leaning leader whom U.S. businessmen have regarded as anathema,” so returning him to office “did not make much business sense.”⁴⁸⁷ That this was so became apparent when Aristide stalled on the economic reforms championed by Clinton.

⁴⁸² Gros, “Haiti: The Political Economy and Sociology of Decay and Renewal,” p. 221.

⁴⁸³ Fatton, *Haiti’s Predatory Republic*, pp. 92, 94.

⁴⁸⁴ Mandelbaum, “Foreign Policy as Social Work,” p. 20.

⁴⁸⁵ Dupuy, *Haiti in the New World Order*, p. 2

⁴⁸⁶ Girard, *Clinton in Haiti*, p. 24.

⁴⁸⁷ *Ibid*, p. 23.

Promoting democracy was certainly a factor in US policy towards Haiti before the return of Aristide in October 1994, but Clinton's policy was also strongly influenced by Congress and public opinion, as shown by the fact that policy clearly shifted in April and May 1994 in the face of a sustained lobbying campaign by influential supporters of Aristide in the United States. Until that point, the Clinton administration had dithered and procrastinated, asserting its support for Aristide while at the same time doing little to bring about his return. Indeed, the US even contemplated discarding Aristide altogether at one point. The administration firmly backed Aristide from the spring of 1994 largely because of pressure from political groups in the US. However, although the US was now determined to see the back of the junta it took several months for Clinton to finally decide to send US troops to Haiti, clear evidence of his reluctance to use force. Even after he had approved an invasion, Clinton was still looking for a way out, which was provided by Jimmy Carter's negotiations with the junta. It is therefore doubtful that Clinton was motivated by a desire for an easy foreign policy success or a show of US credibility. If these had been the president's primary objectives, he would not have chosen to tarnish his triumph by authorising an agreement that envisioned amnesties for Cédras and the other coup leaders. He undoubtedly wanted the dictatorship out, but was willing to do almost anything to avoid military conflict.

We can determine to what extent the Clinton administration was dedicated to promoting democracy after Aristide's return by using our democracy promotion metric. There is clearly some evidence that the US tried to promote genuinely free and fair elections in Haiti. USAID provided support to political parties in Haiti via the National Democratic Institute for International Affairs (NDI), a US democracy promotion NGO, which spent \$865,000 on election-related programs in 1995. NDI engaged in "political party strengthening," which included "political party pollwatcher training" and "political party and consensus-building seminars." The United States also helped to ensure that most Haitian elections during the period in question were monitored. In 1995, for example, the State Department provided the OAS electoral observation team with \$3.7 million, while USAID gave \$655,000 to the International Republican Institute (IRI), another US democracy promotion NGO, "to train political party pollwatchers, field

election observation missions, and document these observations.”⁴⁸⁸ Official US delegations also monitored the 1995 elections. In 2000, USAID “encouraged the formation of” a Haitian election monitoring organisation called the National Council of Observation (CNO), which “mobilized at least 7,000 citizen observers for” the May 2000 elections. However, CNO, which like the OAS refused to monitor the second round of legislative elections in 2000 over the aforementioned allegations of first-round fraud, was seen by many Haitians as a partisan organisation and therefore lacked credibility.⁴⁸⁹ The US drew attention to electoral fraud in Haiti in both 1997 and 2000 and also highlighted instances of intimidation that marred Haitian elections. However, the US government at times failed to treat Haiti’s elections on their merits, notably in 1995 when US officials, eager to portray Haiti as a foreign policy success, offered an overly optimistic picture of the contests that unfolded that year. This proved a serious mistake. As Fatton has observed, by downplaying the flaws in the 1995 elections, the US and others “opened the door to persistent fraud and the perception that what really mattered was the regular rituals [sic] of elections rather than popular participation or the rigors of electoral honesty.”⁴⁹⁰

The second test of a state’s dedication to promoting democracy is whether or not it opposes any action that undermines the legitimacy of another state’s political institutions. By pressuring President Préval to hold new elections following his decision to dissolve the Haitian legislature in 1999 the Clinton administration passed this test. The Clinton administration’s attitude towards human rights in post-October 1994 Haiti is less clear, however. Certain actions taken by the US government pointed to a clear desire to advance human rights, especially the right to life. For instance, the US kept the MNF in Haiti until early 1995, contributed two thousand peacekeepers to UNMIH and also trained a new Haitian police force. USAID sought to advance the political rights of Haitians by supporting political parties through NDI and trade unions through the American Institute for Free Labour Development (AIFLD). However, the Clinton administration also took decisions that called into question its dedication to human rights in Haiti. President Clinton withdrew US soldiers from UNMIH precipitately, jeopardising

⁴⁸⁸ US GAO, “Haiti: U.S. Assistance for the Electoral Process,” pp. 22-3

⁴⁸⁹ Lean, “Democracy Assistance to Domestic Election Monitoring Organizations,” pp. 304-5.

⁴⁹⁰ Fatton, *Haiti’s Predatory Republic*, p. 122.

the security gains that had been made following the end of the dictatorship, while the US-led Multinational Force did not carry out a concerted disarmament campaign, contenting itself instead with a buy-back programme and desultory searches. By March 1995, more than 33,000 weapons had been collected, but it was assumed that another 200,000 had not been relinquished.⁴⁹¹ “The failure to enforce disarmament was the main cause” of the insecurity plaguing Haiti in the late 1990s, argues Erin Mobekk.⁴⁹²

Another test of a state’s dedication to promoting democracy is whether or not it places democracy-related conditions on aid given to another state. In Haiti, the Clinton administration made aid conditional on economic reform, rather than democratic performance, with Haiti required to privatise certain state companies. Although the Clinton administration and other donors may have been persuaded that privatisation was vital for Haiti’s economic development, it was plainly antidemocratic to insist that the Haitian government force through these measures in return for aid when the Haitian people had no input in the formulation of the government’s economic policy and in fact rejected the reforms outright. As one critic of the economic reforms foisted on Haiti has argued, there was a “clear contradiction inherent in advancing democratic governance while simultaneously dictating economic policy from above.”⁴⁹³ Another critic has observed that by insisting on unpopular economic reforms the US government “sent a negative message about the American idea of democracy: that Haitian lawmakers (and by extension, all voters) would not be allowed to come to decisions on their own.”⁴⁹⁴ The US therefore failed this test of its commitment to democracy promotion.

In sum, there is undoubtedly some evidence that the US was genuinely committed to democracy promotion in Haiti after Aristide’s return. It supported Haiti’s electoral processes, except for those that followed the fraudulent 2000 legislative elections, reacted to the dissolution of parliament in 1999 by demanding new elections, and took actions indicative of a desire to promote human rights. However, President Clinton’s policy was also significantly affected by pressures from Congress, which limited his options. This can be seen in the amount of US aid going to Haiti. According to a report by the RAND

⁴⁹¹ Malone, *Decision-Making in the UN Security Council*, p. 123; Girard, *Clinton in Haiti*, p. 109.

⁴⁹² Mobekk, “Enforcement of Democracy in Haiti,” p. 178.

⁴⁹³ Yasmine Shamsie, “Building ‘low-intensity’ democracy in Haiti: the OAS contribution,” *Third World Quarterly*, vol. 25, no. 6 (September 2004), p. 1101.

⁴⁹⁴ Wucker, “Haiti: so many missteps.”

Corporation, “U.S. assistance to Haiti was not generously funded, particularly compared with the reconstruction efforts in Bosnia and Kosovo...Once U.S. peacekeepers departed in 1996, U.S. aid to Haiti returned to preconflict levels. Indeed, U.S. assistance levels after 1996 were not notably higher than during the Cedras regime itself.”⁴⁹⁵ The relatively low doses of aid were the result of the hostility of the Republican-controlled Congress to Clinton’s policy. Indeed, in his memoirs Clinton holds the Republicans partially responsible for the failure in Haiti, noting that “after the Republicans took over Congress in 1995, they were unwilling to give the financial assistance that might have made a difference.”⁴⁹⁶ So, while democracy promotion undoubtedly figured in the administration’s thinking, the main factor influencing US policy was the resistance of the US Congress to the president’s democracy promotion agenda in Haiti.

Democracy Promotion under Clinton: The Overall Record

Clinton’s Haiti policy was in many ways a microcosm of the administration’s more general approach to democracy promotion. There was a great deal of rhetoric, with US officials regularly emphasising their steadfast commitment to spreading democracy around the world, but these assertions were at times called into question by the administration’s antidemocratic policies in certain countries. As with the example of Haiti, the Clinton administration in its overall foreign policy equated support for open markets and free trade with support for democracy, although the two objectives were arguably contradictory. Once again mirroring the example of Haiti, Clinton’s more general efforts to advance democracy were undercut by the refusal of Republicans in the US Congress to back the president’s policies verbally or financially. Overall, while the United States under President Clinton did at times demonstrate support for democracy in other nations, this goal was quickly shelved if and when vital US foreign policy interests were on the line, and was also strongly affected by domestic politics, especially pressure from the Republican-controlled Congress.

⁴⁹⁵ James Dobbins et al, *America’s Role in Nation-Building: From Germany to Iraq* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 2003), p. 82.

⁴⁹⁶ Clinton, *My Life*, p. 649. Regarding the relatively small financial commitments made by the administration in Paris in 1994 and 1995, this “apparently resulted from congressional opposition, not from the Clinton administration’s skimpiness.” Girard, *Clinton in Haiti*, p. 218 n. 94.

As we saw above, Clinton administration officials came to Washington touting their eagerness to promote democracy, defending the policy both in moral terms (it was “the right thing to do”) and also in terms of cold self-interest (democracies were more peaceful and reliable than other forms of regime). However, the reality ultimately proved less impressive than the rhetoric. Early in Clinton’s presidency, democracy promotion expert Thomas Carothers noted that the administration was “addicted to sweeping statements about promoting democracy abroad that simply do not correspond to policy reality,” while in a later retrospection on the president’s record he concluded that “the policy has not lived up to the expansive rhetoric.”⁴⁹⁷ As evidence Carothers pointed to the examples of the Middle East and China, where the US decided that crucial national interests would not be served by antagonising authoritarian regimes over the issue of democracy. Thus, China was granted most favoured nation trade status in 1994, notwithstanding its poor record on political rights and the Chinese Communist Party’s monopoly on political power, while close US relations with the likes of Saudi Arabia and Egypt continued, as these states were understood to “serve U.S. interests on oil, the Arab-Israeli peace process, and resistance to Islamic fundamentalist groups.”⁴⁹⁸ Clinton’s willingness to overlook concerns about political freedom when other, more significant policy imperatives were at stake was also noted by Steven Hook. According to Hook, democracy often came second to American economic or security interests under Clinton. Thus, Israel, Turkey and Egypt were lavished with billions of dollars of American aid despite their well-documented records of human rights violations, while the administration backed China’s entry into the World Trade Organisation (WTO) and ultimately awarded China permanent normal trade relations with the US.⁴⁹⁹

This is not to say that these scholars dismissed the Clinton administration’s claims to have made supporting democracy abroad an important component of its foreign policy. Hook noted, for instance, that under Clinton the United States increasingly attached conditions to foreign aid requiring that recipients undertake democratic reforms.⁵⁰⁰ He also commended Clinton for having “taken the lead in attempting to resolve” the crisis in

⁴⁹⁷ Carothers, *Critical Mission*, pp. 34, 39.

⁴⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 27, 42.

⁴⁹⁹ Hook, “Inconsistent U.S. Efforts to Promote Democracy Abroad,” pp. 122-4.

⁵⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 115.

Yugoslavia, and described the US push for NATO expansion as “part of a broader trend to extend the reach of democratic governance into Eastern Europe.”⁵⁰¹ Carothers asserted that in Latin America and Eastern Europe Clinton generally followed pro-democracy policies, and he also underlined that the president radically increased the amount of aid money dedicated to promoting democracy.⁵⁰² The point is, therefore, that the administration did make democracy promotion a policy goal and indeed achieved some successes, but when it conflicted with other, more pivotal foreign policy aims it was sidelined. This is well expressed by Carothers: “The core strategic approach of U.S. policy under Clinton remains what it has been for decades...Where democracy appears to fit in well with U.S. security and economic interests, the United States promotes democracy. Where democracy clashes with other significant interests, it is downplayed or even ignored.”⁵⁰³

Clinton’s ability to promote democracy was seriously impaired by the obstructionism of Republicans in Congress. Republicans slashed foreign aid once they gained control of Congress in the November 1994 elections, so that by 1999 aid levels were down forty percent on the figure seven years earlier.⁵⁰⁴ As Hook has remarked, Republicans in the 1990s envisioned “a more limited [foreign policy] role for the United States based on narrowly defined national self-interests,” and their gutting of the aid budget left the US “less capable of matching its democratic rhetoric with the material assistance” needed to bolster democracy abroad.⁵⁰⁵ Rick Travis has argued that fear of Republican attacks resulted in democracy promotion being “relegated to a peripheral position” in Clinton’s overall foreign policy by 1997.⁵⁰⁶ The Republicans disliked foreign assistance programs, as shown by the zeal with which they cut foreign spending, and the administration ultimately concluded that actively pursuing democracy promotion was more trouble than it was worth.⁵⁰⁷

⁵⁰¹ Ibid, pp. 127, 117.

⁵⁰² Carothers, *Critical Mission*, pp. 40-1, 43.

⁵⁰³ Ibid, p. 42.

⁵⁰⁴ Hook, “Inconsistent U.S. Efforts to Promote Democracy Abroad,” p. 118.

⁵⁰⁵ Ibid, p. 120.

⁵⁰⁶ Travis, “The Promotion of Democracy at the End of the Twentieth Century: A New Polestar for American Foreign Policy?”, p. 251.

⁵⁰⁷ Ibid, p. 262.

A final point to consider is the relationship between free market economics and democracy in Clinton's foreign policy. Within the administration the two were considered to have a symbiotic relationship, as shown by the tendency of US officials to employ the term "market democracy." To quote Douglas Brinkley, "[democratic] enlargement was about spreading democracy through promoting the gospel of geoeconomics."⁵⁰⁸ In short, the free market was the path to democracy. The problem with this argument is that it is not inevitable that economic liberalization will lead to democratization. As Przeworski et al have shown, while there is a clear link between wealth and democracy, with democracies "much more likely to survive in affluent societies,"⁵⁰⁹ it is not apparent that economic development necessarily results in the democratization of dictatorial regimes. Przeworski et al assert that "the causal power of economic development in bringing down dictatorships appears paltry. The level of development, at least as measured by per capita income, gives little information about the chances of transition to democracy."⁵¹⁰ The example of China may serve as a case in point. The United States under Clinton clearly pursued a policy aimed at opening up China's markets, a goal considered more important than tackling the Chinese regime on elections and other civil and political rights. By focusing on trade, the US tacitly accepted that the issues of civil and political rights would be mothballed. Yet if we are to adopt the logic of Brinkley and Clinton administration officials, by working to liberalise China's markets the US was in fact promoting democracy in China. This assertion is debatable, and an argument can certainly be made that the issues of human rights and political reform should supersede market economics if democracy promotion is the objective. The link between democracy and free market economics is not as clear-cut as Clinton and his foreign policy team seemed to believe.

⁵⁰⁸ Brinkley, "Democratic Enlargement: The Clinton Doctrine," p. 125.

⁵⁰⁹ Przeworski et al, *Development and Democracy*, p. 137.

⁵¹⁰ *Ibid*, p. 98.

5. The George W. Bush Presidency: “Defending” Democracy in Colombia

This third case study is concerned with the democracy promotion policies of the administration of President George W. Bush, with the focus on the South American state of Colombia. The chapter is divided into six parts, the first of which deals with the historical relationship between the United States and Colombia, and the development of democracy in Colombia during the twentieth century. The second part is devoted to exploring the foreign policy priorities and ideology of the Bush administration. The third section, which constitutes the core of the chapter, is an outline of United States policy towards Colombia under President Bush; this is followed by a discussion of the degree of success attributable to the US in advancing democracy in Colombia. In the fifth part I offer conclusions regarding the relative significance of democracy promotion as a US policy objective in Colombia, before concluding the chapter with an analysis of the Bush administration’s democracy promotion policies elsewhere in the world.

Historical Background: US-Colombia Relations

A prominent scholar of US-Colombia relations has commented that “What is readily apparent is that, before the United States began its drug war, the normal state of the U.S.-Colombian relationship was relatively cordial in nature, free of much of the suspicion and animosity that often characterised U.S. relations with other Latin American states.”⁵¹¹ It is hard to square this statement with much of the historical record, however. Indeed, for much of the nineteenth and well into the twentieth century, relations were decidedly frosty. Tensions were evident as far back as the early nineteenth century, when the United States angered Simón Bolívar’s South American revolutionaries by refusing to abandon its policy of neutrality in their conflict with imperial Spain. This offence was mitigated somewhat by Washington’s prompt recognition of the new state of Gran Colombia, made up of present day Colombia, Venezuela, and Ecuador. Gran Colombia

⁵¹¹ Russell Crandall, *Driven by Drugs: U.S. Policy Toward Colombia* (Boulder & London: Lynne Rienner, 2002), p. 3.

was destined to implode within a decade, however, with Colombia going its own way in 1830 as New Granada.

A longstanding source of tension between Washington and Colombia (the name was adopted in 1850) was the restive province of Panama in Colombia's far north. In 1846 a treaty was signed by the two governments in which the US recognised and committed itself to upholding Colombian sovereignty over Panama. This provided the United States with legal cover to interfere in Panama, which it did with considerable regularity, sending troops no fewer than thirteen times to maintain order in the half-century following the opening of the Panama Railroad in the 1850s. During the Colombian civil war of 1899-1902 (the War of a Thousand Days) US forces landed unannounced and, in a brazen display of contempt for Colombian sovereignty, refused Colombian soldiers the use of the US-owned railroad.⁵¹²

Matters came to a head in Panama in 1903. After the Colombian Congress unanimously rejected a treaty granting the US the right to build a canal across the isthmus, Washington embraced Panama's secessionists, recognised Panama's independence, and dispatched a warship to prevent Colombia from sending troops to quell the rebellion in the province. US Secretary of State John Hay promptly signed a canal treaty with the Panamanians. Panama's secession was a triumph for US President Theodore Roosevelt, who had little but disdain for Colombia and its people. He later remarked that "The analogy of Colombians is with a group of Sicilian or Calabrian bandits" and asked whether "the blackmailing greed of the Bogotá ring [should] stand in the way of civilization?"⁵¹³ Colombians were understandably resentful of Washington's role in the loss of Panama, and it wasn't until 1921 that they were mollified, at least partially, with a compensation payment of \$25 million.

US-Colombian relations took a turn for the better with the onset of the Cold War. US policymakers were already disposed to look favourably on Colombia as a result of its cooperation during the Second World War, and were equally pleased when far-right Colombian President Laureano Gómez dispatched Colombian soldiers to fight with the US in Korea. Gómez, a member of the Conservative Party, was a rabid anti-communist

⁵¹² Ibid, p. 19; Robert W. Drexler, *Colombia and the United States: Narcotics Traffic and a Failed Foreign Policy* (London: McFarland & Co., 1997), pp. 36-44.

⁵¹³ Quoted in Drexler, *Colombia and the United States*, p. 47.

with dictatorial tendencies. He had been elected unopposed in 1949 while a state of siege was in effect, and proceeded to escalate the inter-party violence engulfing the Colombian countryside at the time.⁵¹⁴ Security concerns trumped any qualms Washington might have had about Gómez's authoritarian rule, with the two countries signing a military assistance agreement in 1952. When Gómez was ousted the next year in a coup led by army chief Gustavo Rojas Pinilla there was no discernable change in American policy. Rojas Pinilla ingratiated himself with the United States by outlawing the Communist Party and through his efforts to crush the communist peasant enclaves that had appeared during the civil war, and was rewarded with military aid, including warplanes, helicopters and training for Colombian officers.⁵¹⁵

The leaders of the Liberal and Conservative parties, whose rural partisans had spent much of the previous decade embroiled in a savage conflict known as *La Violencia*, managed to put aside their differences to end Rojas Pinilla's dictatorship in 1957. The two parties fashioned a power-sharing agreement known as the National Front, under which each would receive an equal share of all political offices except the presidency, which was to change hands every four years. The idea was to make the costs of fighting prohibitive, for, as the historian David Bushnell has put it, "why should members of one party shoot up a neighboring village of opposite political persuasion when each party was guaranteed 50 percent of the patronage jobs no matter what, without even taking risks?"⁵¹⁶ Elections did take place, but voters were restricted to choosing between candidates from one party; in the 1958 presidential election, for example, Colombians could only vote for someone representing the Liberal Party. Perhaps unsurprisingly, "Low electoral participation rates were an invariant feature of the National Front."⁵¹⁷ This fundamentally undemocratic arrangement, which precluded third-party involvement in elections, was set to last until 1974, but effectively continued until 1986, when President Virgilio Barco appointed an all-Liberal government.⁵¹⁸

⁵¹⁴ The Liberal Party refused to participate in the 1949 elections out of concern for their physical safety.

⁵¹⁵ Drexler, *Colombia and the United States*, p. 74; Robin Kirk, *More Terrible than Death: Violence, Drugs, and America's War in Colombia* (New York: Public Affairs, 2004), p. 42.

⁵¹⁶ David Bushnell, *The Making of Modern Colombia: A Nation in Spite of Itself* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), p. 226.

⁵¹⁷ Forrest Hylton, *Evil Hour in Colombia* (London: Verso, 2006), p. 54.

⁵¹⁸ The restrictions on electoral participation were removed in 1974. See Bushnell, *The Making of Modern Colombia*, p. 225.

United States policymakers liked to tout Colombia under the National Front as a successful democracy, brushing aside the political system's aforementioned antidemocratic features and the fact that the country was under an almost permanent state of siege.⁵¹⁹ Colombia was therefore showered with economic aid in the early 1960s, including US\$833 million in loans from 1961 to 1965. Washington also handed out liberal doses of military assistance - some US\$160 million between 1961 and 1967 - as the Colombian military attempted to eradicate the armed bands of recalcitrant Liberals and communists left over from *La Violencia*. Eliminating communists was a goal Washington approved of, and US military advisers oversaw the Colombian army's assault on the communist peasant enclave of Marquetalia in 1964, an operation which, however, only succeeded in driving the inhabitants of this "independent republic" further into the countryside.⁵²⁰

Overall, Colombian-US relations during the National Front were "marked by progress and cooperation greater than those enjoyed between the two countries at any other time."⁵²¹ Then, in the 1970s there emerged an issue that was to place an at times severe strain on the relationship: drugs. In that decade, Colombia became a centre first for the trade in marijuana, then, far more significantly, for cocaine. From this point on Washington pressured Colombian governments to take a tough line against drug producers and traffickers, pressure that sometimes aroused the resentment of Colombian officials. One such truculent Colombian was Alfonso López Michelsen, who served as president from 1974-8 and who dragged his feet on the drugs issue, informing US officials that it was their problem, not his.⁵²² Washington had more luck with his successor, Julio César Turbay Ayala, who was persuaded to begin fumigating marijuana and who sent 10,000 soldiers to destroy marijuana plants in the remote Caribbean department of La Guajira. He also signed an extradition treaty with the United States. Washington was less concerned by the rampant repression carried out under Turbay, who

⁵¹⁹ State of siege restrictions were in place 75 percent of the time from 1963 to 1982. Gustavo Gallón, "Human Rights: A Path to Democracy and Peace in Colombia," in Christopher Welna and Gustavo Gallón, eds., *Peace, Democracy, and Human Rights in Colombia* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2007), p. 370.

⁵²⁰ Crandall, *Driven by Drugs*, p. 24; Jenny Pearce, *Colombia: Inside the Labyrinth* (London: Latin America Bureau, 1990), p. 63; Kirk, *More Terrible than Death*, pp. 53-5.

⁵²¹ Drexler, *Colombia and the United States*, p. 80.

⁵²² See *Ibid*, pp. 89-109, for an overview of US relations with López Michelsen.

gave the armed forces wide police powers, which they proceeded to abuse by detaining and torturing anyone considered “subversive.” Colombia developed the unwanted reputation of being yet another South American state where citizens vanished without trace.⁵²³

The election of Belisario Betancur as president in 1982 did not augur well for US policy in Colombia. Although a Conservative, Betancur’s views were at odds with those of hard-line US President Ronald Reagan, with Betancur’s efforts to negotiate an end to the wars Washington was fuelling in Central America a prime example. When the two met in December 1982 in Bogotá the meeting did not go at all well, as the Colombian “treated the American president to an after-luncheon speech castigating the United States for its Latin American policies.”⁵²⁴ Betancur’s preference for resolving conflicts peacefully was also in evidence in his approach to the perennial problem of Colombia’s numerous left-wing guerrilla groups, some of which had been around since the mid-1960s. He offered an amnesty to the insurgents, and cajoled the most significant guerrilla organisations into declaring a ceasefire.⁵²⁵ The largest group, the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia-People’s Army (FARC-EP), established with the Communist Party and other Colombians of a leftist persuasion a political party called the Patriotic Union (UP). Within a decade, three thousand UP activists had been assassinated at the hands of death squads organised by drug lords and the military.⁵²⁶

During the 1980s Colombian cocaine barons began exerting a malign and pervasive influence over political life. Betancur’s justice minister, Rodrigo Lara Bonilla, was murdered in 1984 by gunmen working for drug lord Pablo Escobar, whose Medellín Cartel also tracked down and assassinated Lara Bonilla’s successor in Budapest three years later. Jaime Pardo Leal, who stood as the UP’s presidential candidate in 1986, was killed by the Medellín Cartel the following year, while three candidates for the 1990 presidential elections were murdered before the vote either on the command of Escobar or another drug trafficker, Fidel Castaño. These politicians were targeted either for advocating the extradition of drug traffickers to the United States, or simply because they

⁵²³ Crandall, *Driven by Drugs*, pp. 27-8; Kirk, *More Terrible than Death*, pp. 62-3.

⁵²⁴ Drexler, *Colombia and the United States*, p. 138.

⁵²⁵ An exception was the Army of National Liberation (ELN).

⁵²⁶ Kirk, *More Terrible than Death*, pp. 116-7; Livingstone, *Inside Colombia*, p. 55.

represented the political left. In an act that underlined the absence of press freedom in Colombia, Guillermo Cano, the editor of one of Colombia's biggest newspapers, *El Espectador*, and a critic of the drug lords, was shot dead by the Cartel in 1986. The newspaper's offices were bombed three years later.⁵²⁷ Escobar corrupted politicians, judges and law-enforcement officials with bribes, including "million dollar donations to both major parties." He even contrived to have himself elected as a substitute member of Congress in 1982. The Medellín Cartel launched a no-holds-barred war on the state in 1989 when its senior members were threatened with extradition, bombing an airliner, setting off car bombs and kidnapping significant public figures. As one writer has commented, by the end of the 1980s the power of the drug lords "had swelled to unimaginable proportions."⁵²⁸

It was in this context that George H. W. Bush assumed the presidency of the United States in 1989. Bush came to office warning of the "clear and present danger" that drugs presented to US national security, and declared that he would go after cocaine at its source. This, he argued, was the "cheapest way to eradicate narcotics."⁵²⁹ To this end, he radically increased anti-drugs assistance to Colombia and other Andean nations through his "Andean Initiative," a five-year aid package totalling US\$2.2 billion, with Colombia receiving an initial donation of US\$65 million in emergency aid. Russell Crandall has asserted that the decision to step up US involvement in Colombia was precipitated by the August 1989 murder by the Medellín Cartel of Liberal Party presidential candidate Luis Carlos Galán, whose "violent death horrified many U.S. government officials" and convinced them that "much more needed to be done to support the Colombian government in its fight against the drug traffickers."⁵³⁰ If so, it is unclear why the Bush administration was so eager to involve Colombia's military, which was "heavily infiltrated by the [drug] mafia," had worked with the traffickers to set up paramilitary death squads, and was accused by Amnesty International in 1988 of itself employing "a policy of terror, designed to intimidate and eliminate opponents without recourse to

⁵²⁷ Kirk, *More Terrible than Death*, pp. 87-8; Pearce, *Colombia*, pp. 1, 273; Hylton, *Evil Hour in Colombia*, p. 77.

⁵²⁸ Livingstone, *Inside Colombia*, pp. 57-9.

⁵²⁹ The quotes from Bush are in Mario A. Murillo, *Colombia and the United States: War, Unrest and Destabilization* (New York: Seven Stories Press, 2004), p. 124; and Crandall, *Driven by Drugs*, p. 33.

⁵³⁰ Crandall, *Driven by Drugs*, p. 34.

law.”⁵³¹ Nor did the Bush administration see fit to place human rights conditions on aid to Colombia. Notwithstanding these contradictions, the bulk of the US\$65 million was indeed military-related.⁵³²

Despite the Bush administration’s largesse the “Andean initiative failed to make any significant changes to the amounts of drugs entering the USA.”⁵³³ On the other hand, Bush’s presidency did coincide with a significant democratization of Colombian politics. President César Augusto Gaviria in 1990 brought to an end the military’s long-standing monopoly on the position of secretary of defence. His term also saw the writing of a new constitution, which rescinded the president’s right to appoint departmental governors – they would now be popularly elected – along with his ability to declare an indefinite state of siege. Another provision stipulated that proportional representation would be used for elections to the Colombian Senate, “so as to lessen the influence of party bosses whose power base was essentially regional and to make it easier for new political and social movements to gain at least some representation.”⁵³⁴ Gaviria also brought down the Medellín Cartel, with Pablo Escobar shot dead in 1993. Notwithstanding his achievements, the US government was eager to see the back of Gaviria, who was considered to have “gone soft on the Cali cartel,” which had replaced Escobar’s group as the country’s most powerful drug mafia.⁵³⁵

As it turned out, the relationship with Gaviria would in retrospect seem one of relative harmony when compared to the mutual hostility that characterised Washington’s dealings with his successor, Ernesto Samper. Tensions were practically inevitable when it emerged that Samper’s presidential campaign had been funded by the Cali Cartel; while Samper professed his ignorance of the donations several of his advisers, notably his campaign manager and defence minister, Fernando Botero, were imprisoned for their roles in the affair.⁵³⁶ With Republicans having taken control of Congress in the November 1994 mid-term elections and accusing President Clinton of weakness in the fight against drugs, the US government came down hard on the beleaguered Samper,

⁵³¹ Pearce, *Colombia*, p. 267; the quote from Amnesty is in *Ibid*, p. 234.

⁵³² Kirk, *More Terrible than Death*, p. 242; Crandall, *Driven by Drugs*, p. 34.

⁵³³ Doug Stokes, *America’s Other War: Terrorizing Colombia* (London: Zed Books, 2005), p. 87.

⁵³⁴ Bushnell, *The Making of Modern Colombia*, p. 251; Livingstone, *Inside Colombia*, p. 56.

⁵³⁵ Crandall, *Driven by Drugs*, p. 37.

⁵³⁶ William Avilés, “The Democratic-Peace Thesis and U.S. Relations with Colombia and Venezuela,” *Latin American Perspectives*, vol. 32, no. 3 (May 2005), pp. 37-8; Livingstone, *Inside Colombia*, p. 60.

revoking his visa and decertifying Colombia in 1996 and 1997 for not cooperating sufficiently with US anti-drug efforts, rendering Colombia ineligible for certain types of US aid. The US used Samper's fragile position to its advantage, hectoring him into adopting a combative stance on drugs. He obliged by bringing down the Cali Cartel and commencing the aerial spraying of coca bushes with herbicides.⁵³⁷ However, in a sign that Washington would not allow its displeasure with Colombia's elected authorities to stand in the way of its anti-drugs campaign, US anti-narcotics and military aid in fact increased markedly while Colombia was decertified, with the US working through Colombian agencies it considered more trustworthy than Samper.⁵³⁸

The 1990s witnessed the exponential growth of Colombia's left-wing guerrilla organisations, the FARC-EP and the ELN, which grew rich on the back of extortion, kidnapping for ransom and taxing coca. The number of fighters boasted by the FARC-EP, which had always been the larger group, shot up from about 3-4,000 in the mid-1980s to a level of 15-20,000 as the century came to a close.⁵³⁹ Moreover, the Colombian army was increasingly demoralised as a consequence of a number of chastening defeats in large-scale battles with the FARC-EP in the late 1990s. These setbacks "resonated in important circles within the Clinton Administration, which was increasingly concerned about the growing military capacities of the FARC guerrillas."⁵⁴⁰ There was also an explosion in coca growth in Colombia at this time, with the area under cultivation rising from 79,500 hectares to 122,500 hectares between 1997 and 1999,⁵⁴¹ much of which was grown in regions dominated by the FARC-EP. Additionally, new Colombian President Andrés Pastrana angered US policymakers by launching a peace process with the FARC-

⁵³⁷ Avilés, "The Democratic-Peace Thesis and U.S. Relations with Colombia and Venezuela," pp. 38-9; Kirk, *More Terrible than Death*, p. 242. It has been suggested that the US was in fact trying to oust Samper. To quote Crandall, US policy during the Samper years involved "aggressively and publicly attempting to bring down the scandal-ridden but democratically elected president of Colombia." Crandall, *Driven by Drugs*, p. 3.

⁵³⁸ Avilés notes that "This aid directly assisted human rights violators...In 1997, 3,500 Colombians were killed, the vast majority by public security forces and their paramilitary allies, most of the victims being peasants perceived as supporters of the insurgency, trade unionists, and human rights and leftist activists." Avilés, "The Democratic-Peace Thesis and U.S. Relations with Colombia and Venezuela," p. 40; Stokes, *America's Other War*, p. 91.

⁵³⁹ Murillo, *Colombia and the United States*, p. 70; Bushnell, *The Making of Modern Colombia*, p. 255.

⁵⁴⁰ Nazih Richani, "The Politics of Negotiating Peace in Colombia," *NACLA Report on the Americas*, vol. 38, no. 6 (May-June 2005) (electronic version).

⁵⁴¹ United States Department of State, *International Narcotics Control Strategy Report 2007*, <<http://www.state.gov/p/inl/rls/nrcrpt/2007/vol1/html/80855.htm>>

EP, under which the government recognised the insurgents' control of a huge swath of territory. Washington, with some reason, saw the zone as little more than a base for rebel attacks. All in all, "by the summer of 1999 Colombia had become a crisis case for the United States."⁵⁴²

The remedy for Colombia's woes identified by the Clinton administration was "Plan Colombia," a \$1.3 billion aid package for the Andes which became law in July 2000, of which \$860 was reserved for Colombia. The majority of the aid to Colombia - \$642 million - was destined for its military and, to a lesser degree, the police. Washington was thus making an institution renowned for employing violence against noncombatants its principal partner in Colombia. Human Rights Watch accused the Colombian armed forces of being "implicated in serious human rights violations" in 1999 and 2000, noting that government soldiers had "attacked indiscriminately and killed civilians." The military was also admonished for providing support to Colombia's barbarous paramilitary organisations, which were "considered responsible for at least 78 percent of the human rights violations recorded in the six months from October 1999," including torture, murders, gang-rapes and dismemberments.⁵⁴³ Although concerned members of the United States Congress inserted human rights conditions into the aid package, including a demand that the Colombian military sever long-standing links to the paramilitary groups, these could be waived by the president on the grounds of national security, a step taken by President Clinton in August 2000.⁵⁴⁴ Plan Colombia was nevertheless seen as a political triumph for Clinton, whose Colombian policies had always been constrained by the Republican-controlled Congress. Indeed, as Crandall has observed, "the Republicans seemed to be even more enthusiastic about the package than the Democrats."⁵⁴⁵ It was also a boon for the US companies manufacturing the helicopters to be provided to the Colombian military and police. These helicopters, along with three new counter-narcotics battalions and herbicide-spraying planes, were to be used for a "push into the south,"

⁵⁴² Crandall, *Driven by Drugs*, p. 147.

⁵⁴³ Human Rights Watch, *World Report 2001*, <<http://www.hrw.org/wr2k1/americas/colombia.html>>

⁵⁴⁴ Kirk, *More Terrible than Death*, p. 261.

⁵⁴⁵ *Ibid*, p. 153. See *Ibid*, p. 155, for a breakdown of Plan Colombia assistance.

aimed at wiping out coca in areas controlled by the FARC-EP. The stated goal of Plan Colombia was a reduction in Colombian cultivation of coca of 50 percent by 2005.⁵⁴⁶

World View of the Bush Administration

While running for the presidency in 1999 and 2000, George W. Bush and his main foreign policy advisers outlined a realist approach to international affairs in which the national interest of the United States was placed front and centre. Bush made it plain that he had little time for US involvement in nation-building exercises, and was notably critical of Clinton's policy in Haiti. To quote James Mann, candidate Bush "pressed the theme that the Democrats of the 1990s had strayed too far from the traditional concerns of U.S. national security: strengthening America's alliances in Europe and Asia, building up a strong military and dealing with the challenges posed by major powers like Russia and China."⁵⁴⁷ Bush's chief foreign policy adviser, Condoleezza Rice, likewise emphasised that great powers such as China and Russia would be the new administration's overriding concern.⁵⁴⁸ The thrust of the new foreign policy was that America's massive political, military and economic power would be used to serve its own interests. In the words of Ivo Daalder and James Lindsay, Bush and his advisers "talked about exercising American power solely in terms of American interests," an example being their attitude towards international institutions. These "were fine if they served immediate, concrete American interests," but if they did not they would be ignored, undermined or simply discarded.⁵⁴⁹

Bush's choice of top foreign policy personnel also pointed to a more realist approach to international affairs. Vice-President Dick Cheney and Secretary of Defence Donald Rumsfeld were, in the words of Ivo Daalder and James Lindsay, "assertive nationalists – traditional hard-line conservatives willing to use American military power to defeat threats to U.S. security but reluctant as a general rule to use American primacy

⁵⁴⁶ United States Department of State, "A Report to Congress on United States Policy Towards Colombia and Other Related Issues," February 2003, <<http://www.state.gov/p/wha/rls/rpt/17140.htm>>

⁵⁴⁷ James Mann, *Rise of the Vulcans: The History of Bush's War Cabinet* (London: Penguin, 2004), p. 256.

⁵⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 258, 315.

⁵⁴⁹ Ivo H. Daalder and James M. Lindsay, *America Unbound: The Bush Revolution in Foreign Policy* (Washington, DC: Brookings, 2003), pp. 43-4.

to remake the world in its image.”⁵⁵⁰ Condoleezza Rice, who was appointed national security adviser, also approached international affairs from a realist perspective, while the man chosen as Bush’s first secretary of state, Colin Powell, often seen as the most “moderate” member of the foreign policy team, was renowned for his reluctance to unleash the US military unless vital national interests were on the line. There were also numerous veterans of the Reagan administration’s war against Nicaragua in important positions in the new administration. John Negroponte, who Bush appointed US ambassador to the United Nations, had served from 1981 to 1985 as ambassador to Honduras, the country to the north of Nicaragua which was the main staging area for Reagan’s terrorist war against the Sandinistas. Elliott Abrams, an ardent backer of the contras who was later convicted of lying to Congress about his knowledge of the secret war against Nicaragua, was appointed NSC director for democracy, human rights and international operations, while Otto Reich, who had supervised the State Department’s propaganda offensive against the Sandinistas in the 1980s, became assistant secretary of state for Western Hemisphere affairs.

The presence of hard-line conservatives in the administration and Bush’s own statements on international affairs led some analysts to predict that democracy promotion would barely feature in the new administration’s interactions with the world. For example, Elizabeth Cohn argued in 2001 that “the George W. Bush administration appears likely to...jettison altogether the promotion of democracy – even limited versions of it – as a foreign policy goal.” Cohn noted that during Bush’s first eight months in office US officials “made no significant statements about promoting democracy abroad,” and she discerned a notably realist attitude among policymakers. She felt confident enough to conclude that “the foreign policy framework of this administration will not be the promotion of democracy,” with realism likely to be “resurgent.”⁵⁵¹

Those who predicted that democracy promotion would be downplayed under Bush were quickly proved wrong. As his presidency unfolded Bush’s remarks on foreign policy became increasingly ideological and moralistic, and he seized on the idea that democracy promotion should be a central objective of US foreign policy. He repeatedly

⁵⁵⁰ Ibid, p. 15.

⁵⁵¹ Elizabeth Cohn, “Bush ‘Realists’ say goodbye to democracy promotion,” *NACLA Report on the Americas*, vol. 35, no. 3 (Nov-Dec 2001) (electronic version).

defended the invasion of Iraq in 2003 by appealing to the need to bring democracy to the Iraqi people. Christopher Meyer, the British ambassador to the US from 1997 to 2003, has written that he “heard Bush say at Camp David in September 2002 that putting American troops in harm’s way would be justified if it brought democracy and freedom to the people of Iraq.”⁵⁵² By the start of Bush’s second term, the president was touting democracy promotion as *the* vital goal of his foreign policy. Bush dedicated his February 2005 State of the Union address to the theme, arguing that repressive states served as “recruiting grounds for terror,” a reality which he believed could only be changed by extending freedom to benighted parts of the world. To this end, the president asserted, “America will stand with the allies of freedom to support democratic movements in the Middle East and beyond.” Moving beyond mere high-flown rhetoric, he proudly touted unfolding “landmark events in the history of liberty,” like the “beginnings of reform and democracy in the Palestinian territories” and the inevitable “victory of freedom in Iraq,” which would “inspire democratic reformers from Damascus to Tehran.” The United States, the president averred, had a “generational commitment to the advance of freedom, especially in the Middle East.”⁵⁵³

Bush’s paeans to democracy led many commentators to assume that administration neoconservatives like Deputy Secretary of Defence Paul Wolfowitz, who were firm believers in the democratic peace thesis and the consequent need for America to promote democracy,⁵⁵⁴ had taken a stranglehold over Bush’s foreign policy. Stefan Halper and Jonathan Clarke, for example, accused the neoconservatives of having ‘hijacked’ American foreign policy after the terrorist attacks of 11 September, 2001.⁵⁵⁵ Francis Fukuyama has suggested, in contrast, that “while there is reason for associating neoconservatism with Bush’s first-term policies...the connection is often overstated and glosses over a much more complex reality.”⁵⁵⁶ Whatever the case may be, there is no

⁵⁵² Christopher Meyer, *DC Confidential* (London: Phoenix, 2006), p. 237.

⁵⁵³ George W. Bush, “State of the Union Address,” 2 February 2005, <<http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2005/02/20050202-11.html>>

⁵⁵⁴ In the words of Francis Fukuyama, neoconservatives believe that “liberal democracies...are less externally aggressive than dictatorships. So there is an imperative to liberate people from tyranny and promote democracy around the world.” Francis Fukuyama, *After the Neocons: America at the Crossroads* (London: Profile, 2007), p. 114.

⁵⁵⁵ Stefan Halper and Jonathan Clarke, *America Alone: The Neo-Conservatives and the Global Order* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), p. 139.

⁵⁵⁶ Fukuyama, *After the Neocons*, p. 4.

denying that, particularly after the invasion of Iraq, democracy promotion suffused the foreign policy discourse of the Bush administration. What follows is an attempt to determine how the rhetorical commitment to democracy fared in practice.

US Policy towards Colombia under President Bush

Democracy promotion was pinpointed as a primary US goal in Colombia within the first few months of President Bush's presidency. In testimony before Congress in March 2001, General Peter Pace, the head of US Southern Command, stated that "this is a fight for democracy in Colombia, to support that democracy." He declared that by providing huge sums in aid to the Colombian government, the US was "supporting a fellow democracy while we also assist ourselves." Pace's sentiments were echoed by Assistant Secretary of Defense Peter Rodman, who asserted in his confirmation hearings before the Senate Armed Services Committee in June 2001 that "I think, inescapably, we...have a stake in Colombia as a long-standing democracy and a friend."⁵⁵⁷

Aid

The US has provided its "fellow democracy" Colombia with a great deal of aid since President Bush took office. The annual outlay of around \$700 million has made Colombia one of the principal beneficiaries of US foreign aid. Most of this assistance, some eighty percent, has been provided to the Colombian police and military, so that they might more effectively fight drugs and wage war on leftist guerrillas, particularly the FARC-EP.⁵⁵⁸ Until mid-2002, US aid was officially and legally restricted to the anti-drugs campaign, which largely consisted of training Colombian counter-narcotics battalions, providing helicopters and spraying coca plantations. Congress then acquiesced to the Bush administration's request that US aid also be made available for "counter-terrorism," in other words for use against Colombia's various armed groups. The rest of the annual Colombia aid package has been directed to various socio-economic and

⁵⁵⁷ The quotes from Pace and Rodman are in Livingstone, *Inside Colombia*, pp. 165, 172.

⁵⁵⁸ For figures detailing US assistance to Colombia, see Center for International Policy, "U.S. Aid to Colombia Since 1997: Summary Tables," <<http://ciponline.org/colombia/aidtable.htm>>

democracy programs, like assisting those Colombians displaced by violence and crop-spraying, protecting threatened human rights workers and trade unionists, strengthening Colombia's judiciary and attempting to promote alternative development opportunities for workers in coca-growing regions. The socio-economic side of US aid to Colombia is nonetheless very much secondary to the military and police component. Bush administration officials have sought to justify this overwhelming emphasis on security assistance by arguing that the military side is what the US does best and that Washington is merely responding to the demands of the Colombian government. As State Department official Charles Shapiro told the House subcommittee on the Western Hemisphere in April 2007, "Our programs provide greater support in those areas where we have a unique capability...Government of Colombia officials have clearly told us that continued U.S. support to counter-narcotics and counter-terrorism programs remains critical and that our proposed mix of U.S. assistance reflects their needs." The administration's "proposed mix" of aid for the period 2007-13 continues this trend of favouring the Colombian military.⁵⁵⁹

The Bush administration has painted the government of Colombian President Álvaro Uribe, who took office in August 2002, in a glowing light, and has argued that, under his leadership, Colombia deserves continued and significant US support. Not all in Congress have been won over to the administration's point of view, however, and certain Democrats have repeatedly endeavoured to reduce the amount of money going to Colombia. In 2003 House Democrats Ike Skelton and Jim McGovern tried to cut military aid to Colombia by \$75 million. When introducing his amendment, McGovern alluded to Colombia's human rights shortcomings, especially the cosy relations subsisting between the army and Colombia's feared paramilitaries, and claimed that notwithstanding the enormous amounts of aid provided by the US coca production in Colombia was actually increasing. He contended that cutting military aid might act as a wake-up call to the Colombian armed forces, as it would "send a powerful message that Congress believes

⁵⁵⁹ Charles S. Shapiro, "U.S.-Colombia Relations" (testimony before the House Foreign Affairs Committee Subcommittee on the Western Hemisphere), 24 April 2007, <<http://www.state.gov/p/wha/rls/rm/07/q2/83646.htm>>

respect for human rights is essential.”⁵⁶⁰ The amendment was defeated by 226 votes to 195. Two years later House Democrats tried again, this time with the objective of decreasing military assistance to Colombia by US\$100 million. Skelton questioned whether Plan Colombia was producing results, noting that several billion dollars of US aid to Colombia had failed to affect the flow of drugs entering the US. He also complained about what he considered Colombia’s unwillingness to share its part of the burden and asked whether Washington should pour so much money into Colombia “at a time when our military and our foreign aid dollars, our defense dollars are spread so thin across the globe.”⁵⁶¹ While Skelton spoke for many Democrats, the amendment was still defeated by 234 votes to 189. Yet another doomed effort to cut aid occurred the year after, when McGovern argued for a cut in aid of US\$30 million. Deriding the anti-drugs effort as “a miserable failure” that had “accomplished zilch,” and castigating the Colombian armed forces for committing “heinous acts with impunity,” he called on the House to “send a powerful message to the Colombian military that our pockets and our patience are wearing thin.”⁵⁶² A majority of Representatives had not run out of patience, however, and McGovern’s amendment was rejected by a vote of 229 to 174.

The likes of McGovern and Skelton had to face the reality that the House of Representatives, like the Senate, was until November 2006 controlled by Republicans, who were by and large firmly behind President Bush’s Colombia policy. A flavour of the sentiments of these Republican “drug war hawks” can be garnered by studying their speeches lambasting the aforementioned amendments introduced by McGovern and others. Objecting to the 2006 effort to reduce aid by US\$30 million, Mark Souder warned that it would “hurt kids and families in the United States” as well as making “the futures of kids and families in Colombia less secure.” Plan Colombia was working, according to Souder, who asserted, dubiously, that elected officials in Colombia “are not worried about being murdered anymore.”⁵⁶³ He was joined in opposition by Dan Burton, who

⁵⁶⁰ Jim McGovern, “Speech by Rep. Jim McGovern,” 23 July 2003, <<http://ciponline.org/colombia/030723mcgo.htm>>

⁵⁶¹ Ike Skelton, “Speech by Rep. Ike Skelton,” 28 June 2005, <<http://ciponline.org/colombia/050628skel.htm>>

⁵⁶² Jim McGovern, “Speech by Rep. Jim McGovern,” 9 June 2006, <<http://ciponline.org/colombia/060609mcgov.htm>>

⁵⁶³ Mark Souder, “Speech by Rep. Mark Souder,” 9 June 2006, <<http://ciponline.org/colombia/060609soud.htm>>

opined that “the number one issue facing this country is the drug problem,” and argued that Colombia, which was “in the forefront” of the war against drugs, merited American backing. “Young lives have been saved and many overdoses avoided here because of our eradication and other Plan Colombia efforts,” he declared.⁵⁶⁴ A similar speech was made in 2005 by John Mica, who spoke of the “great progress” achieved under Plan Colombia. Mica characterised illegal narcotics as America’s “biggest social problem” and viewed aid to Colombia as a pivotal element of the US anti-drug strategy: “We know where these drugs are. We can eradicate them. And we can do that continuing Plan Colombia,” he proclaimed.⁵⁶⁵

Following the Democrats’ victory in the November 2006 Congressional elections, there were predictions that aid to Colombia would be reoriented. “Many Democrats want to reduce military spending and use the money to boost programs to fight poverty, relocate people displaced by Colombia’s 42-year civil war and encourage farmers to plant legal crops,” reported the *Houston Chronicle*.⁵⁶⁶ A few months later, another media report noted that Democrats in Congress were “raising doubts about the effectiveness of nearly US\$4 billion...in mostly military aid to Colombia since [Álvaro] Uribe took office in 2002.” In contrast to the Bush administration, which wanted to continue focusing on security assistance, “many Democrats express concern about Colombia’s human rights record and want greater emphasis on social programs,” with Representative McGovern arguing that “the U.S. aid formula [should be] reversed from its current ratio of 80 percent military versus 20 percent social.”⁵⁶⁷ In June 2007 Democrats in the House of Representatives pushed through a 10 percent reduction in aid to Colombia. The proportion of aid going to Colombia’s military was reduced significantly, by US\$150 million, while the House voted to increase socio-economic assistance by US\$100 million.

⁵⁶⁴ Dan Burton, “Speech by Rep. Dan Burton,” 9 June 2006, <<http://ciponline.org/colombia/060609burton.htm>>

⁵⁶⁵ John Mica, “Speech by Rep. John Mica,” 28 June 2005, <<http://ciponline.org/colombia/050628mica.htm>>

⁵⁶⁶ John Otis, “U.S. poised to shift Latin America policies,” *Houston Chronicle*, 22 November 2006.

⁵⁶⁷ Frank Bajak, “Colombian president pleads for U.S. aid,” *AP-Miami Herald*, 9 March 2007.

Paramilitarism

The extreme right-wing paramilitaries known as the United Self-Defence Forces of Colombia (AUC) had grown into a very wealthy, ultra-violent and extremely powerful organisation by the time George W. Bush became president. The AUC's wealth derived largely from its stake in Colombia's drugs trade, with former leader Carlos Castaño, who was reportedly murdered on the order of his brother in 2004, famously claiming in 2000 that 70 percent of the organisation's income came from drugs. The AUC's *raison d'être* was to eliminate, by any means necessary, Colombia's left-wing guerrillas and any civilians considered sympathetic to their cause. Their anti-guerrilla ideology made them natural allies of the armed forces. Indeed, the AUC's ties to the Colombian armed forces were so extensive that Human Rights Watch entitled a 2001 report on military-paramilitary ties "*The Sixth Division*," the other five divisions comprising the army's official strength. Human Rights Watch claimed that a number of army brigades worked hand in glove with the paramilitaries, with soldiers "moonlighting" as paramilitaries, coordinating attacks with and providing military equipment to the AUC, and receiving payment for their assistance. A local official in the southern Colombian department of Putumayo described the relationship as a "marriage." The marriage between the paramilitaries and the army's 24th Brigade was the stuff of nightmares for the inhabitants of Putumayo, for its offspring were "extrajudicial executions, forced disappearances, and death threats."⁵⁶⁸

The AUC, which boasted over 10,000 fighters by 2001, was also a major force in the political sphere, as shown by its role in the 2002 congressional and presidential elections. The paramilitaries threatened candidates and resorted to widespread voter intimidation, including the issuing of "express instructions not to vote for specific candidates, especially [Liberal Party presidential nominee] Horacio Serpa." The paramilitaries also "obliged people to vote for [Álvaro] Uribe" in numerous departments. Those who defied the AUC ran the risk of death, as evidenced by the fate of a radio announcer in the department of Cesar, who was murdered "supposedly for having read a

⁵⁶⁸ Human Rights Watch, "*The Sixth Division*": *Military-Paramilitary Ties and U.S. Policy in Colombia* (New York: Human Rights Watch, 2001), pp. 1-3, 16-18.

communiqué from Liberal candidate Horacio Serpa, after the paramilitaries had forbidden the broadcasting of any material about that candidate.” According to then Minister of the Interior Armando Estrada, “The paramilitaries took advantage of the March [legislative] elections to establish a lobby for them in Congress.”⁵⁶⁹ AUC commander Salvatore Mancuso boasted after the elections that the paramilitaries controlled 30 percent of Congress, and while he may have been exaggerating, there was no question that the AUC had many backers in the legislature.

In an article published in 2002, Nazih Richani described the AUC as “a group that is friendly to U.S. policy and economic interests in Colombia.” He also stated that “it’s clear that some U.S. agents consider the AUC more of an asset than a liability.”⁵⁷⁰ Yet in September 2001 the State Department placed the AUC on its list of Foreign Terrorist Organisations (FTOs), where it joined the FARC-EP and the ELN. There was some cynicism regarding the motives of the Bush Administration in taking this step. As Cynthia Arnson commented, the decision to place the paramilitaries on the list of FTOs “appeared at least in part to respond to criticism within and outside the U.S. government that the United States exercised a double standard by condemning terrorism of left-wing guerrillas while ignoring that of right-wing paramilitaries.”⁵⁷¹ While the administration’s reasons for putting the AUC on the list of terrorist groups are open to dispute, US policy took a further turn against the paramilitaries in September 2002 when the US Justice Department issued extradition orders for three AUC leaders, Carlos Castaño and Salvatore Mancuso included, on charges of trafficking drugs to the United States, where they would face possible life imprisonment. Just two months later the paramilitaries announced a unilateral ceasefire, an action that US Secretary of State Colin Powell deemed “encouraging,” while cautioning that “it remains to be seen whether it is a true ceasefire and whether it leads to a process that will end the difficulties that have existed

⁵⁶⁹ Miguel García and Gary Hoskin, *Political Participation and War in Colombia: An Analysis of the 2002 Elections*, (London: Crisis States Programme, 2003), pp. 7-9.

⁵⁷⁰ Nazih Richani, “Colombia at the crossroads: The future of the peace accords,” *NACLA Report on the Americas*, vol. 35, no. 4 (Jan-Feb 2002) (electronic version). Richani’s view was backed up by Jason Hagen, who wrote a few months later that “It is no secret to those who follow Colombian issues in Washington that some U.S. officials privately sympathize with the AUC.” Jason Hagen, “New Colombian president promises more war,” *NACLA Report on the Americas*, vol. 36, no. 1 (July-August 2002) (electronic version).

⁵⁷¹ Cynthia J. Arnson, “The Peace Process in Colombia and U.S. Policy,” in Welna and Gallón, eds., *Peace, Democracy, and Human Rights in Colombia*, p. 134.

with the AUC.”⁵⁷² The indictment was seen by many as a major factor influencing the ceasefire declaration, for the likes of Castaño were apparently desperate to avoid jail time in the US. In the words of Mario Murillo, “there is no question that the indictment...had a direct impact on the AUC’s decision to announce a ceasefire at the end of 2002.”⁵⁷³

In July 2003 the government of Colombian President Álvaro Uribe and the leaders of the AUC began formal negotiations aimed at achieving the complete demobilisation of the paramilitaries by December 2005. This agreement came despite reports that the ceasefire was being continually flouted, with the *Washington Post* noting in January 2004 that “several hundred civilian murders have been attributed to the [AUC] since [the ceasefire announcement].”⁵⁷⁴ The Colombian government set about drafting a law that would provide a basis for the process of demobilisation, but its initial efforts were greeted with a wave of criticism. Uribe at first proposed that AUC leaders should confess to their crimes in court, pay compensation to their victims or perhaps perform some social work, in return for which they could avoid spending a single day in prison. Members of the United States Congress were among those who were distinctly underwhelmed by Uribe’s scheme. In September 2003, fifty six members of the United States House of Representatives sent a letter to the Colombian president warning that “allowing these criminals to receive suspended sentences and pay reparations in lieu of jail time...would amount to impunity for serious human rights violations and would erode the rule of law in Colombia.”⁵⁷⁵ The Bush administration was inclined to be more positive, with a “senior Bush administration official” saying that month that “We support a process that gets one of these armed groups - these terrorist groups – off the battlefield,” while refusing to comment on Uribe’s aforementioned ideas on “alternative sentencing.”⁵⁷⁶ In a display of its support for the demobilisation effort the US handed over US\$3 million to support its early stages.⁵⁷⁷

⁵⁷² Colin L. Powell, “Interview by Sergio Gomez Maseri of El Tiempo,” 2 December 2002, <<http://www.state.gov/secretary/former/powell/remarks/2002/15621.htm>>

⁵⁷³ Murillo, *Colombia and the United States*, p. 106.

⁵⁷⁴ Scott Wilson, “OAS to Monitor Disarmament of Colombian Paramilitary Units,” *Washington Post*, 26 January 2004.

⁵⁷⁵ “Letter to President Álvaro Uribe from 56 members of the U.S. Congress,” 26 September 2003, <<http://ciponline.org/colombia/030926cong.htm>>

⁵⁷⁶ Scott Wilson, “Uribe Sets Goal at Own Peril,” *Washington Post*, 20 September 2003.

⁵⁷⁷ Garry Leech, “Washington’s Paramilitary Game in Colombia,” 2 August 2004, <<http://www.colombiajournal.org/colombia195.htm>>

Paramilitary demobilisation was practically stillborn prior to 2005, prompting criticism from US officials, notably US Ambassador to Colombia William Wood. In February 2004, Wood noted that the AUC had not lived up to its ceasefire commitments, while in June he condemned the paramilitaries in an interview with a Colombian magazine, stating that “They have only one program: narco-terror. And only one agenda: destruction.” Further evidence of US displeasure came the following month when charges were issued in the US against another two AUC leaders for drug trafficking.⁵⁷⁸ However, by the time of Condoleezza Rice’s trip to Bogotá in April 2005, the process had gathered sufficient momentum for the new secretary of state to express optimism. Rice was publicly supportive of Uribe’s negotiations with the paramilitaries, deeming the demobilisation of around 5,000 AUC members to that point “the impressive result of tough policies.” She added that she hoped to see passage of “a law that will effectively dismantle illegal armed groups, bring justice and reparation to victims, and punish those guilty of major crimes and atrocities.”⁵⁷⁹ A law governing demobilisation was indeed passed by the Colombian Congress in June 2005, although its terms proved to be highly controversial. Law 975, also known as the Justice and Peace Law, provided that paramilitaries who had committed major human rights violations would receive sentences of up to eight years in return for confessing their crimes and surrendering assets obtained by illegal means. Human Rights Watch was scathing in its reaction to the law, arguing that it “fails to include effective mechanisms to dismantle the country’s mafia-like armed groups” and “utterly fails to satisfy international standards on truth, justice, and reparation for victims.”⁵⁸⁰

Many in the US Congress had followed the Colombian government’s attempts to draft a law for paramilitary demobilisation with some concern. In February 2005, six senior members of Congress wrote to President Uribe, affirming that they backed his efforts to demobilise the paramilitaries, and offering financial support to this end providing that “such a process is conducted pursuant to an effective legal framework...that will bring about the dismantlement of the underlying structure, illegal

⁵⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁷⁹ Condoleezza Rice, “Remarks with Colombian Foreign Minister Carolina Barco,” 27 April 2005, <<http://www.state.gov/secretary/rm/2005/45280.htm>>

⁵⁸⁰ Human Rights Watch, “Overview of human rights issues in Colombia,” <http://www.hrw.org/english/2006/01/18/colomb12206_txt.htm>

sources of financing, and economic power of these FTOs [Foreign Terrorist Organisations].” They emphasised that it was “critical that the provision of benefits...be conditioned on...compliance with the cease-fire and cessation of criminal activity,” and underlined that “it is necessary that the perpetrators of atrocities be held accountable for their crimes.”⁵⁸¹ One of the joint signatories of the letter was the Republican chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, Richard Lugar, who wrote once again to the Colombian president a few months later. This time Lugar expressed the fear that the law on demobilisation proposed by Uribe “would leave intact the complex mafia-like structures and wealth of...the AUC.” He added that he was “troubled” that AUC commanders “can reportedly receive extremely short sentences for their crimes, even if the groups they command remain active and continue to engage in drug trafficking and terrorist activities.”⁵⁸² Notwithstanding such qualms, the US Congress appropriated US\$20 million for paramilitary demobilisation as part of its foreign aid bill for 2006. Bush administration officials were seemingly pleased with the law, especially after it was modified by Colombia’s Constitutional Court in May 2006. As Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs R. Nicholas Burns stated in November 2006, “We’ve been very pleased to support [the Justice and Peace] law and support the process of demobilization.” While the US would have “a number of questions that we’ll want to seek answers to about the implementation of this law,” Burns highlighted that “we admire what President Uribe and his administration have done, what his Cabinet has done, to seek the demobilization of over 30,000 people.”⁵⁸³

Congressional and administration support came despite the failure of the Colombian government to address many of the issues raised by the senators and representatives in their communications with President Uribe. The ceasefire of November 2002 was breached with such regularity that it became totally meaningless, with over 2,000 murders carried out by the paramilitaries to the end of 2005. Moreover, although over 30,000 AUC fighters and logistical staff had surrendered by April 2006, it was plain

⁵⁸¹ “Letter from 6 House and Senate committee chairs and ranking members regarding support for paramilitary negotiations,” 2 February 2005, <<http://ciponline.org/colombia/050202chai.htm>>

⁵⁸² Richard G. Lugar, “Letter to President Alvaro Uribe from Senator Richard Lugar,” 23 May 2005, <<http://ciponline.org/colombia/050523luga.pdf>>

⁵⁸³ R. Nicholas Burns, “Press availability with Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs R. Nicholas Burns,” 25 October 2006, <<http://ciponline.org/colombia/061024burn.htm>>

that the power and organisational structures of the paramilitaries endured. A June 2006 report by the International Crisis Group noted that “the demobilised paramilitaries maintain important influence in [Colombia’s] Congress,” while “paramilitary control over local socio-economic structures has been left virtually untouched.” The report also highlighted that “paramilitaries have penetrated the formal economy, investing in highly liquid assets and businesses that facilitate money laundering.”⁵⁸⁴ Then, in October 2006 a scandal broke in Colombia that called into question the entire demobilisation process. A laptop computer discovered by Colombia prosecutors revealed that AUC commander Rodrigo Tovar Pupo, alias “Jorge 40,” had ordered the murders of 558 Colombians in the Caribbean department of Atlántico while the paramilitary ceasefire was supposedly in effect. It also emerged that Tovar had organised sham demobilisations, using peasants in the place of his fighters, had bribed police to turn a blind eye to his continued drug trafficking, and had “helped senators and congressmen close to him win reelection.”⁵⁸⁵

A month later, in November 2006, the Colombian Supreme Court ordered the arrest of three serving members of Congress, along with one former congresswoman, from the Caribbean department of Sucre, all of whom were accused of having links to the paramilitaries. One of the accused, Senator Álvaro García, was charged with having orchestrated a massacre in 2000 and of involvement in the murder of an electoral official in 1997. The next revelation to seep out came from Senator Miguel de la Espriella, a man long suspected of having paramilitary connections, who revealed to the Colombian newspaper *El Tiempo* that he and numerous other politicians from the Caribbean coast had signed a secret pact pledging loyalty to the paramilitaries in 2001. “In [the Caribbean department of] Córdoba you couldn’t practice politics without getting the nod from the self-defense forces,” he told *El Tiempo*.⁵⁸⁶ AUC commander Salvatore Mancuso produced a copy of the pact during testimony in January 2007 before the special tribunal set up to hear paramilitary confessions. During his testimony Mancuso revealed how the AUC had influenced elections, admitting that “paramilitaries had coerced voters at

⁵⁸⁴ International Crisis Group, “Uribe’s Re-election: Can the EU Help Colombia Develop a More Balanced Peace Strategy?” *Crisis Group Latin America Report No. 17*, 8 June 2006, <http://www.crisisgroup.org/library/documents/latin_america/17_uribes_re_election.pdf>

⁵⁸⁵ Juan Forero, “In Colombia, a Dubious Disarmament,” *Washington Post*, 17 October 2006.

⁵⁸⁶ Quoted in Hugh Bronstein, “Colombian senator admits right-wing militia link,” *Reuters*, 26 November 2006.

gunpoint to support regional and presidential candidates who favored the paramilitaries' agenda,"⁵⁸⁷ one of the preferred candidates being President Uribe. In February, five more members of the Colombian Congress were arrested on suspicion of having links to the paramilitaries, including Senator Álvaro Araújo, the brother of foreign minister Maria Consuelo Araújo, who quickly tendered her resignation. Senator Araújo was accused of conspiring with paramilitaries to kidnap a political competitor, Victor Ochoa, before the 2002 election, an action undertaken "to intimidate Ochoa's associates from running and assure the senator's election."⁵⁸⁸

The "para-politics" scandal continued to snowball, with the most dramatic arrest that of the former head of the Colombian intelligence service (DAS – Department of Administrative Security), Jorge Noguera. A former DAS colleague, Rafael García, alleged that when running the intelligence service Noguera had destroyed files pertaining to the paramilitaries and provided AUC commander Jorge 40 with a hit-list of trade unionists. This was in addition to collaborating with them to ensure Uribe's election while he served as the future president's campaign manager in 2002. Noguera was arrested in February 2007. Although released in March on a technicality Noguera was rearrested in July "on charges of colluding with paramilitary death squads."⁵⁸⁹ In March, the *Los Angeles Times* reported that the CIA had intelligence suggesting that the Colombian army had planned, in concert with the AUC, an assault on a slum in Medellín in 2002, after which the paramilitaries established control over the area.⁵⁹⁰ In May another five members of Congress and six former lawmakers were arrested for purported paramilitary ties, and it also emerged that imprisoned underlings of supposedly demobilised AUC commanders like Mancuso were still "plotting murders and overseeing drug-trafficking operations and extortion rackets."⁵⁹¹ This information came courtesy of police wiretaps, but it then became apparent that the police were also tapping the phones of opposition politicians, journalists and even government officials. The Colombian government claimed ignorance of the operation, and the head of the National Police and

⁵⁸⁷ Indira A.R. Lakshmanan, "Salvatore Mancuso, former Colombian death squad leader, recounts squad's mayhem," *Boston Globe-International Herald Tribune*, 18 January 2007.

⁵⁸⁸ Chris Kraul, "Top Colombia official resigns," *Los Angeles Times*, 20 February, 2007.

⁵⁸⁹ "Secret police's ex-chief arrested," *Los Angeles Times*, 7 July 2007.

⁵⁹⁰ Paul Richter and Greg Miller, "Colombia army chief linked to outlaw militias," *Los Angeles Times*, 25 March 2007.

⁵⁹¹ Juan Forero, "Colombian Lawmakers Arrested," *Washington Post*, 15 May 2007.

other senior police officials were fired. Perhaps most damagingly of all, Salvatore Mancuso asserted in further testimony in May that members of the Colombian establishment had been intimately involved in the paramilitary project from the start. “Paramilitarism was state policy,” stated Mancuso.⁵⁹²

As this scandal was unfolding, former paramilitaries scheduled to testify before the special tribunal and activists seeking some form of recompense for injustices suffered at the hands of the AUC were turning up dead. In December 2006 Jaime Andrés Angarita, a colleague of Salvatore Mancuso, was murdered, prompting Minister of the Interior Carlos Holguín to speak of a “plot to eliminate specific people within the paramilitary structure” in order to prevent them from testifying.⁵⁹³ At the end of January Yolanda Izquierdo, a leader of a group of peasants seeking the restitution of land allegedly stolen by paramilitaries, was assassinated in Córdoba. She had attended Mancuso’s hearing and received death threats advising her to drop her demands for compensation. Rodrigo Ogaza, a member of another group in Córdoba working for the rights of the displaced, remarked that Izquierdo had been “possibly imprudent,” noting that his organisation chose not to “make public accusations against specific paramilitary groups or try to recover specific parcels of land, because to do so would be suicidal.”⁵⁹⁴ Amnesty International cautioned that Izquierdo’s murder “raises serious doubts about a supposed demobilization process...which has patently failed to effectively dismantle paramilitary groups.”⁵⁹⁵ Izquierdo’s death followed swiftly on the heels of the killing of another advocate for the rights of displaced peasants in Córdoba, Freddy Espitia, which itself came soon after the office of the League of Displaced Women was set on fire near Cartagena.⁵⁹⁶ Then, in April 2007, a human rights activist named Judith Vergara, “who had denounced right-wing paramilitary violence,” was shot dead in Medellín, in “a sign that militia terror continues despite a deal meant to disband the illegal groups.”

⁵⁹² Quoted in Juan Forero, “Paramilitary Ties to Elite In Colombia Are Detailed,” *Washington Post*, 22 May 2007.

⁵⁹³ Quoted in Associated Press, “Colombia’s interior minister denounces plot to murder paramilitary fighters,” *International Herald Tribune*, 29 December 2006.

⁵⁹⁴ Quoted in Chris Kraul, “Killing haunts Colombia’s peace plan,” *Los Angeles Times*, 8 February 2007.

⁵⁹⁵ Amnesty International, “Colombia: Latest killing of human rights defender throws controversial paramilitary demobilization process into further doubt, 2 February 2007, <<http://www.amnestyusa.org/news/document.do?id=ENGAMR230022007>>

⁵⁹⁶ Constanza Vieira, “Colombia: The Limits of Paramilitary Repentance,” *Inter Press Service News Agency*, 13 February 2007.

According to a colleague of Vergara's, "The only theory we have is that Judith was killed by people who did not like the complaints she was making about demobilized paramilitaries demanding that people continue paying extortion money."⁵⁹⁷ As the Colombian Commission of Jurists commented, it seemed that "a reengineering of paramilitarism," rather than a peace process, was taking place.⁵⁹⁸

A columnist for the *Washington Post* remarked in January 2007 that the billowing scandal of paramilitary influence in Colombian politics "has barely raised an eyebrow in Washington."⁵⁹⁹ The Bush administration has certainly appeared unperturbed, failing to register any concern about the revelations and even attempting to turn the scandal into a triumph for the Colombian government. This was evident from the comments of State Department official Eric Watnik, who told the *Christian Science Monitor* in February 2007 that "The U.S. applauds the Colombian government for its determination to investigate, and where appropriate, prosecute all charges of ties to paramilitary organisations and other illegal armed groups."⁶⁰⁰ President Bush was supportive of his Colombian counterpart during a trip to Bogotá a month later, applauding Uribe for his commitment to justice in Colombia. Testifying before Congress in April 2007, State Department official Charles Shapiro was upbeat, arguing that "the allegations that have surfaced...about government connections to paramilitary groups show both the progress Colombia has made in rooting out such people and the challenges that lie ahead. It was the Uribe administration's policies that led to the discovery of these links and resulted in the arrest of prominent government figures."⁶⁰¹ Another optimistic official was Deputy Secretary of State John Negroponte, who, when asked about the scandal while in Colombia the following month, declared that "I basically see the situation with respect to the paramilitaries in a positive way."⁶⁰²

In contradistinction to Bush administration officials, members of the US Congress have expressed alarm at the nexus between politicians and paramilitaries. In February

⁵⁹⁷ Hugh Bronstein, "Colombian rights activist assassinated in Medellín," *Reuters*, 24 April 2007.

⁵⁹⁸ Quoted in Kraul, "Killing haunts Colombia's peace plan."

⁵⁹⁹ Marcela Sanchez, "Cleaning Up Colombia's Dirty War," *Washington Post*, 26 January 2007.

⁶⁰⁰ Quoted in Indira A. Lakshmanan, "U.S. worried by scandal rocking Colombia," *Boston Globe-International Herald Tribune*, 28 February 2007.

⁶⁰¹ Shapiro, "U.S.-Colombia Relations."

⁶⁰² John D. Negroponte, "Interview with Caracol TV," 9 May 2007, <<http://www.state.gov/s/d/2007/84557.htm>>

2007, Democratic Senator Patrick Leahy stated that the scandal “confirms the concerns that many have had for a long time, that the paramilitaries have infiltrated the economic and political establishment of Colombian society.” He remarked that “It should give us some pause as to who we are dealing with.” That same month, Democratic Representative Sander Levin was quoted as saying that “Plan Colombia is in more jeopardy because of these scandals, the infiltration of the paramilitary into the inner workings of the Colombian government.”⁶⁰³ Levin announced in April 2007 that the Democrats were considering holding hearings into the scandal, in order “to figure out exactly what’s going on in Colombia, exactly what is the role of the paramilitary, how much a part of the government they are, how the government is trying to address that.”⁶⁰⁴ That month Senator Leahy blocked US\$55 million in aid to the Colombian military over its alleged connections to the paramilitaries. The Democrats’ misgivings were again on display when President Uribe travelled to Washington a month later. After meeting Uribe with several other members of Congress, the speaker of the House of Representatives, Nancy Pelosi, released a statement in which she noted that “Many of us expressed our growing concerns about the serious allegations of connections between illegal paramilitary forces and a number of high-ranking Colombian officials.”⁶⁰⁵

Free Trade

One of the main preoccupations of the Bush administration as regards Colombia has been to pry open the country’s markets and secure a free trade accord. This aspect of policy towards Colombia is reflective of the administration’s more general approach to relations with Latin America, and indeed its overall foreign policy. As Assistant Secretary of State for Western Hemisphere Affairs Otto Reich remarked in 2002, “President Bush’s vision for the hemisphere is one of free markets and free people.”⁶⁰⁶

⁶⁰³ The quotes from Leahy and Levin are in Juan Forero, “Scandal in Colombia Raises Skepticism on Capitol Hill,” *Washington Post*, 17 February 2007.

⁶⁰⁴ Quoted in Juan Forero, “Colombian Officials Probe Uribe Allies In His Home State,” *Washington Post*, 16 April 2007.

⁶⁰⁵ Quoted in Doug Palmer, “Colombia scandals cloud trade deal – US senator,” *Reuters*, 3 May 2007.

⁶⁰⁶ Otto J. Reich, “U.S. Assistance to Colombia and the Andean Region” (testimony before the House International Relations Committee Subcommittee on the Western Hemisphere), 11 April 2002, <<http://www.state.gov/p/wha/rls/rm/9264.htm>>

President Bush has described himself as “a strong supporter of trade with...our Andean friends,” a point that was reiterated in the Colombian context by Reich’s successor as assistant secretary, Roger Noriega, who asserted in 2004 that “no one recognizes better than President Bush that in the long run free trade, and the jobs and economic alternatives it offers to Colombia’s citizens, will provide the foundation of our long-term partnership with Colombia.”⁶⁰⁷ The administration’s enthusiasm for hemispheric free trade was evident from its attempt to cajole the 34 states of the Americas, bar Cuba, into agreeing to a Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA). This scheme had to be abandoned after Venezuela and Mercosur, a regional trade grouping comprising Brazil, Uruguay, Argentina and Paraguay, torpedoed the plan for an FTAA at the Summit of the Americas in November 2005, on the grounds that the “conditions do not exist to attain a hemispheric free-trade accord that is balanced and fair.”⁶⁰⁸

With the FTAA dead and buried the administration refocused its energies on negotiating free trade pacts with individual states, one of which was Colombia. Talks to this end had in fact begun in May 2004 in Cartagena, on Colombia’s Caribbean coast. Explaining the decision to embark on free trade negotiations, US Trade Representative Robert Zoellick declared that “Colombia’s courageous fight against narco-trafficking terrorists that threaten democracy and regional stability can be assisted by promoting economic development and hope.”⁶⁰⁹ Other US officials have elaborated on the advantages that would derive from such an agreement. Assistant Secretary Noriega argued that “U.S. companies will substantially benefit from the elimination of Colombia’s relatively high trade barriers,” while “U.S. agricultural producers in particular expect to gain much through improved access to a large, relatively lucrative market.”⁶¹⁰ In fact, Colombia was already the second largest market in Latin America for US agricultural products, with exports to Colombia totalling \$677 million in 2005

⁶⁰⁷ George W. Bush, “President Bush, President Pastrana Discuss Trade, Terrorism,” 18 April 2002, <<http://www.state.gov/p/wha/rls/rm/9542.htm>>; Roger F. Noriega, “U.S. Policy and Programs in Colombia” (testimony before the House of Representatives Committee on Government Reform), 17 June 2004, <<http://www.state.gov/p/wha/rls/rm/33676.htm>>

⁶⁰⁸ Quoted in Garry Leech, “Despite FTAA Defeat at Americas Summit, Free Trade to Be Imposed on Colombians,” 7 November 2005, <<http://www.colombiajournal.org/colombia221.htm>>

⁶⁰⁹ Quoted in Office of the United States Trade Representative, “U.S. and Colombia to Begin FTA Negotiations on May 18,” 23 March 2004, <<http://www.state.gov/p/wha/rls/prsr/30979.htm>>

⁶¹⁰ Noriega, “U.S. Policy and Programs in Colombia.”

alone.⁶¹¹ Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice also joined the fray, stating in 2005 that “a future [trade] agreement would substantially strengthen U.S.-Colombian economic ties to our mutual benefit. Free trade and the jobs it creates for Colombians and Americans will lead to broadened economic opportunities for both nations and even more effective partnerships against drugs and against terrorism.”⁶¹² The two teams of negotiators announced that they had reached agreement in February 2006, and in August President Bush sent a letter to Congress notifying its members of his intention to sign the US-Colombia Free Trade Agreement (FTA). In addition to highlighting the benefits the FTA would offer in terms of US jobs and investment, “Bush said the pact would also strengthen democracy and spread prosperity in Colombia.”⁶¹³ The President duly signed the agreement in November 2006.

Not everyone has been persuaded by the administration’s claims, however. US trade unions, human rights organisations and Democratic members of Congress have expressed deep concern about the FTA, which must be ratified by Congress to enter into law. The main reason for their opposition is Colombia’s status as the world’s most dangerous country for trade unionists. It is a country where “Union officials who try to organize factories, farms and other workplaces run the risk of murder at the hands of hired thugs, often paramilitaries contracted by employers.”⁶¹⁴ The number of murdered Colombian union activists is disputed, although no one doubts the severity of the problem. In testimony before the US House of Representatives in June 2007 Maria McFarland Sánchez-Moreno of Human Rights Watch, citing figures from Colombia’s National Labour School, stated that 72 Colombian unionists were killed in 2006. The Colombian government put the figure much lower, at 25 unionist murders. However, as McFarland emphasised, Colombia’s government “reaches this artificially low number by arbitrarily excluding unionized teachers and peasant unions,” so that when unionised teachers are

⁶¹¹ Office of the United States Trade Representative, “United States and Colombia Conclude Free Trade Agreement,” 27 February 2006, <http://www.ustr.gov/Document_Library/Press_Releases/2006>

⁶¹² Rice, “Remarks with Colombian Foreign Minister Carolina Barco,” 27 April 2005.

⁶¹³ Doug Palmer, “Bush tells Congress will sign Colombia trade pact,” *Reuters*, 24 August 2006.

⁶¹⁴ Evelyn Iritani and Chris Kraul, “Colombia trade pact is decried,” *Los Angeles Times*, 22 November 2006.

included the government's tally rises to 58 unionists killed in 2006.⁶¹⁵ Moreover, there is near total impunity for such killings: according to the American Federation of Labour and Congress of Industrial Organisations (AFL-CIO), of the 236 murders of Colombian unionists from 2004 to 2006, in only one case has there been a conviction.⁶¹⁶ There have also been extremely disturbing allegations of state involvement in killings of trade union members, with the Colombian intelligence service, the DAS, accused of colluding with the AUC to murder union leaders. As noted above, Rafael García, a former DAS agent now in jail for money laundering, destroying official documents and other crimes, has alleged that ex-DAS chief Jorge Noguera provided AUC commander Rodrigo Tovar Pupo with the names of unionists who were then assassinated.

While the physical dangers confronting members of Colombian trade unions provide the most sensational evidence of the state's inability or unwillingness to protect workers' rights, there are further ways in which Colombian workers are mistreated. In "parts of the country...many workers toil in semi-feudal conditions," while "employers can easily fire or avoid employing unionized workers." The International Confederation of Free Trade Unions has denounced what it considers "structural anti-trade unionism" by the Colombian government and businesses, "which deny the rights to strike and to collective bargaining, while carrying out major restructurings and downsizing that are apparently only motivated by one goal: to curb trade union activity." Further, the Colombian government has been accused of permitting "serious labor violations to flourish in sectors such as the apparel and flower industries, where laborers say they are subjected to forced overtime and exposure to dangerous pesticides." Some two thirds of workers in the flower sector "have suffered headaches, rashes, nausea, impaired vision or asthma, according to the Pesticide Action Network." Only 5 percent of workers are unionised, one of the lowest rates in Latin America.⁶¹⁷

⁶¹⁵ Maria McFarland Sánchez-Moreno, "Congressional Testimony on Violence against Trade Unionists and Human Rights in Colombia," 28 June 2007,

<http://hrw.org/english/docs/2007/07/23/colomb16458_txt.htm>

⁶¹⁶ Doug Palmer, "Colombia scandals cloud trade deal – US senator," *Reuters*, 3 May 2007.

⁶¹⁷ Sergio De Leon, "Union organizing can be deadly in Colombia," *Miami Herald*, 7 March 2007; Iritani and Kraul, "Colombia trade pact is decried"; Gustavo Capdevila, "Labour-Colombia: Unions Press for Local ILO Office" *Inter Press Service News Agency*, 20 September 2006; Livingstone, *Inside Colombia*, p. 95.

The Republican defeat in the November 2006 mid-term elections spelled trouble for the US-Colombia FTA, for whereas ratification of the accord seemed certain while the Republicans controlled Congress, this was not the case once the Democrats took over. The Democrats, who have long-standing ties with US labour groups, expressed grave concern at the plight of Colombia's unionists and the Colombian government's human rights record more generally. Representative James McGovern, a leading Democratic critic of US policy in Colombia, remarked in March 2007 that "Countless numbers of trade unionists in Colombia have been intimidated, have been threatened and have been murdered. Until those issues are addressed, I think there's going to be some rough sledding for the trade agreement."⁶¹⁸ Senior Democrats like Charles Rangel, chairman of the House Ways and Means Committee, and Sander Levin, who chairs the House Subcommittee on Trade, quickly made it plain that, in light of Colombia's dreadful record on workers' rights, the FTA, which merely required Colombia to enforce its own labour laws rather than agree to abide by international labour standards, would have to be rewritten. As Levin commented, "You cannot put together a free-trade agreement when there isn't freedom for workers in terms of their basic international rights."⁶¹⁹ In light of their well-founded concerns about the treatment of workers in Colombia Democrats insisted that new language be inserted into the FTA to provide guarantees that internationally recognised workers' rights would be respected. It soon became apparent, however, that new language would not be enough to satisfy them.

Some opponents of the US-Colombia FTA have argued that including tougher language on labour standards would be insufficient to deal with the problems facing workers and unionists in Colombia. Carol Pier of Human Rights Watch captured the view of many critics when she wrote that Colombia's "human rights problems...cannot be solved through corrections to the trade agreement." She believed that "Congress should reject the pact outright," as passage of the FTA "would reward Colombia with prized access to American markets even as its workers' rights are brutally violated."⁶²⁰ Many Democrats came round to this view. This was evident from the trade deal reached by the

⁶¹⁸ Quoted in De Leon, "Union organizing can be deadly in Colombia."

⁶¹⁹ Quoted in Juan Forero, "Unionists' Murders Cloud Prospects for Colombia Trade Pact," *Washington Post*, 10 April 2007.

⁶²⁰ Carol Pier, "A pact with the devil," *Baltimore Sun*, 2 April 2007.

Bush administration and senior Democrats in May 2007, when the administration agreed to amend trade pacts already signed with Peru and Panama to include stronger protections for workers. Although President Bush suggested that the accord also offered “a clear path” to progress on the FTA with Colombia, the Democrats made it clear that “the deal does not apply to Colombia, because of special concerns in that country over attacks on union leaders by armed groups.”⁶²¹ The Democrats’ opposition was again on display in June 2007 when senior House Democrats, including Pelosi, Levin and Rangel, released a statement in which they emphasised that although they would ratify the FTAs with Peru and Panama, the “widespread concern in Congress about the level of violence in Colombia...and the role of the paramilitary” precluded ratification of the US-Colombia FTA. This trade accord had no hope of passing Congress without “concrete evidence of sustained results on the ground in Colombia.”⁶²²

Other arguments have been put forth against the free trade pact. As part of the FTA, Colombia must immediately remove tariffs on more than eighty percent of US imports, with the rest to follow over a ten year period. The impact on the agricultural sector in Colombia, which comprises 23 percent of Colombian workers, could be severe, as Colombian farmers would be forced into direct competition with their US counterparts, who are lavished with billions of dollars in subsidies from the US government. This is recognised even by the Colombian government: “The Colombian Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs conducted a study of the effects of liberalization on nine primary agricultural products and found that full liberalization would lead to a 35 percent decrease in employment.”⁶²³ The National Federation of Agricultural Unions in Colombia has predicted that “over 700,000 people currently employed in the rice industry will lose their jobs as 79,000 tons of subsidized rice from the U.S. floods the Colombian market.” A similar fate may await Colombia’s corn producers, for the FTA allows for the annual export to Colombia of 2 million tons of US corn, when Colombians eat just 2.3 million tons of the crop each year. It is possible that due to the lower price “many Colombians will buy the imported corn, jeopardizing the jobs of the 300,000 Colombians

⁶²¹ Pablo Bachelet, “Bipartisan deal puts trade back on track,” *Miami Herald*, 11 May 2007. See Ibid for the quote from Bush.

⁶²² Pablo Bachelet, “Good U.S. vibes toward Colombia’s Uribe are turning,” *Miami Herald*, 4 July 2007.

⁶²³ Washington Office on Latin America, “The Colombia FTA and Agriculture,” 25 May 2007, <http://www.wola.org/media/Colombia%20FTA_Agriculture.pdf>

employed in the Corn industry.”⁶²⁴ The potentially devastating consequences of the free trade agreement on Colombian agriculture were recognised by House Democrat Linda Sánchez, who denounced it as “a bad deal for American and Colombian working families” that “will gut Colombia’s farming industry,” while the Washington Office on Latin America (WOLA) compared the situation facing Colombia’s agricultural workers to that of their counterparts in Mexico, “where an estimated 1.7 million farmers have lost their livelihoods since NAFTA went into force.”⁶²⁵

State Department official Charles Shapiro has defended the US-Colombia FTA on the grounds that it “will help Colombia further reduce poverty and provide legitimate economic opportunities to all of Colombia’s citizens.”⁶²⁶ Shapiro’s view is shared by the *Economist*, which backs the FTA on the grounds that “hampering the free movement of goods would discourage Colombian farmers from diversifying away from coca and into legal crops.”⁶²⁷ While we cannot say with certainty what impact the FTA would have on coca growing, the upbeat predictions of the State Department and the *Economist* are open to question. As WOLA has argued, among the “risks” of the FTA is “increased participation in illicit drug activity.”⁶²⁸ Those Colombian farmers who are unable to earn a living through growing legal crops may feel they have no choice but to turn to coca. To quote Oxfam America, “Poor farmers need viable alternatives to growing coca, but US dumping of rice and corn could undermine their livelihoods and leave them with no other option.”⁶²⁹ Passage of the FTA could also exacerbate Colombia’s already desperate crisis of displacement, with farmers being forced to leave the countryside for the urban slums that have developed on the outskirts of major cities.

There are clearly reasons for doubting US officials when they argue that the FTA is good for Colombia, and many Colombians have indeed expressed their displeasure with the agreement. “Indigenous, peasant and Afro-Colombian organizations, along with

⁶²⁴ Witness for Peace, “U.S. Colombia Free Trade Agreement: What are the Consequences of Free Trade?”, <<http://www.witnessforpeace.org/pdf/Colombia/%20FTA%20flier%20FINAL.pdf>>

⁶²⁵ Quoted in Oxfam America, “US-Colombia Free Trade Deal a Step Back for Development,” 22 November 2006, <http://www.oxfamamerica.org/newsandpublications/press_releases/press_release.2006-11-22.8083450369>; WOLA, “The Colombia FTA and Agriculture.”

⁶²⁶ Shapiro, “U.S.-Colombia Relations.”

⁶²⁷ “How to boost the coca crop,” *Economist*, 24 March 2007.

⁶²⁸ WOLA, “The Colombia FTA and Agriculture.”

⁶²⁹ Oxfam America, “US-Colombia Free Trade Deal a Step Back for Development.”

the trade union movement, have been actively mobilizing against the trade agreement,” writes Mario Murillo. In March and August 2005, indigenous and peasant groups in the Colombian department of Cauca held popular referenda on a free trade deal with the US. “On both occasions, over 95% voted to reject the agreement.” The Colombian government was unimpressed by the referenda, with a minister deeming “the outcome...the result of “dark forces” influencing the indigenous and peasant communities – a not-so-veiled reference to the guerrillas.”⁶³⁰ In October 2004, 300,000 Colombians demonstrated in Bogotá “where they burned a U.S. flag and voiced their displeasure with ongoing discussions between Colombia and the United States aimed at establishing a free trade agreement.”⁶³¹ Strikes and demonstrations took place in Colombian cities in September 2006 against the FTA and the government’s planned privatisations of state companies.⁶³²

Oil

Oil is a major factor influencing US policy towards Colombia. In February 2002, the Bush administration, as part of its aid request for fiscal year 2003, asked Congress to provide \$98 million to establish and train a “Critical Infrastructure Brigade,” whose “initial role would be to protect a pipeline that transports oil belonging to Los-Angeles based Occidental Petroleum Corp. from fields in northeastern Colombia to the Caribbean coast.”⁶³³ The Caño Limón-Coveñas pipeline, which extends from the Caño Limón oilfield in the eastern department of Arauca 500 miles across Colombia, was a favourite target of guerrillas from the ELN, and was bombed 170 times in 2001. Protecting it was seen as a way to safeguard the interests of Occidental Petroleum as well as a means of providing Colombia with much needed revenue to fund its war. As the *Washington Post* reported in March 2003, the estimated \$500 million lost as a consequence of attacks on

⁶³⁰ Mario A. Murillo, “Colombia’s Indigenous caught in the conflict,” *NACLA Report on the Americas*, vol. 39, no. 4 (Jan-Feb 2006) (electronic version).

⁶³¹ Garry Leech, “Colombians Protest Economic Policies,” 18 October 2004, <<http://www.colombiajournal.org/colombia196.htm>>

⁶³² Capdevila, “Labour-Colombia: Unions Press for Local ILO Office”; Leech, “Despite FTAA Defeat at Americas Summit, Free Trade to Be Imposed on Colombians.”

⁶³³ Karen DeYoung, “U.S. Eyes Shift in Colombia Policy,” *Washington Post*, 15 January 2002. Ultimately, two Colombian brigades were trained to carry out this task.

the pipeline in 2001 “equalled U.S. aid to Colombia that year – money Washington wants Colombia to spend on the war effort.”⁶³⁴ Anne Patterson, who was US ambassador to Colombia at the time, justified the plan on the grounds that it was “important for...our petroleum supplies and for the confidence of our investors.”⁶³⁵ Among these investors was Occidental Petroleum, whose “lobbyists have long been among Washington’s leading proponents for increased military assistance to Colombia,” understandable in light of the fact that the company owned roughly 44 percent of the oil passing through the Caño Limón-Coveñas pipeline.⁶³⁶ Occidental spent some \$350,000 lobbying Congress to pass Plan Colombia while Bill Clinton was President and no doubt had a sympathetic ear in the White House thanks to its ties to then Vice-President Al Gore, who “owned almost \$500,000 worth of stock” in the company.⁶³⁷

Congress acceded to the administration’s request for funds to guard the pipeline, approving \$93 million for this purpose in its budget for 2003. Another \$6 million was appropriated as part of an anti-terrorism supplemental signed into law in August 2002.⁶³⁸ US Special Forces trainers began arriving in Arauca in early 2003, with the head of the US Special Forces mission proclaiming that their aim was “to train the Colombians to find, track down and kill the terrorists before they attack the pipeline.”⁶³⁹ Congress has continued to provide funding for the pipeline program in the years since its inception, with the State Department emphasising its continuing utility. Thus, in its 2006 budget justification, the State Department affirmed that the two Colombian brigades “will receive additional munitions, equipment and training to sustain this high profile and important mission,” aimed at securing “a key element of Colombia’s economic

⁶³⁴ Scott Wilson, “U.S. Seeks to Avoid Deeper Role in Colombia,” *Washington Post*, 9 March 2003.

⁶³⁵ Quoted in William Avilés, “Paramilitarism and Colombia’s Low-Intensity Democracy,” *Journal of Latin American Studies*, vol. 38, no. 2 (May 2006) (electronic version).

⁶³⁶ Adam Isacson, “Failing Grades: Evaluating the Results of Plan Colombia,” *Yale Journal of International Affairs*, Summer/Fall 2005, p. 141; Adam Isacson, “Washington’s “new war” in Colombia: the war on drugs meets the war on terror,” *NACLA Report on the Americas*, vol. 36, no. 5 (March-April 2003) (electronic version).

⁶³⁷ Murillo, *Colombia and the United States*, p. 143; Garry Leech, “Gore’s Hypocritical Human Rights Stance Towards Colombia,” 23 April 2007, <<http://www.colombiajournal.org/colombia255.htm>>. According to Peter Dale Scott, “U.S. oil corporations have waged a concerted campaign for U.S. engagement in Colombia since at least the mid-1990s.” Peter Dale Scott, *Drugs, Oil, and War: The United States in Afghanistan, Colombia, and Indochina* (Oxford: Rowman & Littlefield, 2003), p. 100.

⁶³⁸ Scott Wilson, “U.S. Seeks Court Immunity For Troops in Colombia,” *Washington Post*, 15 August 2002.

⁶³⁹ Murillo, *Colombia and the United States*, p. 144.

infrastructure.”⁶⁴⁰ The mission appears to have been a qualified success. A report by the United States Government Accountability Office (GAO) revealed that attacks on the pipeline plunged to just 17 in 2004, and 13 in the first seven months of 2005. On the other hand, the GAO also observed that the guerrillas had modified their strategy, concentrating instead on sabotaging the electric grid so as to deprive the Caño Limón oilfield of the power needed to pump oil. Such attacks had risen from zero in 2001 to 23 in 2003, with eleven instances of electrical grid sabotage in the seven months to July 2005.⁶⁴¹

Beyond pleasing US oil corporations and boosting Colombian government revenues, there are major oil-related strategic interests at stake in Colombia. One of the justifications for US involvement in the country proffered by the State Department in a 2003 report on United States policy in Colombia was that “Colombia has important reserves of petroleum, natural gas and coal.”⁶⁴² The point was made again in April 2007 by State Department official Charles Shapiro in testimony before the House Foreign Affairs Subcommittee on the Western Hemisphere, where he stated that “Colombia is a strategic energy partner with coal and petroleum production contributing to global energy supply.”⁶⁴³ Colombia in fact only provides around 1.5 percent of annual US oil imports, a relatively small amount. The country’s known oil reserves are scanty, leading to fears that it will become a net importer within a few years. However, there is a widely held view that there are significant unexplored oil deposits on its territory, with one commentator suggesting that “Colombia has the potential to be as important an oil supplier as Venezuela to the US.” Unfortunately for the government, however, much of the area assumed to contain oil is controlled by the FARC-EP. The depletion of Colombia’s oil reserves partly explains current President Álvaro Uribe’s eagerness to

⁶⁴⁰ Quoted in Center for International Policy, “The 2006 aid request,” <<http://ciponline.org/colombia/aid06.htm>>

⁶⁴¹ United States Government Accountability Office, “Security Assistance: Efforts to Secure Colombia’s Caño Limón -Coveñas Oil Pipeline Have Reduced Attacks, but Challenges Remain,” September 2005, pp. 15,17, <<http://ciponline.org/colombia/050906gao2.pdf>>

⁶⁴² United States Department of State, “A Report to Congress on United States Policy Towards Colombia and Other Related Issues.”

⁶⁴³ Shapiro, “U.S.-Colombia Relations.”

court foreign investors and restructure and partially privatise the state oil company, Ecopetrol.⁶⁴⁴

While Colombia's oil production and potential represent of themselves important reasons for US involvement in the country, an additional and probably more crucial motivation is the danger that the conflict in Colombia will spill over into neighbouring countries, with potentially serious implications for US oil imports. The crucial role played by South America in US energy security was underlined by Admiral James Stavridis, the present commander of US Southern Command, who emphasised in testimony before Congress in 2007 that the US "imports over 50 percent of its oil from the Western Hemisphere, with 34 percent coming from Latin America and the Caribbean in 2005 – outweighing the 22 percent imported from the Middle East."⁶⁴⁵ Colombia's eastern neighbour Venezuela is an especially important source of oil for the United States, providing around 12 percent of annual American oil imports. Venezuela's contribution is exceeded only by Mexico, Saudi Arabia and Canada.⁶⁴⁶ A report published in 2001 by the RAND Corporation provides an indication of the significance attached to Venezuela, which the authors described as "a critical country for U.S. and Colombian security interests," due to its regional clout and its status as "one of the world's largest oil producers."⁶⁴⁷ Ecuador, located to the south of Colombia, is itself an increasingly important exporter of oil to the US, supplying 2.7 percent of US crude oil imports in 2005, double the figure for 2003.⁶⁴⁸ US officials have drawn attention to the harmful impact on Ecuador of instability in Colombia. As Stavridis' predecessor, General Bantz Craddock, commented, "Ecuador remains plagued by illicit [drugs] trafficking and the presence of FARC members who penetrate its vulnerable northern border."⁶⁴⁹ The potential for the instability in Colombia to negatively affect other states was also acknowledged by

⁶⁴⁴ Livingstone, *Inside Colombia*, pp. 80-3, 174; "Bucking a trend," *Economist*, 3 February 2007.

⁶⁴⁵ James G. Stavridis, "Posture Statement of Admiral James G. Stavridis" (testimony before the House Armed Services Committee), 21 March 2007, <<http://ciponline.org/colombia/070321stav.pdf>>

⁶⁴⁶ In 2005, Canada supplied 16.1 percent of US crude oil imports, Mexico 15.3 percent, Saudi Arabia 14.2 percent and Venezuela 12.2 percent. Energy Information Administration, "U.S. Imports by Country of Origin," <http://tonto.eia.doe.gov/dnav/pet/pet_move_impcus_a2_nus_epc0_im0_mbb1_a.htm>

⁶⁴⁷ Angel Rabasa and Peter Chalk, *Colombian Labyrinth: The Synergy of Drugs and Insurgency and Its Implications for Regional Stability* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 2001), pp. 87, 91.

⁶⁴⁸ Energy Information Administration, "U.S. Imports by Country of Origin."

⁶⁴⁹ Bantz J. Craddock, "Posture Statement of General Bantz J. Craddock" (testimony before the House Armed Services Committee), 16 March 2006, <<http://ciponline.org/060316crad.pdf>>

Admiral Stavridis, who stated that “In addition to supporting Colombia, countering any expansion of FARC activity into neighboring countries is also part of our focus.”⁶⁵⁰

Democracy Promotion in Colombia: Success or Failure?

US officials often refer to Colombia as Latin America’s oldest democracy but, as the overview of Colombian political history at the start of the chapter showed, its democratic credentials have always been doubtful. This is a country where drug cartels have funded presidential campaigns, where politics was until very recently monopolised by two elite-dominated parties, where the members of another political party, the Patriotic Union, were systematically murdered, and where trade unionists have for years been killed with impunity. If we consider the present state of Colombian democracy more closely, by applying our democracy metric, it is evident that Colombia still fails to meet many of the criteria of genuine democracy.

If we consider the six criteria of genuinely free and fair elections, Colombia meets some of the benchmarks but comes up short in significant respects. Citizens over the age of eighteen, except for members of the police and military, have the right to vote,⁶⁵¹ and there is certainly no lack of political parties, with 24 parties making it into the Congress that was elected in 2006. Voters also had a wide choice in presidential contests in both 2002 and 2006. Eleven candidates competed for the presidency in 2002, while a left-wing candidate, Carlos Gaviria, gained 22 percent of the vote in 2006, placing him a distant second behind the right-wing, law-and-order incumbent, Álvaro Uribe.⁶⁵² The Organisation of American States sent observers to monitor all the congressional and presidential elections that took place in the period in question. However, Colombia’s electoral processes have suffered from fraud. In 2002, for example, “the National

⁶⁵⁰ Stavridis, “Posture Statement of Admiral James G. Stavridis.”

⁶⁵¹ United States Department of State, “Country Reports on Human Rights Practices 2002: Colombia,” <<http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2002/18325.htm>>

⁶⁵² Fernando C. Ulloa and Eduardo P. Carbo, “The congressional and presidential elections in Colombia, 2002,” *Electoral Studies*, vol. 22, no. 4 (2003); International Crisis Group, “Uribe’s Re-election: Can the EU Help Colombia Develop a More Balanced Peace Strategy?”

Electoral Commission invalidated 17,000 votes based on evidence of fraud, annulling the victories of five Senators-elect.”⁶⁵³

Colombia’s elections have been blighted by interference and intimidation on the part of armed and criminal groups. In 2002 there was “a concerted campaign by terrorist organizations such as the FARC to disrupt” the elections.⁶⁵⁴ Among the methods employed by the guerrillas to this end were the intimidation of candidates and voters, armed blockades of highways, the kidnapping of presidential candidate Ingrid Betancourt and four congressional candidates, as well as assassination attempts against the eventual victor of the presidential election, Álvaro Uribe, one of which, a car bombing in Barranquilla, killed four people. As we saw above, the paramilitaries used threats and violence in an effort to establish a lobby in Congress. “In areas dominated by paramilitaries, such as the department of Cordoba and urban areas of the Middle Magdalena region, paramilitaries gathered community leaders – sometimes by force – to instruct them on acceptable candidates,” reported the US State Department.⁶⁵⁵ In sum, the 2002 elections were “affected by formidable pressures from armed groups,” whose actions constituted “an obvious assault on Colombia’s democracy.”⁶⁵⁶

The 2006 electoral cycle was also marred by “a concerted campaign by the FARC and AUC to disrupt or manipulate the outcome.”⁶⁵⁷ The guerrillas set up armed blockades in their strongholds and attacked people manually eradicating coca in the department of Meta; dozens of politicians were murdered in the months leading up to the elections.⁶⁵⁸ Prior to the March 2006 congressional elections there was “good evidence of [paramilitary] attempts to place candidates on party lists...and to promote favoured candidates by force, intimidation and bribery, particularly in the Atlantic coast departments.” Before the day of the election AUC leader Jorge 40 apparently met with a number of politicians from the Caribbean departments, including serving congressmen, to

⁶⁵³ US State Department, “Country Reports on Human Rights Practices 2002: Colombia.”

⁶⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁵⁶ García and Hoskin, *Political Participation and War in Colombia*, pp. 9, 14.

⁶⁵⁷ United States Department of State, “Country Reports on Human Rights Practices 2006: Colombia,” <<http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2006/78885.htm>>

⁶⁵⁸ International Crisis Group, “Uribe’s Re-election: Can the EU Help Colombia Develop a More Balanced Peace Strategy?”

discuss electoral strategy.⁶⁵⁹ Paramilitaries again employed intimidation to keep candidates off the ballot paper. One such individual was “independent Colombian Congressman Pedro Arenas from the eastern department of Guaviare [who] was warned by paramilitaries that they would kill him if he ran for re-election. Arenas chose not to run and moved his family out of the region.”⁶⁶⁰ Notwithstanding the above, election-related violence was far less severe than in 2002.

The ability of Colombians to make a well-informed judgement when voting has been compromised to a degree by the aforementioned threats and violence. As we saw above, those running for president in 2002 had to contend with very real dangers to their physical safety; it was therefore “understandable that candidates limited their public appearances.”⁶⁶¹ The presidential election in 2006 was notable for President Uribe’s reluctance to campaign in public. The International Crisis Group commented that there was a “lack of any meaningful policy debate,” as “Uribe refused to debate his opponents and avoided speaking of major policy issues.” The incumbent “only hinted at his program for the next four years.”⁶⁶² Still, the situation had improved since 2002. As the OAS reported, “this electoral process demonstrated improved conditions for campaigning, which in contrast to previous elections, allowed the different candidates to carry out some public activities.”⁶⁶³ Moreover, despite problems relating to freedom of speech (see below), Colombia has numerous privately owned newspapers and magazines, with a fairly wide circulation, as well as many private TV and radio stations. Also, a 2005 electoral reform which stipulated that competing parties would receive state funding for their campaigns, as well as TV and radio airtime, helped candidates to disseminate their message. An official from the left-wing Polo Democrático stated approvingly that “never

⁶⁵⁹ International Crisis Group, “Colombia: Towards Peace and Justice?” *Crisis Group Latin America Report No. 16*, 14 March 2006,

<http://www.crisisgroup.org/library/documents/latin_america/16_colombia_towards_peace_and_justice.pdf>

⁶⁶⁰ Garry Leech, “U.S. Silent on Colombia’s Election Irregularities,” 13 March 2006, <<http://www.colombiajournal.org/colombia231.htm>>

⁶⁶¹ Ulloa and Carbo, “The congressional and presidential elections in Colombia, 2002,” p. 790.

⁶⁶² International Crisis Group, “Uribe’s Re-election: Can the EU Help Colombia Develop a More Balanced Peace Strategy?”

⁶⁶³ “OAS Receives Reports on Elections in Colombia, Peru and Dominican Republic,” OAS Press Release, July 12, 2006.

before has the Left had access to such a large amount of funds for an electoral campaign.”⁶⁶⁴

The overall picture as regards Colombian elections is therefore mixed. Its human rights performance, however, is quite poor. Although the constitution of 1991 is very progressive, and incorporates all the pivotal democratic rights, many citizens do not enjoy these rights in practice.⁶⁶⁵ The right to life of Colombians is jeopardised by very high levels of political and criminal violence. Despite the progress made by the Uribe administration in reducing murders and kidnappings, Colombia remains one of the world’s most violent states. Furthermore, Colombia’s security forces have themselves been implicated in many murders of civilians. A March 2007 report by the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (UNHCHR) “found that Colombia’s army...had participated in killing civilians in 21 of Colombia’s 32 states” in 2006. The report also stated that victims had been “falsely presented as leftist rebels killed in combat.”⁶⁶⁶

Colombians generally enjoy the right of assembly, as shown by the massive anti-FARC demonstrations held around the country in February 2008, which attracted hundreds of thousands of protestors. However, as the death toll of Colombian unionists demonstrates, the right to freedom of association is extremely restricted. The right to freedom of speech is also curtailed in Colombia, which is one of the most dangerous places in the world in which to work in the media. In 2005, according to Colombia’s Freedom of the Press Foundation (FLIP), 64 journalists were threatened, two were murdered and six forced to flee the country. However, “these are only the documented cases.” As Anastasia Moloney has observed, the dangers facing reporters have implications for the legitimacy of Colombia’s electoral process, for “few journalists dare to delve into the murky past of some election candidates, investigate illegal sources of campaign funds and reveal corruption scandals for fear of reprisals from those they implicate.” According to Moloney, this “climate of fear” is particularly prevalent in the countryside where “journalists come into daily contact with the armed groups and are

⁶⁶⁴ International Crisis Group, “Uribe’s Re-election: Can the EU Help Colombia Develop a More Balanced Peace Strategy?”

⁶⁶⁵ See “Text of the Constitution of Colombia (1991),”
<http://confinder.richmond.edu/admin/docs/colombia_const2.pdf>.

⁶⁶⁶ Joshua Goodman, “U.N.: Colombia’s army killed civilians,” *AP*, 15 March 2007.

more likely to face intimidation.”⁶⁶⁷ In a report covering events in 2006, Reporters Without Borders noted that the supposedly demobilised paramilitaries “often threatened journalists and forced them to flee the region and sometimes the country.” Three journalists were murdered and ten forced to flee in 2006.⁶⁶⁸ There is also hostility to the media from the state itself. When news broke of possible ties between the paramilitaries and Colombia’s former intelligence chief, Jorge Noguera, in April 2006, President Uribe’s “response was to rail against the media for reporting the scandal.”⁶⁶⁹ In November 2006, Freddy Muñoz, a reporter for Telesur, a Latin American TV channel, was arrested by the DAS, accused of being a member of FARC-EP. The charges were considered baseless by media organisations and Muñoz was released in January 2007, although he remained under investigation. Moreover, the Colombian police have admitted to illegally wiretapping journalists.

As regards economic and social rights, Colombia again fares quite poorly. Article 67 of the constitution states that education is mandatory for Colombians aged between 5 and 15. However, according to UNESCO only 88 percent of Colombian children were enrolled at primary school in 2006, leaving Colombia below the regional average. The adult literacy rate stood at 92.8 percent in 2005.⁶⁷⁰ And while article 51 of the constitution states that Colombians have the right “to live in dignity,”⁶⁷¹ this right is in practice denied to large parts of the population. Hundreds of thousands of civilians are displaced each year in Colombia, with non-governmental organisations putting the overall number of internally displaced persons (IDPs) at well over 3 million.⁶⁷² The Colombian government contends that the figure is much lower, although it still estimates that more than a million have been forced to leave their homes. The government’s figures

⁶⁶⁷ Anastasia Moloney, “Colombia: elections and threats on the press,” *NACLA Report on the Americas*, vol. 39, no. 6 (May-June 2006) (electronic version).

⁶⁶⁸ Reporters Without Borders, “Colombia – Annual report 2007,” <http://www.rsf.org/article.php3?id_article=20532>

⁶⁶⁹ “Unintelligent,” *Economist*, 22 April 2006.

⁶⁷⁰ UNESCO Institute for Statistics, “Education in Colombia,” <<http://stats.uis.unesco.org>>

⁶⁷¹ “Text of the Constitution of Colombia (1991),”

<http://confinder.richmond.edu/admin/docs/colombia_const2.pdf>

⁶⁷² The crisis of displacement is attributed mainly to Colombia’s armed groups, which are accused of forcing people from their land for economic purposes. A report in the *Guardian* in June 2007 noted that “Armed groups in Colombia are driving peasants off their land to make way for plantations of palm oil, a biofuel that is being promoted as an environmentally friendly source of energy.” Oliver Balch and Rory Carroll, “Massacres and paramilitary land seizures behind the biofuel revolution,” *Guardian*, 5 June 2007.

are almost certainly a considerable underestimate, for they do not include Colombians displaced by the fumigation of coca, who are labelled economic migrants, and they also exclude the many internally displaced who do not register with the authorities, either out of fear or ignorance of their right to assistance from the government. Worryingly, the evidence suggests that this crisis is only worsening. According to the Consultancy for Human Rights and Displacement (CODHES), a Colombian refugee organisation which has received threats from paramilitaries, the number of internally displaced people rose by 48 percent from 2002 to late 2006, while the first 100 days of 2007 witnessed “the worst displacement in the last decade.”⁶⁷³ The internally displaced are forced to survive in sub-human conditions, as shown by the example of the slum of Las Delicias, on the outskirts of the city of Cúcuta. Las Delicias, whose population of 3,000 is drawn largely from displaced families, is “a sprawl of wooden shacks and corrugated iron huts built amid the city’s waste,” with no doctor, no school, no sanitation and no running water. “There are places like Las Delicias in and around every big city in the country,” according to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).⁶⁷⁴

Moving on to the third element of genuine democracy, Colombia has a Congress that is no longer legitimate, for it has been corrupted by the paramilitaries. The infiltration of the AUC into Colombia’s political institutions, notwithstanding their supposed demobilisation, was evident from the makeup of the Congress that emerged from the elections of 2006. Several unashamedly pro-AUC candidates who had been removed from the electoral lists of parties in the official pro-Uribe coalition nonetheless made it into the new legislature, having run on the ticket of smaller parties like Colombia Viva and Convergencia Ciudadana. “At least four of the seven candidates who won senate seats for Convergencia Ciudadana have been questioned about links to paramilitary groups,” reported the International Crisis Group in June 2006. One of the four, Luis Eduardo Vives, was arrested in February 2007 on suspicion of working with the paramilitaries. The report also noted that “an estimated 10 to 20 per cent of the new

⁶⁷³ Anastasia Moloney, “Colombia Faces Worsening Internally Displaced Persons Crisis,” *World Politics Watch*, 2 November 2006; Hugh Bronstein, “More than 15,000 Colombians displaced this year,” *Reuters*, 16 April 2007.

⁶⁷⁴ Marie-Hélène Verney, “Colombian conflict drives displaced to a life of fear on a garbage dump,” *UNHCR News*, 25 October 2006.

senate is thought to have such ties.”⁶⁷⁵ That a disturbingly large number of elected representatives did in fact have links to the AUC was clear from information that surfaced from the “para-politics” scandal, with politicians from a wide variety of parties implicated. Some of the arrests have been particularly embarrassing for President Uribe. As noted above, Senator Alvaro Araújo is the brother of Uribe’s former foreign minister, while aforementioned senators Álvaro García and Miguel de la Espriella represented Colombia Democrática, a pro-Uribe party headed by the president’s cousin, Senator Mario Uribe. Senator Uribe was himself arrested in April 2008, charged with colluding with the AUC. Mario Uribe was “the latest in a string of more than 30 members of Congress elected in 2006 who have been arrested for allegedly conspiring with the paramilitary death squads.” The crisis in Congress is so far-reaching that “Some members of the leftist Polo Democrático party have suggested scrapping the Congress altogether and calling new elections immediately.”⁶⁷⁶

Democracy Promotion in Colombia: An Important US Policy Objective?

While there is strong evidence to suggest that democracy promotion has not met with a great deal of success in Colombia, this does not mean that it has not informed US policy. After all, US policymakers regularly invoke democracy promotion as one of their principal objectives in Colombia. In the words of former Assistant Secretary of State for Western Hemisphere Affairs Roger Noriega, “U.S. policy toward Colombia supports the Colombian Government’s efforts to defend and strengthen its democratic institutions...and end the threats to democracy posed by narcotics trafficking and terrorism.”⁶⁷⁷ Noriega’s message was reiterated by US “Drug Tsar” John Walters, who declared that in Colombia “the United States continues to support an agenda of promoting democracy, advancing free trade, and advancing poverty alleviation and social

⁶⁷⁵ International Crisis Group, “Uribe’s Re-election: Can the EU Help Colombia Develop a More Balanced Peace Strategy?”

⁶⁷⁶ Sybilla Brodzinsky, “Ties may bind Colombian president to death squads,” *Miami Herald*, 25 April 2008.

⁶⁷⁷ Noriega, “U.S. Policy and Programs in Colombia.”

justice.”⁶⁷⁸ Just a few days after Walters’ made these remarks, General Peter Pace, the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, stated after meeting Colombian officials that he had discussed “how to continue the very good partnership, to strengthen the democracy here in Colombia, which in turn strengthens the democracy in the United States.”⁶⁷⁹

It should be remembered when considering this question that the US has historically been quite willing to do business with nasty Colombian rulers, notable examples being authoritarian presidents Laureano Gómez and Julio César Turbay Ayala, and military dictator General Rojas Pinilla. Furthermore, presidents who have contributed to the growth of Colombian democracy, such as César Augusto Gaviria, have not always been looked upon favourably by the US. Simply put, the state of Colombian democracy has never really mattered to American officials so long as its leaders co-operated with the United States. Does this historical trend persist? We can judge whether or not the United States under President Bush has truly sought to promote democracy by employing our democracy promotion metric.

There is certainly some evidence that the Bush administration has tried to promote genuinely free and fair elections in Colombia. The US government has funded OAS election observation missions in Colombia, with the State Department and USAID meeting the vast majority of the 2002 OAS mission’s costs (\$578,100 of a total budget of \$600,000).⁶⁸⁰ The United States has also supported Colombian political parties and NGOs. For instance, in 2005, the National Endowment for Democracy awarded \$86,367 to Bogotá’s Foundation of the Press Freedom (FLIP), to help the group “maintain its alert network for the protection of journalists, informing national journalists, civil society, and the international community of incidents of attacks against journalists.” In 2005 and 2006 NED provided a total of \$159,801 to the League of Displaced Women, to “promote participation of displaced women in the department of Bolívar in municipal government.” NED has also contributed funds to support the programmes of the National Democratic Institute for International Affairs, which provides training to seven Colombian political

⁶⁷⁸ John Walters, “Colombia faces challenges to governance, shows progress,” *Miami Herald*, 19 January 2007.

⁶⁷⁹ Peter Pace, “Joint Press Statement with CJCF General Peter Pace,” 23 January 2007, <<http://bogota.usembassy.gov/wwwsgeneralpace.shtml>>

⁶⁸⁰ OAS, “Report of the Electoral Observation Mission in the Republic of Colombia - 2002,” <<http://www.oas.org/consejo/docs/cp11823E04.doc>>

parties from across the political spectrum, including the left-wing Polo Democrático.⁶⁸¹ The State Department has also highlighted fraudulent practices in Colombian elections, noting in its 2002 human rights report that “the National Electoral Commission invalidated 17,000 votes based on evidence of fraud, annulling the victories of five Senators-elect.”⁶⁸² Intimidatory practices have likewise been acknowledged by US officials. However, the US government has been guilty at times of not treating Colombia’s elections on their merits. Thus, the State Department in 2006 described Colombia’s elections as “generally free and fair,” while acknowledging there had been “a concerted campaign by the FARC and the AUC to disrupt or manipulate the outcome.”⁶⁸³ Given the evidence outlined above, this seems a rather misleading description.

Overall, then, the Bush administration scores rather well when it comes to promoting free and fair elections in Colombia. However, the administration has failed the next test, that it should oppose any practices that undermine the legitimacy of a state’s political institutions. The administration has displayed a stubborn determination to downplay the “para-politics” scandal, notwithstanding the fact that the revelations about paramilitary infiltration of the Colombian Congress call into question its very legitimacy. As noted above, the Bush administration has even tried to turn the scandal into a success story for the government of Álvaro Uribe. However, as Garry Leech has commented, the ties subsisting between politicians and paramilitaries did not come to light because of the president’s policies, but grew out of the mountain of sensational information found on the computer of AUC leader Rodrigo Tovar Pupo. This computer “was not delivered to authorities as part of the demobilization process; it was discovered in the possession of Tovar’s right-hand man when he was arrested in early 2006.”⁶⁸⁴ Even if the Colombian government had been the driving force behind these disclosures, the Bush administration should still have expressed some concern about the level of criminal influence in

⁶⁸¹ NED, “Grants: Latin America and the Caribbean Program 2006,” <<http://www.ned.org/grants/06programs/grants-lac06.html>>; NED, “Grants: Latin America and the Caribbean Program 2005,” <<http://www.ned.org/grants/05programs/grants-lac05.html>>; NDI, “Latin America and the Caribbean: Colombia,” <http://www.ndi.org/worldwide/lac/colombia/colombia_pf.asp>

⁶⁸² US State Department, “Country Reports on Human Rights Practices 2002: Colombia.”

⁶⁸³ US State Department, “Country Reports on Human Rights Practices 2006: Colombia.”

⁶⁸⁴ Garry Leech, “The Best-Laid Plans of Presidents and War Criminals: The Unintended Outcome of Colombia’s Demobilization Process,” 17 May 2007, <<http://www.colombiajournal.org/colombia258.htm>>

Colombia's political system, if it were genuinely concerned about that country's democracy.

Is there evidence that the Bush administration has sought to promote human rights in Colombia? State Department officials would certainly have us believe that this is so. "Human rights concerns have been a central element in U.S. policy toward Colombia," declared Otto Reich in congressional testimony,⁶⁸⁵ and there is some persuasive evidence to buttress this claim. For instance, USAID funds "an individual protection program for human rights workers, defenders, and community and social leaders" which "has benefited 4,745 at-risk persons."⁶⁸⁶ USAID also contributes to human rights by funding the Colombian Office of the National Ombudsman's Early Warning System. By the end of 2006 the Early Warning System had "issued 54 risk assessments and 20 alerts that helped prevent or mitigate human rights violations by providing local civilian and military authorities with recommendations to take preventive actions."⁶⁸⁷ The US has also funded initiatives aimed at helping Colombia's more than three million internally displaced persons. USAID has spent \$33 million since 2001 "to support the Government of Colombia's efforts to provide social and economic development opportunities" to IDPs, including the provision of basic health services to a million IDPs and educational opportunities for 180,000 displaced children.⁶⁸⁸ Furthermore, the US helps Colombians to put political rights like freedom of speech into practice by aiding groups like FLIP and the League of Displaced Women.

The Bush administration's attitude towards human rights in Colombia, despite the positive contributions just described, is full of ambiguities. Thus, although the US spends millions of dollars aiding IDPs, it also carries out policies that aggravate the displacement crisis. The Plan Colombia aid package included \$15 million for the estimated 30,000 peasants "who would inevitably be displaced as a direct result of the militarization of

⁶⁸⁵ Reich, "U.S. Assistance to Colombia and the Andean Region."

⁶⁸⁶ USAID Colombia, "Democratic Governance,"

<<http://colombia.usaid.gov/site/English/DemocracyandGovernance/tabid/74/Default.aspx>>

⁶⁸⁷ United States Department of State, "Supporting Human Rights and Democracy: The US Record 2006,"

<<http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/shrd/2006/80591.htm>>

⁶⁸⁸ USAID Colombia, "Internally Displaced,"

<<http://colombia.usaid.gov/site/English/InternallyDisplaced/tabid/77/Default.aspx>>

Colombia's southern regions.”⁶⁸⁹ In other words, the US government knew its policies would lead to more displacement. The US has also been accused of exacerbating the problem by funding coca spraying. Opponents of fumigation argue that the herbicide used, known as “Roundup,” kills not just coca plants but other crops as well, and causes illness among humans and animals. While the US government denies the link, “the Roundup label for home garden use calls the chemical a hazard to humans and animals.”⁶⁹⁰ The Colombian human rights body CODHES recorded almost 30,000 persons displaced as a consequence of fumigation in 2003 alone.⁶⁹¹

The Bush administration has also been condemned by human rights organisations for failing to enforce the human rights clauses attached to US aid to Colombia. The release of 30 percent of military aid to Colombia is dependent on a certification from the US secretary of state that Colombia is meeting certain human rights standards, including the severance of links between the military and paramilitary groups.⁶⁹² Were this consistently enforced, it would serve as evidence that the US is genuinely attempting to further democracy in Colombia. However, and despite countless reports of extrajudicial killings by the Colombian military and continued military-paramilitary links, the State Department has repeatedly approved Colombia for this aid, including in April 2007, a ruling that came just weeks after the *Los Angeles Times* published a story alleging that the head of the Colombian army, Mario Montoya, had coordinated a military assault on Medellín in 2002 with the AUC. In response, Democratic Senator Patrick Leahy froze the \$US55 million in aid that had been approved by Secretary of State Rice, insisting that the State Department explain on what basis it had certified Colombia. The Bush administration has also placed the goal of free trade above human rights in Colombia. Despite the perils facing many Colombian unionists, the US government has made ratification of the US-Colombia FTA one of its main policy objectives.

⁶⁸⁹ Stokes, *America's Other War*, p. 94; Center for International Policy, “The Contents of the Colombia Aid Package.”

⁶⁹⁰ Kirk, *More Terrible Than Death*, p. 263.

⁶⁹¹ Anastasia Moloney, “Displaced in Colombia,” *NACLA Report on the Americas*, vol. 38, no. 2 (Sept-Oct 2004) (electronic version).

⁶⁹² The percentage of aid that is conditional on human rights performance was increased from 25 percent to 30 percent in the fiscal year 2008 foreign aid bill. Center for International Policy, “Plan Colombia and Beyond,” 17 December 2007, <<http://www.cipcol.org>>

The attitude of the Bush administration as regards democracy promotion in Colombia is therefore somewhat contradictory. As we have seen, there is clearly evidence that the US does genuinely seek to promote free and free elections there. Its stance on human rights is unclear, as there is evidence pointing both ways. The US does not pass the other tests of democracy promotion: its military assistance to Colombia is technically dependent on democratic performance, but this stipulation has been ignored in practice, and the administration has failed to take a hard line on the issue of paramilitary-congressional ties. The last test of democracy promotion – that a state should endeavour to remove a dictatorial government – is not relevant in this case. In conclusion, we can say that while furthering democracy takes its place among the goals of US policy in Colombia it is nonetheless less significant than the “war on drugs” or the objective of crushing the FARC-EP, which is seen, with justification, as a murderous terrorist organisation that should be wiped out. Promoting democracy is a second-rung objective.

Democracy Promotion under Bush: The Overall Record

President Bush has repeatedly underscored the commitment of the United States to promoting democracy abroad, but a brief overview of his record points to a more ambiguous story. Take, for instance, the example of US policy towards Colombia’s eastern neighbour, Venezuela, whose left-wing nationalist president, Hugo Chávez, has become the Bush administration’s most vocal critic, earning Washington’s enmity in the process. In April 2002 Chávez, who had been twice elected in contests considered legitimate by observers, was briefly ousted in a coup orchestrated by senior Venezuelan military figures, business leaders and the country’s largest trade union federation. The man installed as Chávez’s replacement, Pedro Carmona Estanga, quickly dissolved the National Assembly and the Supreme Court, abolished the constitution, and sacked elected mayors and governors. Notwithstanding the undemocratic means used to oust Chávez, “The Bush administration worked hard to legitimise the Carmona government.”⁶⁹³ Along with El Salvador, the US was the sole state in the Americas to recognise Carmona, and

⁶⁹³ William M. LeoGrande, “A Poverty of Imagination: George W. Bush’s Policy in Latin America,” *Journal of Latin American Studies*, vol. 39, no. 2 (May 2007), p. 372.

Assistant Secretary of State Otto Reich on the day of the coup “invited ambassadors from Latin America and the Caribbean to his office to inform them that the departure of Chávez *was not* a departure from democratic rule, since he had resigned” (italics in original) and thus only had himself to blame.⁶⁹⁴ White House Press Secretary Ari Fleischer told journalists that Chávez had “provoked the crisis,” while the military had simply responded to “the message of the Venezuelan people.”⁶⁹⁵ The administration was forced to backtrack when Chávez was restored to office the day after the coup.⁶⁹⁶

The support of the US government for the removal of Chávez in April 2002 was to be expected, given the assistance the US had provided to Venezuelan organisations working to oust the Venezuelan president. In the year leading up to the coup the National Endowment for Democracy (NED) “quadrupled its assistance to various groups that opposed the Chávez administration,” while “opposition leaders were repeatedly received at the U.S. embassy, where they sought support for overthrowing the Chávez government in the months preceding the coup.” US officials were apparently not unreceptive to these plans.⁶⁹⁷ The CIA had information on an impending coup attempt the week before it occurred, but the US government decided against informing the Venezuelan authorities. The NED and USAID continued to contribute to Venezuelan efforts to replace Chávez following the events of April 2002, including “financial contributions to various anti-Chávez organizations in their failed effort to remove Chávez through a recall referendum in August 2004.”⁶⁹⁸

The Middle East has been pinpointed by President Bush as the focus of America’s “generational commitment to the advance of freedom,” but there are certainly grounds for doubting that democracy promotion has been a goal of the US in this region. The Bush administration has continued providing Hosni Mubarak’s authoritarian regime in Egypt with billions of dollars in aid. Mubarak’s regime is most assuredly not committed to freedom: an emergency law has been in place in ever since he became president,

⁶⁹⁴ Avilés, “The Democratic-Peace Thesis and U.S. Relations with Colombia and Venezuela,” pp. 49-50. Chávez had in fact refused to resign.

⁶⁹⁵ Quoted in LeoGrande, “A Poverty of Imagination,” p. 372.

⁶⁹⁶ For information on the coup see *Ibid*, pp. 371-3; Avilés, “The Democratic-Peace Thesis and U.S. Relations with Colombia and Venezuela,” pp. 49-50; and Richard Gott, *Hugo Chávez and the Bolivarian Revolution* (London: Verso, 2005), pp. 223-37.

⁶⁹⁷ Avilés, “The Democratic-Peace Thesis and U.S. Relations with Colombia and Venezuela,” pp. 48-9.

⁶⁹⁸ *Ibid*, p. 51.

opposition politicians are regularly arrested, and torture by the security forces is commonplace. The ultra-reactionary regime in Saudi Arabia remains one of the United States' closest allies in the Middle East. This is a state where those "convicted of murder, drug trafficking, rape and armed robbery can be executed with a sword and in public as a deterrent." People who commit less serious crimes are also treated very harshly, as was the case with 20 foreigners who were sentenced to "receive lashes and spend several months in prison for attending a party where alcoholic drinks were served and men and women danced."⁶⁹⁹ Less sensationally, civil servants in the kingdom "are banned from saying anything in public that conflicts with official policy." As for women, they "are still deprived of simple rights, such as the right to drive or to travel without a male guardian's permission."⁷⁰⁰ Moving outside the Middle East, the administration has seen fit to ignore the undemocratic nature of the Pakistani regime led by General Pervez Musharraf, who is considered a crucial ally in the "war on terror." Following the September 11 terrorist attacks, the US terminated the sanctions President Clinton had imposed after Musharraf's coup and nuclear tests, and began providing billions of dollars in aid, more than US\$10 billion since 2001, in return for Musharraf's help in fighting al-Qaeda.

Still, some scholars have commended President Bush for his Middle Eastern democracy promotion agenda, although they remain critical of certain aspects of his administration's policies. Writing in 2006, Jennifer Windsor asserted that "The Bush administration deserves credit for elevating freedom in its rhetoric and especially for its commitment to reform in the Middle East, an important and courageous departure from past policy." However, she described democracy promotion as "now under siege," especially after the Palestinian Islamist group Hamas won legislative elections in the Palestinian territories in 2006. Windsor called on the US "to move beyond bold rhetoric and more systematically utilize and integrate the full range of tools and tactics at its disposal: sanctions, incentives, trade linkages, democracy-building programs, exchanges, and multilateral and bilateral diplomacy."⁷⁰¹ Amy Hawthorne has discerned three

⁶⁹⁹ AP, "Saudi court jails foreigners for drinking party," *Guardian*, 5 February 2007.

⁷⁰⁰ "All puffed up and stalling on reform," *Economist*, 3 March 2007

⁷⁰¹ Jennifer Windsor, "Advancing the Freedom Agenda: Time for a Recalibration?" *Washington Quarterly*, vol. 29, no. 3 (Summer 2006), pp. 21, 27-8.

“strands” of democracy promotion under Bush: “aggressive calls for democracy in certain “unfriendly” regimes,” US support for civil society groups, and “modest diplomatic engagement.” US policies towards Iraq and the Palestinians constituted strong examples of the first “strand,” she argues, although promoting democracy “is not the primary motivation for either policy.” She emphasised, however, that “United States policymakers remain deeply ambivalent about whether calling for democratic change is truly in America’s interest now.”⁷⁰²

While President Bush has certainly embraced Middle Eastern freedom rhetorically, the close relations Washington continues to enjoy with the likes of Saudi Arabia call into question the president’s claimed eagerness to advance Middle Eastern democracy. Furthermore, the Bush administration has displayed a willingness to embrace Middle Eastern leaders who have overseen and emerged victorious in flawed elections, presumably because they co-operate with American foreign policy. The US has commended Algeria, an ally in the “war on terror” which has received US military aid, on its democratic progress. A White House press release issued following the April 2004 Algerian presidential elections, which the incumbent Abdelaziz Bouteflika won with 85 percent of the vote, stated that “the President congratulates President Bouteflika on his re-election. These elections represent another step on the road toward democracy in Algeria.”⁷⁰³ However, the legitimacy of this contest was called into question by the withdrawal of “the most established Algerian pro-democratic party,” which “called for a boycott of the election,” and the Constitutional Court’s decision to exclude Taleb Ibrahimi, the leader of the Islamist Wafa movement, from the ballot, “because the size of his potential electoral base worried the regime.” In addition, the election was almost certainly marred by fraud.⁷⁰⁴ Washington’s upbeat attitude towards Algeria’s elections stood in sharp contrast to its response to those that unfolded in the occupied Palestinian Territories in 2006. These legislative elections were won by Hamas, considered a terrorist group by the US, which promptly cut off aid and refused to deal with the victors, even though their triumph was seen as legitimate and reflective of the preference of voters.

⁷⁰² Amy Hawthorne, “Can the United States Promote Democracy in the Middle East?” *Current History* (January 2003), pp. 22-4.

⁷⁰³ Quoted in Frédéric Volpi, “Algeria’s Pseudo-democratic Politics: Lessons for Democratization in the Middle East,” *Democratization*, vol. 13, no. 3 (June 2006), p. 453 n.3.

⁷⁰⁴ Volpi, “Algeria’s Pseudo-democratic Politics,” pp. 447-8.

While this short section on the Bush administration's broader policy on democracy promotion clearly cannot be considered comprehensive, it nonetheless suggests that democracy promotion should not be looked upon as the primary goal of present US foreign policy. It should also be borne in mind in this context that while declaring that it seeks the expansion of freedom and democracy abroad, the Bush administration has itself been guilty of failing to uphold the democratic norms and values of the United States. As Thomas Carothers has commented, by torturing prisoners captured in its "war on terror," holding detainees for years without charge at Guantánamo Bay, Cuba, and eavesdropping illegally on the telephone calls of American citizens, the administration has inflicted "blow after self-inflicted blow against America's democratic principles and standards."⁷⁰⁵ In so doing, the United States has lost a great deal of credibility as an advocate of global human rights and democracy, for a government that exhibits such disdain for its own laws and democratic traditions can hardly be taken seriously when it upbraids other nations for their perceived shortcomings.

⁷⁰⁵ Carothers, "The Backlash Against Democracy Promotion."

6. Conclusion

Answers can now be given to the two questions addressed in this study. The first of these concerned the results of America's efforts to promote democracy abroad. Has the United States had success in this respect, or have its pro-democracy campaigns been failures? Second, how much of a role does democracy promotion really play in United States foreign policy? Is it truly a major policy objective, as American presidents and foreign policy officials would have us believe, or do they actually consider it to be of little significance, especially relative to other foreign policy goals? Having provided answers to these questions I will move on to a discussion of the implications of the thesis for international relations theory. I will finish by offering some policy recommendations and ideas for future research.

From Reagan to George W. Bush: An Unimpressive Record

The evidence from the three case studies points to the conclusion that America's recent record on democracy promotion has not been impressive. Overall, the pro-democracy campaigns of the United States examined in this study achieved little that was positive and in some respects served to seriously harm the prospects for democracy in the target country. The most catastrophic outcome occurred in Nicaragua, where tens of thousands were killed and injured as a result of the war waged against the government by the contras, the rebels organised, funded, and directed by the United States. It is simply illogical to suggest that the Reagan administration promoted democracy in Nicaragua when it bears responsibility for the deaths of thousands of innocents. There were other, less sensational, ways in which the US undermined Nicaraguan democracy. The exigencies of fighting the war forced the Nicaraguan government to spend increasingly large parts of its budget on defence, money which had previously been used to fund successful socio-economic programs. The Sandinistas' problems were compounded by the economic war waged by the US, which included contra and CIA attacks on Nicaragua's infrastructure, causing hundreds of millions of dollars worth of damage, bringing international lending to the Sandinistas to a shuddering halt, and implementing

an economic embargo. All of this had a very negative effect on Nicaraguan democracy, for citizens' lives became less secure and the struggle for survival took precedence over participation in political life.

While there is little doubt that the policies of the United States in the 1980s had a distinctly negative impact on democracy in Nicaragua, the picture is more opaque when it comes to the Clinton administration's dealings with Haiti. In some respects, and certainly in the early part of Clinton's administration, the US made a decidedly positive contribution to Haitian democracy. Haitians had Clinton to thank for the demise of the very brutal military dictatorship of General Raoul Cédras, who was only persuaded to stand down when it became inescapably clear that American military personnel were heading to Haiti to force him and his thuggish colleagues from power. Deposed Haitian President Jean-Bertrand Aristide, who had been elected in 1990 only to be ousted by the military a few months later, resumed his duties on the back of this military intervention, while the human rights situation took a marked turn for the better in the short-term. We can say with confidence therefore that during President Clinton's first term the US had a fair degree of success furthering democracy in Haiti. However, by the end of the century democracy in Haiti was looking like a fantasy. Disastrous elections were held in 1997 and 2000 and Haitian political life reached a standstill, leading the president to dissolve the legislature in 1999 and appoint a government that ruled by decree. The human rights situation also deteriorated markedly. While political violence was not at a comparable level to that which prevailed throughout the Cédras years, Haitians nonetheless risked retribution, even death, if they engaged in political activity. Furthermore, socio-economic conditions were desperate.

Colombia is often described by United States officials as Latin America's oldest democracy, a claim that has little basis in fact. As we saw in the third case study, Colombian politics has historically suffered from minority domination and more recently the corrupting influence of cocaine barons, among other flaws. The Bush administration has therefore had its work cut out promoting democracy in Colombia, and the country still does not meet a number of the criteria of genuine democracy. Elections in 2002 and 2006 were notable for the pernicious influence exerted by the two left-wing guerrilla organisations and the extreme right-wing paramilitaries. The legislatures that emerged

from these contests were generally assumed to have been infiltrated by the paramilitaries. As revelations of ties between the paramilitaries and Colombian politicians leaked out from late 2006 it became apparent that Colombian politics had indeed been corrupted by paramilitarism. Colombia does not have a legitimate Congress and it fails to meet several of the criteria of free and fair elections. It also suffers from major human rights shortcomings. International and Colombian non-governmental organisations believe that there are more than 3 million internally displaced persons in Colombia, out of a population of around forty five million. These people are divorced from society, inhabiting slums on the edges of cities, living on rubbish dumps, barely subsisting. Colombia is plagued by other human rights failings, such as threats and attacks on journalists in what is one of the most dangerous nations in the world to work in the media, and extrajudicial killings committed by members of the security forces.

The story that emerges from the three case studies should give proponents of democracy promotion pause. In each of these high-profile pro-democracy efforts, which consumed large quantities of taxpayer money, the United States was unable to successfully promote democracy to any significant degree. Nicaragua was a disaster, Haiti was heading that way as Clinton left office, while Colombia is still far from real democracy. Moreover, the more general democracy promotion record of these presidents is not inspiring. The flagship of the George W. Bush administration's democracy promotion agenda has been Iraq, which has been a catastrophe. Although American officials could point to the removal of Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein and the holding of elections as successes, these achievements are far outweighed by the chaos that has engulfed the country since 2003. Millions of Iraqis have been forced from their homes and now live as internally displaced persons or as refugees in other states,⁷⁰⁶ the country is fragmenting along sectarian lines, and the government cannot provide even a modicum of security to its citizens. Iraq is not even a functioning state, let alone a democracy. The Reagan administration's democracy promotion effort in El Salvador, another very expensive and much-touted foreign policy undertaking, served to prop up a government whose security forces killed tens of thousands of Salvadorian civilians. What the record

⁷⁰⁶ The Norwegian Refugee Council reported in April 2007 that "Some 2 million Iraqi refugees have fled their homeland, while a further 1.9 million are displaced within the country." "Number of people made homeless by conflict soars," *Reuters*, 16 April 2007.

of these presidencies perhaps points to is that the US achieves most for foreign democracy when it doesn't become involved to any significant degree. This, however, is an issue for further research. What this study has shown is that when the United States becomes embroiled in long-term, military-oriented democracy advancement initiatives the outcome is often dismal.

While the US record on furthering democracy abroad is not good, it does not necessarily follow that American policymakers do not genuinely try to pursue this objective. After all, US presidents repeatedly embrace the cause of democracy promotion. What the evidence from the three case studies points to is that advancing democracy is not a top American foreign policy priority, but a secondary goal, and sometimes not even a goal at all. In Nicaragua, the Reagan administration's commitment to democracy was purely rhetorical. A great deal can be deduced from the administration's principal means for promoting democracy in Nicaragua, that is funding, arming and directing the contras. Notwithstanding the pretensions of Ronald Reagan and George Shultz, who deemed the contras freedom fighters, there is no avoiding the fact that they were terrorists who regularly targeted farmers, teachers, health workers, hospitals and schools. The contras' moral deficiencies were unsurprising given their pedigree as protégés of the CIA and especially the Argentine military junta: even contra civilians admitted that some of their Argentine handlers were "Nazis." Although it is true that democracy can be promoted through violent means, it is nonetheless illogical to argue that a state or a group of insurgents is endeavouring to bring freedom to a country while at the same time deliberately murdering civilians.

There is further reason to conclude that the Reagan administration was totally uninterested in aiding democracy in Nicaragua. Any government honestly desirous of seeing democratic rule in another country would offer its backing to a fair electoral process. The elections that unfolded in Nicaragua in 1984 were generally well-received, including by impartial observers from the United States. However, President Reagan and other officials poured scorn on the contest, including before it had even occurred. The administration's opposition to democracy in Nicaragua was also evident from its antipathy towards the Esquipulas peace agreement reached by the five Central American presidents in 1987, the terms of which committed the Sandinistas to democratization. Had

US policymakers been truly committed to Nicaraguan democracy, they surely would have welcomed this peace accord, for it gave the US precisely what it claimed to want in Nicaragua. Finally, it is reasonable to assume that a government that seeks to advance democracy in another state would be scrupulous about upholding the laws and democratic norms and practices of its own country. When it came to policy towards Nicaragua, though, the Reagan administration would do almost anything to get its own way. This included violating the Boland Amendment of December 1982, which forbade US military support for groups seeking the overthrow of the Sandinistas, and running a secret war from late 1984 after Congress cut off funding for the anti-Sandinista covert operation. These were serious assaults on the democracy of the United States.

The case against the administration of President Reagan is therefore clear-cut. The aim of US policy towards Nicaragua was straightforward: remove the Sandinistas. Language about the need for democracy in Nicaragua was purely for public consumption. Things become more complicated when we analyse the Clinton administration's policy towards Haiti, though. The United States under Clinton worked for almost two years to effect the removal of the Haitian military junta, first through sanctions and diplomacy and then by threatening to use force, thus passing one of the tests of a state's commitment to promoting democracy. Still, while the exit of General Cédras was certainly a boon for Haiti's democratic prospects we cannot automatically infer from this that the Clinton administration was acting out of concern for Haitian democracy. Clinton was subjected to considerable pressure from important political groups in the United States, especially the Congressional Black Caucus, and it was this that finally persuaded him to stop trying to bring about a negotiated accord between President Aristide and the junta. For a long time US officials endeavoured to persuade Aristide to reach a compromise with General Cédras, and they leaned on the Haitian president to agree to amnesty provisions for human rights abusers in the belief that this would facilitate an accord. The point is that concerns about democracy took a back seat to securing an agreement with the dictatorship: this was the overriding priority. The US was so eager to strike a deal that it even contemplated dumping President Aristide in late 1993 and early 1994. The Clinton administration wanted the junta out, and they were prepared to forget their commitment to Haitian democracy if necessary.

After President Aristide returned to Haiti and resumed his duties the Clinton administration proved its commitment to Haitian democracy in several ways. The United States kept a large contingent of peacekeepers in Haiti until April 1996 and sought to train a new police force that would eventually assume responsibility for security. The US promoted the holding of free and fair elections in Haiti. While the administration could certainly point to these actions as evidence of its commitment to building democracy it also pursued other policies that seemed at variance with the goal of democracy promotion. The Clinton administration's avowed support for democracy in Haiti was called into question by its attitude towards the Haitian government's economic policies. By demanding that President Aristide push through free market reforms, including trade liberalization and the privatisation of state companies, in return for aid, the US was making clear that it was more worried about what happened to its money than it was about promoting Haitian democracy. Clinton administration officials may have had good economic reasons for insisting on free market reforms, and it is quite understandable that they did not wish to hand over large quantities of aid without some say on how it would be spent. Attaching such conditions to aid ran counter to the goal of promoting democracy, however, for it deprived the Haitian people and their government of the power to determine economic policy. That privilege was to be left in the hands of the US and other lenders and donors.

Notwithstanding these limitations, there is clearly some evidence to suggest that the administration of Bill Clinton honestly wanted to further democracy in Haiti. This leaves us with the George W. Bush administration's policy towards Colombia, which, like Clinton's Haiti policy, has been rather contradictory. The US has supported electoral observation in Haiti, funded programmes aimed at strengthening political parties and NGOs, funded projects that assist IDPs, and contributed to other initiatives intended to promote human rights. On the other hand, the State Department has time and again approved Colombia for military aid, despite well-founded allegations of military-paramilitary collaboration and extrajudicial killings by the Colombian security forces. Perhaps the biggest failing of the Bush administration has been its unwillingness to deplore the revelations of congressional-paramilitary ties. Indeed, the "para-politics" scandal has been sold as a triumph for Uribe by the administration in Washington.

Deputy Secretary of State John Negroponte has remarked that “I basically see the situation with respect to the paramilitaries in a positive way,” a remarkable statement for a representative of an administration that purports to champion Colombian democracy. The administration’s response to the para-politics scandal demonstrates that promoting democracy is less important than backing President Uribe. As America’s closest Latin American ally, Uribe has been offered steadfast support. He is seen as a vital partner in helping the US to meet its main goals in Colombia: fighting the war on drugs, defeating the country’s left-wing guerrillas, passing a free trade accord, and ensuring that Colombia and its neighbours continue to export large quantities of oil to the United States.

The three case studies therefore lead us to the conclusion that the United States over the past quarter of a century has not made democracy promotion a top policy objective. It is a secondary concern, and at times plays no role whatever. That democracy promotion is indeed a second-order policy goal can be seen from the overall foreign policies of the three administrations in question. President George W. Bush, who committed his government to “ending tyranny in our world,” nonetheless has seen fit to retain cosy relations with some of the world’s more unpleasant regimes, notably the ultra-reactionary Saudi royal family and the authoritarian government of Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak. In fact, this support of repressive and dictatorial Middle Eastern leaders has been a notable feature of each of the administrations examined in this study. Saudi Arabia was looked upon very favourably by the Reagan administration, not only due to its vast oil reserves but because it subsidized the Nicaraguan contras when they were facing financial meltdown. US policy in the Middle East is inextricably linked to American energy interests, which are of far greater significance to American policymakers than the state of democracy in the region. But it is not just the Middle East where democracy promotion loses out to other policy objectives. President George W. Bush’s administration backed a coup in Venezuela in 2002, while Reagan’s administration supported the bloodthirsty regime of Rios Montt in Guatemala, Panamanian strongman Manuel Noriega and Zaire’s Mobutu, among other unsavoury authoritarians. It is hard to take seriously the democracy promotion rhetoric of American officials when they enjoy friendly relationships with such regimes.

The evidence presented in this thesis has two main implications pertaining to United States foreign policy. First, we should be wary of taking the lofty pro-democracy rhetoric of American officials at face value. The evidence from the case-studies shows that democracy promotion is likely to be at best a secondary American policy objective. On occasion, the appeals to democracy made by American policymakers are meaningless, as with Reagan's policy towards Nicaragua. People who take an interest in the foreign policy of the United States would therefore do well to form their own judgements on policy issues independent of the public utterances of officials. This is particularly important for citizens of the United States, in whose name policy is conducted, and who have the capability, if they are informed, of affecting the course of their country's foreign policy. It is difficult to carry out a military operation without public support, which is one reason democracy promotion is so often invoked as an aim of such actions. Citing democracy promotion as an objective has the effect of shutting off debate, for there are few who wish to be seen as anti-democracy. However, there may be very good reasons for taking a stand against a policy described in these terms. It therefore behoves citizens to be sceptical of their leaders' pronouncements and to be knowledgeable about policy, for they can then perhaps convince their leaders to change course and avoid entanglement in needless foreign adventures.

This leads to the second implication of the study. Democracy promotion campaigns with a strong military component tend to end in failure. Even if we conclude that American leaders are genuine when they profess their intention of advancing democracy abroad the fact remains that such endeavours rarely achieve their stated aims. The examples of Clinton's policy towards Haiti and Bush's policy in Colombia are particularly instructive in this regard, for democracy promotion undoubtedly played a part in each administration's thinking. Even in these cases, however, progress towards democracy has been difficult. This lack of results is very significant, and ought to give pause to the citizens of the United States and their elected representatives. Huge quantities of money have been spent on the democracy promotion efforts considered in this thesis, first in Nicaragua, then Haiti, then Colombia, with little to show for the financial outlay. The American people and members of Congress might do well therefore to reflect on whether these democracy promotion efforts are worth it. There must be other

uses to which these billions of dollars could be put, and which have more chance of succeeding. Another factor to consider is that using the United States military to spread democracy carries with it the risk that American soldiers will be killed. More than three thousand American soldiers have lost their lives in what is, purportedly at least, an attempt to bring democracy to Iraq. Is this really a cause that American servicemen and women should be asked to die for, especially when the hopes of success are so slim? It may be time for a wholesale rethink of the mission of promoting democracy.

Implications of the Study for IR Theory

A basic tenet of foreign policy analysis is that “domestic politics and institutions affect the foreign policy decisions and behavior of states.”⁷⁰⁷ The evidence from the case studies strongly suggests that institutions do matter when it comes to making American foreign policy, and that FPA should therefore be seen as an important analytical tool in this field of study. This observation has important implications for the study of international relations. Rationalist theories of IR such as structural realism assume that the state is a unitary actor whose behaviour is governed largely by structural, or systemic, factors, above all the international distribution of power. Structural realists contend that states are forced to seek power to provide for their own security, and that the accumulation of great power by one state relative to others in the international system is likely to trigger countermeasures, with the establishment of an alliance to balance against the strongest state a likely response. “Unbalanced power, whoever wields it, is a potential danger to others,” argues Kenneth Waltz, and therefore “leads others to try to balance against it.”⁷⁰⁸ Waltz acknowledges that “States are free to disregard the imperatives of power, but they must expect to pay a price for doing so.”⁷⁰⁹ In other words, if states do not pay sufficient attention to the international distribution of power they could face annihilation. It follows that for structural realists non-systemic factors are of minor use for explaining or predicting state behaviour. However, the evidence gathered in this study

⁷⁰⁷ C. James DeLaet and James M. Scott, “Treaty-Making and Partisan Politics: Arms Control and the U.S. Senate, 1960-2001,” *Foreign Policy Analysis*, vol. 2, no. 2 (2006), p. 179.

⁷⁰⁸ Waltz, “Structural Realism after the Cold War,” p. 28.

⁷⁰⁹ *Ibid*, p. 37.

demonstrates that domestic institutions play a major role in shaping foreign policy, calling into question structural realism's explanatory power. We cannot explain American foreign relations simply by looking at the international distribution of power; it is imperative that we also employ FPA, taking into account the domestic foreign policy-making process, including the part played by Congress and the bureaucracy. This conclusion is of course applicable to international relations more generally.

The ability of the bureaucracy to shape policy was particularly clear in the case of President Clinton's policy towards Haiti, where institutions like the CIA and the Pentagon for a long time succeeded in obstructing the president's efforts to return exiled Haitian leader Jean-Bertrand Aristide. CIA analysts briefed congressional Republicans against Aristide, and in so doing exacerbated the hostility towards Clinton's policy in Congress. The CIA had ties to the leader of the paramilitary group FRAPH, which was vehemently opposed to Aristide's restoration, and which managed to prevent the American ship the *Harlan County* from docking in Port-au-Prince in October 1993, thus contributing to the collapse of the Governor's Island peace accord promoted by the Clinton administration. The Pentagon was equally leery of seeing Aristide back in office, partly because such an outcome might require the deployment of US forces, whose lives would be endangered, and also because they just didn't like him. It was the opposition of the Defence Department, along with congressional hostility, that caused Clinton to procrastinate until September 1994 before finally ordering an invasion to restore Aristide. The bureaucracy's ability to shape foreign policy was also a feature of the Reagan administration's policy towards Nicaragua, where the CIA, and especially its director, Bill Casey, provided much of the impetus for the anti-Sandinista covert campaign.

Two scholars have recently observed that, notwithstanding the increased attention devoted to domestic influences on foreign policy in the FPA literature, "one player receiving less attention in foreign policy analysis is the U.S. Congress."⁷¹⁰ The evidence set out in this study suggests that this oversight ought to be remedied, for Congress clearly plays a most significant part in the making of US foreign policy. This thesis builds on the work of the likes of James Lindsay, who has shown that the legislature has throughout American history asserted itself in foreign affairs, and continues to do so

⁷¹⁰ Ibid, p. 179.

today. Lindsay has observed that the historical activism of Congress in the realm of foreign relations grew out of the constitutional powers granted to the legislature by the Founding Fathers, notably the right to declare war and ratify treaties (a privilege restricted to the Senate).⁷¹¹ Although Cold War imperatives occasioned a period of congressional retreat in the years after the end of World War 2, this subservience was a historical anomaly and the “era of congressional deference came to a crashing halt” in the 1970s.⁷¹² Since then, Congress has used its control over government spending – “Congress’s primary tool for shaping foreign policy” - to once more exert considerable influence over American foreign relations.⁷¹³ As I will now show, the three case studies provide powerful evidence of congressional activism in foreign affairs.

President Reagan’s choice of the contras as an instrument for bringing democracy to Nicaragua aroused impassioned opposition in Congress, especially among Democrats, with heated battles breaking out over the issue of contra aid. The Reagan administration repeatedly acted with contempt for the legislature, which it viewed as a nuisance and an obstacle to its covert war against the Sandinistas. This was apparent from CIA Director Casey’s deception before the intelligence committees in 1981, when he claimed the contras would act as an arms interception force, the administration’s refusal to abide by the December 1982 Boland Amendment, which was intended to limit the covert operation to its stated goal, arms interdiction, and Casey’s reticence before the intelligence committees about CIA involvement in the mining of Nicaragua’s harbours in 1984. The Democrat-controlled House of Representatives repeatedly voted to bring the covert war to an end and in October 1984 the second Boland Amendment became law, supposedly terminating United States government support for the contras. It was this law that led the Reagan administration to embark on its illegal secret war in Nicaragua, which required donations from third countries, quid pro quos, and an airlift to the contras orchestrated by the staff of the National Security Council. Following the Iran-contra scandal Democrats in Congress succeeded in restricting United States aid to the contras to so-called non-lethal assistance, in other words food, medicine and the like, much to the

⁷¹¹ James M. Lindsay, *Congress and the Politics of U.S. Foreign Policy* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1994), p. 13.

⁷¹² *Ibid.*, p. 24.

⁷¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 30.

annoyance of President Reagan, who was desperate to continue funnelling military aid to the rebels. Congress therefore had a very significant impact on American policy in Nicaragua while Reagan was president.

Clinton administration policy towards Haiti was likewise affected to a very considerable degree by the United States Congress. The administration was for a long time extremely reluctant to go through with the military option, largely because of the open aversion of Republicans in Congress to this course of action. The intensity of Republican hostility was so severe that Clinton was apparently warned he could be impeached if the military operation turned out badly.⁷¹⁴ It was only because part of Clinton's own base in Congress, particularly the members of the Congressional Black Caucus, was demanding the reinstatement of Aristide that the president, who had exhausted all other options for a resolution of the crisis by the summer of 1994, ultimately resorted to force. When the Republicans won control of Congress in November 1994 the president's room for manoeuvre on Haiti became even more restricted. Even before the Democrats' reversal in the 1994 mid-terms Clinton had anticipated a short stay for the majority of American troops in Haiti, due to the tenuousness of congressional backing for Operation Uphold Democracy, but with the Republicans in power the withdrawal became urgent. US soldiers ceased to participate in the UN peacekeeping mission in early 1996, well over a year before the operation ended. The Republicans shut off aid to the Haitian government at various points, curtailing Clinton's ability to carry out his plans for Haiti. President Clinton himself later laid some of the blame for the failure in Haiti at the door of his Republican opponents in Congress.

If the Republicans' victory in 1994 had major implications for Clinton's Haiti policy the same could be said of the Democrats' triumph in the 2006 mid-term elections. Up until that point President Bush had been given a fairly free hand when it came to Colombia, as his policy was firmly backed by congressional Republicans desirous of looking tough on the drugs issue. Yearly aid handouts in the region of \$US700 million sailed through Congress. While many congressional Democrats wanted to reduce the

⁷¹⁴ According to the historian Taylor Branch, who interviewed Clinton, the president's "closest friends in the U.S. Senate advised him in person that his contemplated military intervention was...insane" and that "with major casualties there would be talk of impeachment." Quoted in Fatton, *Haiti's Predatory Republic*, p. 93.

amount of military aid going to Colombia they could do little in light of their lack of representation. This changed after 2006, however, and in June 2007 the Democrats used their majority in the House of Representatives to push through a 10 percent aid cut for Colombia, including a very large \$US150 million reduction in military assistance. The Democrats' enthusiasm for an aid cut was partly informed by the revelations of political and paramilitary ties in Colombia that were emerging as part of the "para-politics" scandal, disclosures that left Bush administration officials seemingly unmoved. Had the Republicans remained in control of Congress, it is probable that the scandal would not have affected the amount of assistance going to Colombia, but with the Democrats in charge it provided a further incentive to diminish aid levels. It also prompted Democratic Senator Patrick Leahy to hold up \$US55 million in previously approved military aid. The "para-politics" scandal also reinforced the Democrats' opposition to the US-Colombia Free Trade Agreement negotiated by the Bush administration, an accord that they also disliked on the grounds of Colombia's poor human rights record. The Democrats have been able to use their congressional majority to block passage of the FTA, which would surely have been passed had the Republicans not suffered electoral defeat in 2006. In short, then, Congress has been a major factor in US policy towards Colombia since the Democrats took over.

Possible Avenues for Future Research and Policy Recommendations

Two possible avenues for research suggest themselves. First, is there a Democratic-Republican divide on the issue of United States democracy promotion? The evidence from the three case studies examined here suggests that this may be so, with Democrats more supportive of this objective than their Republican counterparts. The conventional scholarly view, however, suggests that democracy promotion is a bipartisan goal.⁷¹⁵ A study addressing this question could be structured in a similar fashion to my own, with the focus on a number of case studies in which the issue of democracy promotion was a key aspect of the policy debate. Alternatively, interviews could be conducted with serving members of the United States Congress or their staffers in order

⁷¹⁵ See the comments of Ikenberry and Tony Smith in chapter two.

to determine their views on democracy promotion. The latter approach could produce some very misleading data, however, for there is every reason to believe that those questioned would not give entirely honest answers. After all, the overwhelming majority of politicians do not want to be seen as anti-democracy. Case studies would therefore be preferable.

Second, is there more chance of democracy developing in a foreign country if the United States is relatively uninvolved? As the case studies showed, the US can be very heavy-handed when it comes to promoting democracy, dispatching soldiers, demanding economic reforms, insisting on certain policies. This overbearing approach, however, has often failed to produce the desired outcomes. The example of the Reagan administration, where democratic openings occurred in the likes of South Korea and Chile, among other nations, despite only minor American contributions, suggests that a low-key approach may be more effective. A study that compared democratization in states where the US role was rather limited with instances where the US was heavily involved could therefore prove very instructive.

It is not my intention to provide an exhaustive list of policy ideas. However, there are two suggestions that I would like to make. First, United States policymakers should be candid about their foreign policy aims. This may sound quixotic, but there is surely no point preaching the virtues of democracy while at the same time providing billions of dollars in aid to authoritarian states like Egypt and Pakistan. The blatant contradictions inherent in such policies engender scepticism about America's motives even in cases where democracy promotion is a genuine policy objective. It would therefore behove American officials either to tone down the high-sounding rhetoric about democracy promotion or to stop propping up nasty dictators. Perhaps the best course of action would be to do both. I do not, however, anticipate any change in the discourse that accompanies US foreign policy. Democracy promotion *sounds like* a worthy objective, and has proved very useful for drumming up public support for foreign policy. No doubt it will continue to be invoked in the future.

Second, if United States policymakers are really serious about promoting democracy abroad, they should think twice about taking the military route to this end. In each of the cases dealt with in this thesis the US relied heavily on military means,

whether this entailed supporting rebels attacking Nicaragua, sending American troops to occupy Haiti, or funnelling billions of dollars to Colombia's security forces. In each case the results were not good. This is to be expected, for two reasons. First, there is only so much that can be achieved by force. Direct military action by the United States may be enough to dislodge dictators like Raoul Cédras or Saddam Hussein, but there is no guarantee that democracy will flower in the aftermath. Second, making foreign military forces America's principal partners in democracy promotion is singularly risky, maybe even illogical, for there is a very strong possibility that by aiding another state's armed forces the US will be buttressing an institution that is a byword for human rights abuses, hardly a sure-fire way of promoting democracy. Furthermore, sending American soldiers to promote democracy implies that they could lose their lives in a probably vain attempt to bring democracy to another country, itself a goal of debatable merit.

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