



The Historical Development of Democracy Promotion as a Strategic Priority within the US Foreign Policy

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Abstract

Promotion of democracy abroad has been a central pillar of the US Foreign Policy for centuries. The frequent tensions that has been developing in the world in response to the American interference in terms of promoting democracy has created motivation for this study, to trace the roots of this modern US strategy of democracy promotion. Therefore, this study will investigate the historical development of democracy promotion in US foreign relations from mid 1800s up to the Obama administration and which reasons have made it a strategic priority within the US foreign policy. The main objective of the study is to examine how democracy promotion measures and tools have differed from time to time under different US administrations. A qualitative approach has been used to collect and analyze data. Data triangulation method has been used in collecting secondary data from multiple sources including books, government publications, policy papers, academic journals, conference proceedings, speeches, web information and previous research, while collected data was analyzed through deductive content analysis method. The key research finding is that the measures and policy initiatives of promoting democracy abroad have differed during different eras, depending on the international political scenario as well as the American national interests.

Keywords: US; Foreign Policy; Democracy Promotion; Strategic Priority; National Interests

Introduction

Democracy is an indispensable element of international politics. Different actors in the international system including states; governmental and non-governmental organizations are engaged in promoting and spreading democracy as a means of ensuring world peace and stability. Many democracies exist in the international system among which the USA stands as the principle promoter of democracy abroad. Increasingly the research community has been showing an interest to find and build up a relationship between Democracy Promotion and the US foreign policy. Democracy promotion has been a major part of the US foreign policy for many decades. The recent tensions growing around the world have sparked some debate over the US moves in democracy promotion. Promotion of democracy has been a cornerstone of US foreign policy; according to many scholars and practitioners of international relations. It has been lying at the heart of its national objectives since its founding days. Since recent years; US involvement in many parts of the world; particularly in the Middle East region; has turned out to be a subject of controversy. This is because; many complexities have been created due to US interference in the Middle East region in terms of promoting democracy. The US is accused for its military interventions and use of force to establish democracies in the region. Instead of installing democratic governments; it had rather complicated the issue by becoming a destabilizing factor. With the recent tensions developing around the world; particularly in regions like the Middle East; it emerges a need of time to investigate how democracy promotion strategies have developed within the US foreign policy over the course of history. Therefore; this study would primarily focus on tracing the roots of this modern American strategy of democracy promotion and how it has developed as a priority area within the US foreign policy over the course of time.

Some scholars refer to democracy promotion also as democracy assistance; a process by which governments and international organizations seek to support the spread of democracy as a political system around the world. The US administrations prioritized democracy promotion as a major strategic tool in its foreign policy agenda by claiming that these democratic reforms will benefit not only for the US; but also for its neighbours as well as the entire world. The proponents of democracy believe that; democracy promotion will help to establish global political stability as well as economic prosperity and also as means of countering terrorism.

When it comes to US democracy promotion as a prime objective of the US foreign policy and national security; some critics have stated that; it has created some skepticism over the world and the support for democracy promotion has reduced due to certain reasons. According to some critics; the rhetoric conflation by the Bush Administration; and its allies of the war in Iraq and democracy promotion; has muddied the meaning of the democracy promotion; diminishing support for it at home and abroad. Thus; Iraq war was a backlash on US democracy promotion. In addition; critics have cited many other reasons as well. For instance; some consider it as an inappropriate interference into the domestic affairs of other countries; thereby becoming a destabilizing factor.

In recent years; the US invested vastly in democracy promotion projects in Russia; Eastern Europe and the Middle East region; which has given rise to many controversial issues. For instance; John J. Measheimer; an erudite scholar in the field of International Relations; who proposed the theory of Offensive Realism; opens up the forum for debate over the US policy of democracy promotion. He puts some weight on the side of the West; particularly; the US as being a major influential party in the Ukraine crisis. Simply; according to him; “the US and its European allies share most of the responsibility to the crisis. The West’s triple package of policies- NATO enlargement; EU expansion and democracy promotion adds fuel to a fire waiting to ignite” [1]. This is not the only instance in which the US interfered in election campaigns and domestic affairs of other countries. The US has a historic record on election meddling. The US accuses Russian leaders for interfering in the recent US election. Then so is the longstanding US record in election meddling in other strategically important countries that serve American interests. For instance; the American huge financial support was expected to help the victory of Boris Yeltsin in the election towards the collapse of the Soviet Union. The US backed IMF loan was granted to Russia with the aim of installing a pro-American leader with the ulterior motive of disintegrating the Soviet Union.

Democracy promotion has been a long standing element of the US foreign policy which has developed to be a primary component since recent years. Since the World War I; with Woodrow Wilson’s mission “to make the world safe for democracy”; US administrations have been very much interested in promoting democracy to some strategically important countries to varying degrees. Particularly; the recent administrations of Reagan; Bill Clinton; and George H.W. Bush; viewed democracy promotion as a central pillar in US foreign policy. Reagan presidency’s “crusade for freedom; George H. W. Bush’s ‘beyond containment lies democracy’; and George W. Bush’s ‘march to freedom in the Muslim world’; all depict the importance and the centrality of democracy promoting in the US foreign policy. However; critics suggest that far from promoting democracy; it has become merely “a rhetorical cover for intervention and control”; which serves US interests rather than the target countries [2]. Epstein; Serafino and Miko in a report to the Congressional Research Service; argue “the democracy promotion ideal is now under close scrutiny”. According to some observers promoting democracy is a priority in the US foreign policy while others argue that it is “but one of a number of US strategic objectives and not necessarily the overriding one” [3].

The Concept of Democracy

The concept of Democracy receives top most recognition in the context of both international politics as well as international relations. It is the Constitution of the United States of America which was adopted in 1788; stands to be the world's first formal blueprint for a modern democracy. And ever since; promotion of democracy has been one of the top US foreign policy priorities up to the present day. However; democracies have existed in the word political history long before the founding of America or the adoption of democratic values and principles by the USA.

History of democracies dates back to about 500 B.C.E. when democracies existed in Greece and Italy. “[T]he term democracy comes from the Greek words demos; the people and cratis; to rule” [3]. Therefore; the term democracy can literally be translated as a government by the people. The most common and widely spread definition on democracy was put forwarded by the US President Abraham Lincoln (1809-1865) as; “government of the people; by the people; for the people”. Today; this word democracy has become a term difficult to define; since it has different meanings depending on the context. Democracy is broadly and most commonly accepted as a political system with some “minimum elements; effective participation by the people under a constitution; respect for human rights and political equality before the law for both minorities and the majority” [3]. According to Richard Haass; elements such as independent media; unions; political parties; school and democratic rights for women provide checks on government power over society [3]. The Oxford Advanced Learners’ Dictionary defines democracy as “a system of government in which all the people of a country can vote to elect their representatives.” The concept of democracy lies at the center of Democratic Peace Theory which projects that democracies do not go to war with one another. The widely spread view is that liberal democracies are less prone to war and that establishing democracy all around the world would ensure international peace.

Waves of democratization

According to Samuel P. Huntington; the global democratic process took place in waves which are accompanied by a “reverse wave”. Accordingly; three distinct waves of democratization have been identified in which a wave being defined as a group of transitions from nondemocratic to democratic regimes that occur within a specified period of time. However; these waves of democratization have been followed by reverse waves in which some of the democratic countries reverted to nondemocratic rule. As it has been observed by Huntington; the first long wave of democratization began in 1820s and “continued for almost a century until 1926”; marking the emergence of democratic regimes as a nineteenth-century phenomenon. The first reverse wave was marked with the coming of Mussolini in Italy to power in 1922. The second wave of democratization initiated with the “triumph of the Allies in World War II which reached its zenith in 1962 with 36 countries governed democratically”. It was followed by the second reverse wave “which brought the number of democracies back down to 30” during 1960-1975. The third began in the mid-1970s starting in Portugal and Spain and later spread across Latin America; Asia; Central Europe; Middle East and Africa [4].

The recent demise of Ben Ali; Hosni Mubarak; and Muammar al-Gaddafi; and the subsequent intense pressure on other authoritarian leaders in the Middle East and North African region has made the critics to call Arab Spring as the beginning of the fourth wave of democratization which has now been followed by the fourth reverse wave of which is been referred by some analysts as the Arab Winter; the rise of Islamic fundamentalism in the Arab world. Huntington further highlights US as a major promoter of democracy during the 1970s and 1980s [4]. Even though a greater emphasis was given to democracy promotion within the US foreign policy during this period; it does not

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suggest that democracy promotion has not constituted in the US foreign policy earlier. Democracy and liberal ideology has been the founding principles of the American constitution which has been developing over a long period of time.

Democracy as a Fundamental Component within US Foreign Policy

Before assessing democracy promotion as a key element in US foreign policy; it is important to identify the fundamental principles of US foreign policy. Simply; foreign policy refers to the general objectives that guide the activities and relationships of one state in its interactions with other states. Scholars have provided many definitions for foreign policy. Padelford and Lincoln have identified foreign policy as a “key element in the process by which a state translates its broadly conceived goals and interests into concrete course of action to attain these objectives and preserve interests” [5]. F. S. Northedge defines foreign policy as “the use of political influence in order to induce other states to exercise their law-making power in a manner desired by the states concerned: it is an interaction between forces originating outside the country’s borders and those working within them” [5]. Therefore; in essence; foreign policy can be defined as a strategic tool which is used by states based on its national interests in influencing the behaviour of other states.

Therefore; foreign policy of a state is concerned with the behaviour of a state towards other states. Foreign policy can therefore be considered as a set of principles and practices that regulate the interactions of a state with other states. Through foreign policy a state seeks to achieve a variety of objectives. These objectives can be short range; middle range and long range objectives. When considering about the US foreign policy; dissemination of capitalist economy and democracy is one of the long range objectives of the US policy. According to many scholars in international politics; dissemination of liberal democratic ideology receives the top most recognition among the fundamental principles of the US foreign policy. Democracy is an ideal that has been a major element in US foreign policy since the American Revolution. American leaders have put a greater emphasis on promoting democracy and democratic institutions around the world both in words and deeds; as a tool of American influence and as an end itself; which became well explicit in Woodrow Wilson’s Fourteen Points. Ever since; all US administrations have prioritized the dissemination of the American ideology in the world to varying degrees.

Development of Democracy Promotion as a priority in the US Foreign Policy

This study explores the historical development of democracy promotion in US foreign relations from mid 1800s up to the Obama administration. Promotion of American democratic values has been a top priority in the US foreign policy for the last few decades. In other words; democracy promotion has been a cornerstone or “a centerpiece of US foreign policy” for nearly a century [6]. The American support for democracy in the world is based on the Democratic Peace Theory (Democratic peace theory is a theory which posits that democracies are hesitant to engage

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in armed conflict with other identified democracies. It depends on the idea that whether states are likely to go to war or choose peace; depends on the type political system they have. Democratic peace theorist puts great faith on democracies believing that democracy brings a more peaceful less belligerent foreign policy. They believe that in general democracies are more peaceful and are less likely to go to war). The theory is used by some (specially the US) to justify war; as long as war is conducted for spreading democracy like in the case of War in Iraq 2003. US president Woodrow Wilson who marked the dawn of a new era in democracy promotion in US foreign policy is also an ardent believer of Democratic Peace Theory.

Even though the quality and quantity of democracy promotion varied under different US administrations; almost every US president used it as a major foreign policy tool. There is a significant variation among US presidents on their different policy applications and approaches used in promoting democracy. Not only the ways and means were subjected to changes; but also desired goals and objectives of democracy promotion underwent changes from time to time and also under different republican and democratic administrations. Early US foreign policy was primarily aimed at achieving her economic interests. Non-interventionism was the principle which governed US foreign policy in the 19th century. Neutrality was adopted in her foreign policy which helped the US to remain uninvolved in European wars. But her modern strategy of democracy promotion prevailed in another form. By the time US celebrated her first 100th anniversary of independence; US was not willing to provide anything beyond moral support for democratic changes in other countries. This was well evident when the US was prompt to recognize the Second Republic of France during the revolutions of 1848. The 11th US president; James K. Polk (1845 – 1849) declared: “our ardent and sincere congratulations are extended to the patriotic people of France upon their noble and thus far successful efforts to found for their future government liberal institutions similar to our own” [7]. But less than four years later; the Second Republic was dissolved with its failure to establish lasting democratic changes. Even though; these failures sparked debate within the US regarding her role and participation in democracy promotion; the Fillmore administration (1850 –1853) was reluctant to involve in conflicting European affairs. President Fillmore made use of these conditions in revolutionary France and also Napoleonic wars to support and continue US policy of nonintervention. However; until the dawn of the twentieth century; the US foreign policy was not extended towards engaging in military interventions abroad; outside of the Western hemisphere.

America’s first attempts at democracy promotion can be cited from her invasions of Cuba in 1898 and the Philippines. But both these invasions were not primarily aimed at promoting democracy; but at liberation of these two countries from the Spanish tyranny. Once Spain was defeated and these territories were fallen into the hands of the US; a new path was sought by the McKinley administration in order to retain the US influence within these territories. This new path was democracy promotion. Before the Cuban invasion; president McKinley (1897 –1901) did not made any reference on either installing a democratic government or bringing any democratic changes to Cuba. What he declared was; “we have only the desire to see the Cubans prosperous and contented; enjoying that measure of self-control which is the inalienable right of man...” [8].

But once; Cuba was under the US control; McKinley's policies and vision towards Cuba seemed to change by late 1899. It "evolved from simple self-government and self-reliance to the need for democratic representative government through a national-level constitutional convention" [9]. US vision at bringing democratic changes to Cuba was accompanied by her economic interests in Cuba which became well evident by the Platt Amendment. The Platt Amendment established the terms under which the United States would end its military occupation of Cuba. It laid down eight conditions to which the Cuban Government had to agree before the withdrawal of U.S. forces and the transfer of sovereignty. Cuban stability and democracy were desired by the US as a means of ensuring her economic interests in Cuba particularly with regard to sugar cane industry. The Platt Amendment remained in force until 1934; allowing US military and economic infiltrations into Cuba.

In case of the Philippines; it could enjoy relative autonomy compared to that of Cuba; because of its distance from the US. For US to interfere into the Philippines; only possible and practical option available was democracy promotion. After gaining the control over the territory by defeating Spain; departing the country without any US influence was seen as a threat to the American security. Therefore; the first US president to decide on the future government "for a nation - building enterprise" [9]; President McKinley; chose to install a democratic government in the Philippines. This was mainly supported by the view that; leaving liberated Philippines (from Spain) without establishing a solid government would leave a power vacuum that could be fulfilled by another power having expansionist policies like Germany. On the other hand; installing a government which compromises US values in the Southeast Asia was seen by US leaders as a factor enhancing her security.

In the US strategy in Philippines; presidents; William McKinley; Theodore Roosevelt and William Taft had a common vision. At the beginning; the US wanted to establish self-government in Philippines after gaining freedom from Spain. It was evident when President Theodore Roosevelt declared in his first annual message made in 1901: "our earnest effort is to help these people upward along the stony and difficult path that leads to self-government" [10]. But; even after the Filipinos reached a state in which they could manage their own affairs; the US still had a strategic presence to maintain a military presence in Philippines. And this continued US intervention in the Philippines was justified and projected by them as a selfless effort merely to protect and develop Philippines; "our people must keep steadily before their minds the fact that the justification for our stay in the Philippines must ultimately rest chiefly upon the good we are able to do in the islands..... our chief reason for continuing to hold them must be that we ought in good faith to try to do our share of the world's work" [11]. Therefore; a big contrast could be noted in between the initial US plans and the change in her policies once their original objectives were achieved. It is this dominating nature in her foreign relations that has made American moves to be viewed with suspicion by other countries.

President McKinley was the first US president to violate the traditional US foreign policy of non-interventionism. Even though; we cited the US invasion of Cuba and the Philippines as the first American efforts at



democracy promotion; they were not primarily aimed at bringing out democratic changes. Democracy had been only a minor element in these two US invasions. But American modern strategy of democracy promotion was there in a different shape. A similar invasion was made in Panama in 1903. In all these three cases; democratization was adopted after the intervention was made and as a strategy to retain US influence in these territories for some more years. President McKinley and his republican successors; Presidents; Theodore Roosevelt and William Taft also carried out this tradition “by confining democracy promotion merely to verbal support and recognition” [12]. But it was during the administration of President Woodrow Wilson; that the US adopted a more consolidated and well established policy for democracy promotion in the American foreign policy. Woodrow Wilson initiated a new era in US foreign policy; in which active democracy promotion was given a prominent place.

Wilson’s views contrasted with his republican predecessors. He was an ardent believer of the democratic peace theory. His belief was that; “A steadfast concert for peace can never be maintained except by a partnership of democratic nations. No autocratic government could be trusted to keep faith within it or observe its covenants” [13]. Wilson’s vision of democracy was largely shaped by the World War I. It was further extended towards his attempts at establishing the League of Nations. He encouraged democratic changes in Latin America by adopting a policy of non-recognition of governments that came to power through undemocratic means. Wilson’s military intervention in Mexico was an example of how he used the policy of non-recognition. However; Wilson’s interventions in Latin America were unable to bring significant democratic changes to the expected level. Wilson’s Fourteen Points is regarded as one of the major contributions towards the US democracy promotion. In it he advocated “the principle of justice to all peoples and nationalities; and their right to live on equal terms of liberty and safety with one another; whether they will be strong or weak” [14].

But Wilson’s Republican successors who were opposed to the League of Nations; did not follow Wilson’s strong pro-democracy rhetoric in their foreign policy as a response to Wilson’s failed League of Nations while confining into the traditional US isolationist approach in foreign policy. These Republican presidents were: Warren Harding; Calvin Coolidge and Herbert Hoover. US foreign policy before the World War II was dominated by the isolationist sentiment while the position for democracy promotion was deteriorated. However; the US foreign policy drastically changed during and in the aftermath of the World War II. This led Wilson’s democracy promotion to regain its importance by adopting as a major foreign policy objective. In the Post Second World War context; a new revival of the strategy of democracy promotion took place in US foreign policy. A central feature of the US strategy of democracy promotion in the post Second World War context was that; it was used as a foreign policy tool to contain the spread communism.

During the time of the World War II; President Franklin D. Roosevelt; stressed on democracy promotion and was strictly opposed to the isolationist wing within the US. Franklin D. Roosevelt declared: “the United States will never survive as a happy and fertile oasis of liberty surrounded by a cruel desert of dictatorship” [15]. Even if;



Roosevelt administration supported for democracy promotion; there were instances in which Roosevelt supported authoritarian regimes like Turkey and China. Roosevelt tried to adhere into the policy of noninterference in Latin America with his Good Neighbour policy. Even though; it is true that Roosevelt brought democratization back into the US foreign policy; it was practiced at a limited level. It was a reflection of the fact that; Roosevelt believed in the importance of having more allies for US than having democratic governments. However; after Roosevelt; President Harry Truman was able to open up a new chapter in US democracy promotion; taking it to a new level.

A major transition in US foreign policy took place during the tenure of President Harry Truman. It was during this period; that the US began identifying a relationship between international security and the US national security. Therefore; it is not wrong to say; that the root of modern form of US democracy promotion; which is aimed at achieving US security interests; basically began to shape during the tenure of President Harry Truman (1945 – 1953). This period is not only a transitional period in the US foreign policy; but can also be considered a transitional period in the entire international system; mainly because of the end of the World War II and the beginning of cold war. This perceived threat to US was emanating from the Soviet Union. This threat of Soviet expansionism was well explained by the former British Prime Minister; Winston Churchill as; “From Stettin in the Baltic to Trieste in the Adriatic; an iron curtain has descended across the continent” [16]. Therefore; in response to this threat; President Truman used democracy as a foreign policy tool to contain the spread of communism.

The Truman Doctrine encompassed his plans and desires of democracy promotion abroad. In addition to diplomacy and military intervention; the traditional US tools of democracy promotion; a new approach at promoting democracy was made through foreign economic assistance. In his speech on Truman Doctrine declaring concern for Turkey and Greece; Truman stated; “Greece must have assistance if it is to become a self-supporting and self-respecting democracy. The United States must supply that assistance. We have already extended to Greece certain types of relief and economic aid but these are inadequate. There is no other country to which democratic Greece can turn” [17]. Thus; providing economic assistance to countries destroyed in the World War II was adopted as the primary tool of democracy promotion under Truman administration. Ever since; the US adopted this method of providing economic assistance or economic aid to foreign countries as a major tool of democracy promotion. The rationale behind Truman’s justification of his funding for economic aid was based on the argument that; providing economic assistance was much cheaper than fighting another war [28]. The Truman Doctrine was supported by the Marshall Plan which supported the rebuilding process in countries in the Western Europe.

Apart from; diplomacy and economic aid; Truman used another tool for democracy promotion: covert operations. He undertook covert operations to bolster pro-democratic forces in Western Europe by covertly financing anti-communist forces. These funds were mainly provided for: influencing elections; developing anti-communist unions; holding conferences for anti-communist intellectuals [18]. Truman chose limited use of force in his attempts at democracy promotion. According to Tony Smith; the rebuilding of Japan and Germany into

democracies was undertaken via a process called “four Ds”: demilitarization; democratization; decartelization (e.g.; land reforms) and deprogramming (e.g.; using education and media) [18]. In cases of Japan and Germany; demilitarization was the goal in which democratization was used as a means to attain this goal. Another key milestone in democratization during Truman era was the establishment of the United Nations; which has been an advocate of democracy. UN is a chief advocate of democracy promotion which is implemented through a trust fund called the UN Democracy Fund (UNDEF).

Truman era is recognized to be the most successful era of US democracy promotion. His policies were able to convert four fascist governments into democracies. They were: Germany; Italy; Japan and Austria. Moreover; the United Nations; an international organization which stands to promote democracy to this day was created. However; Truman’s efforts at democracy promotion were not sincerely aimed at creating democracies in Europe; but ironically; an attempt to contain the spread of communism which was perceived as a threat to US security. Therefore; to attain this end; democracy promotion was used as a strategy. The growing threat of cold war and the transition of US government after Truman from a democratic government into a republican government; created certain limitations in democracy promotion.

It was Dwight D. Eisenhower (1953 – 1961); who succeeded President Truman. Even though; Eisenhower shared with Truman; the ultimate goal of ensuring US security through containment of communism; the way he practiced it was distinguished from Truman. Eisenhower did not perceive democracy promotion as a means to achieve these goals. Instead; he relied on the use of military force to support for freedom. However; US interference into the Middle East region in the name of democracy promotion can be traced from the time of President Eisenhower. He has well expressed US concerns for the Middle East region when he declared; “the Middle East; which has always been coveted by Russia; would today be prized more than ever by International Communism. The Soviet rulers continue to show that they do not scruple to use any means to gain their ends. The free nations of the Middle East need; and for the most part want; added strength to assure their continued independence” [19]. In this speech; Eisenhower pointed out the Soviet interests in the Middle East region and criticized soviet influence in the region in spreading communism. However; these claims sound ironic; as the US also possesses the same economic interests (on oil resources) as Russia does in the Middle East region.

The very historic Iranian coup d’état of 1953 by the US and UK was a severe backlash on the US foreign policy. It became well evident that the US was behind the military coup that overthrew the democratically elected Prime Minister Mohammad Mosaddeq; as the CIA admitted publicly in a later period that it was behind the 1953 coup. Mosaddeq’s actions to nationalize British Anglo-Iranian Oil Company made the British to perceive Mosaddeq as a severe threat to their strategic economic interests vested in the oil resources. The UK who needed the US support in this regard could easily persuade the Eisenhower administration to conspire against Iran. The Eisenhower administration which was overwhelmed with the fear of rising communism in the Middle East used this opportunity

to lay a trap to appoint a pro-western leader in Iran. The military coup aimed at installing a pro-western rule in Iran that would safeguard the west's oil interests. This became evident from the consolidation of the Shah rule for the next 26 years until the Iranian revolution in 1979. These American moves severely tarnish the established American liberal democratic principles. This is a prime example on how the real commitment towards democracy promotion differs from that of the rhetorical support. The case of Lebanon is another instance of democracy promotion that can be cited from the Eisenhower administration. In 1958; the US forces were ordered by Eisenhower; to protect the freely elected democratic government of Lebanon from the Soviet supported insurrectionists.

A revival in democracy promotion took place after Truman; for the second time in US foreign policy when John F. Kennedy assumed office in 1961. He again brought democracy promotion back into the forefront of US foreign policy. In his inaugural speech Kennedy declared; "let every nation know; whether it wishes us well or ill; that we shall pay any price; bear any burden; meet any hardship; support any friend; oppose any foe to assure the survival and the success of liberty" [20] . Kennedy also like his predecessors considered foreign aid as a factor leading to economic development which ultimately results in democracy [21]. Under such circumstances; Kennedy created two other aid programs to contribute to democracy: the Peace Corps and the US Agency for International Development (USAID). Kennedy left the US foreign policy with a lasting institution for democracy promotion; the USAID. In spite of these successes; certain policies of Kennedy administration left a black mark on the US. This happened in cases of military interventions in Cuba; Laos; Cambodia; Thailand and South Vietnam which were much focused on containing the spread of communism rather than true democracy promotion. It was the Vietnam War that became the most controversial subject during this period; within which US policies were severely criticized by the international community. It was a major incident which questioned the genuineness of the US policy of democracy promotion.

However; Kennedy's two republican successors: Richard Nixon and Gerald Ford and the democratic successor; Lyndon B. Johnson; showed little interest in democracy promotion. Johnson supported Mobutu in the Congo; Suharto in Indonesia; and a coup in Greece. Nixon supported a coup against the democratically elected; but leftist leader Salvador Allende in Chile. This action of Nixon raises one question: has US promoted democracy in good faith; or is it in the name only? In case of Chile; Allende was democratically elected; but was a leftist. So the US acted against him.

However; President Jimmy Carter (1977 –1981) acted as a true democrat; working in accordance with the real democratic means. He bought a revival in democracy promotion by opening a new chapter in US democracy promotion which can be distinguished from the previous US administrations. Carter no longer relied on US security interests; but rather desired to create a more humane foreign policy which would have a greater room for the protection of human rights. He unveiled his policy in his inaugural address: "Our Nation can be strong abroad only if it is strong at home. And we know that the best way to enhance freedom in other lands is to demonstrate here that



our democratic system is worthy of emulation... there can be no nobler nor more ambitious task for America to undertake on this day of a new beginning than to help shape a just and peaceful world that is truly humane..... Because we are free; we can never be indifferent to the fate of freedom elsewhere” [22]. Carter policies were implemented by the creation of a human rights strategy. Carter encouraged democratization in the developing world. He adopted the measure of cutting down economic aid in response to countries violating human rights. This measure was undertaken in countries like Argentina; Chile; El Salvador; Ethiopia; Nicaragua and Uruguay. However; Carter’s foreign policy was criticized by his opponents especially by Ronald Reagan; considering it as being responsible for losing two allies: Iran and Nicaragua.

President Ronald Reagan severely opposed to carter’s policies calling it a weak foreign policy. At the same time; President Reagan was a staunch opponent of communism calling the Soviet Union as an “evil empire”. He embraced friendly dictatorships that were excluded under the Carter administration such as: Argentina; Chile; the Philippines and South Korea. Even though; Reagan started by following a policy opposed to Carter; he gradually adopted democracy promotion in his foreign policy; which is different in nature from that of Carter’s. In spite of their different views; both of them used democracy promotion as a tool to enhance US security as well as international peace. The distinction could be made in the measures executed by these two presidents in their democracy programs. It is a good example on how democracy promotion was adopted by democratic and republican administrations. In view of President Carter; democracy promotion was the cornerstone in improving human rights. He envisioned a world respecting human rights as a factor leading to enhance US security. These views of Carter were very much in contrast to his predecessors. Carter’s predecessors were ever ready to sacrifice human rights; if they found it the way to promote US security interests. Thus; they have been following a double standard in practicing human rights.

On the other hand; according to President Reagan; it was economic prosperity that would lead to international peace. Just as Carter saw democracy as the key factor leading to protection of human rights in the world; Reagan saw democracy as the key to economic prosperity. Reagan tried to convince the world that; if they want to prosper economically; then they have to adopt free market economy and the path to adopt a free market is through democratization. According to Reagan; “These democratic and free-market revolutions are really the same revolution” [23]. The creation of the Caribbean Basin Initiative and the National Endowment for Democracy; were the most important attempts by Reagan to facilitate his so called revolutions. Reagan used military intervention in his democratization attempts. He supported freedom fighters in Afghanistan; Angola; Cambodia and Nicaragua. Reagan believed in the potential of military intervention in “producing an unified democratic Lebanon” [24]. However; the invasion of Grenada can be considered as the most direct military intervention under Reagan administration in the name of democracy. In both these cases; the major concern was the threat of communism.

Reagan’s pro-democratic ideals were succeeded by President George H. W. Bush (1989 – 1993).



His serious commitment to democracy promotion was expressed as: “we seek a partnership rooted in a common commitment to democratic rule....Our battlefield is the broad middle ground of democracy and popular government; our fight; against the enemies of freedom on the extreme right and on the extreme left” [25]. Bush built up a direct link between democracy and security. He defended his efforts at democracy promotion by stating; “Strategically; abandonment of the worldwide democratic revolution could be disastrous for American security” [26]. The scope of Bush’s democratization policy was limited to Latin America and Eastern Europe. He encouraged democratic transitions in El Salvador; Honduras and Nicaragua. Among other things; one of the important incidents during Bush’s tenure is his military intervention in Panama for democracy promotion primarily accompanied by security interests. After years of deteriorating relations with Manuel Noriega; the right wing dictator of Panama; in December 1989 President Bush ordered US forces to invade Panama. As he declared; “[T]he goals of the United States have been to safeguard the lives of Americans; to defend democracy in Panama; to combat drug trafficking; and to protect the integrity of the Panama Canal treaty” [27].

Despite the government transition from Republican to Democrat; when President Clinton (1993 – 2001) assumed office; the importance given to democracy promotion in US foreign policy continued to remain the same. A National Security Strategy of Engagement and Enlargement was set under the Clinton administration in which US priority areas have been set forth.

Clinton has set its goals as follows:

- A. “To sustain our security with military forces that are ready to fight.
- B. To bolster America's economic revitalization.
- C. To promote democracy abroad” [28].

He; in this new security strategy advocated: “we believe that our goals of enhancing our security; bolstering our economic prosperity; and promoting democracy are mutually supportive... Nations with growing economies and strong trade ties are more likely to feel secure and to work toward freedom. And democratic states are less likely to threaten our interests and more likely to cooperate with the U.S. to meet security threats and promote free trade and sustainable development” [28]. Therefore; like most of his predecessors; Clinton also saw democracy as a means to attain US security interests.

Moreover; in this security strategy; Middle East region has been given a greater priority in “integrated regional approaches”. In this security strategy; he highlights US interests in the Middle East and its approach towards its allies in the Middle East by stating: “the United States has enduring interests in the Middle East; especially pursuing a comprehensive breakthrough to Middle East peace; assuring the security of Israel and our Arab friends; and maintaining the free flow of oil at reasonable prices. Our strategy is harnessed to the unique characteristics of the region and our vital interests there; as we work to extend the range of peace and stability” [28]. This is a good Citation: Navodi CU. (2017). The Historical Development of Democracy Promotion as a Strategic Priority within the US Foreign Policy. Soc Pol Sci. 2.

example of the US double standards towards its foes and allies in the Middle East region. Clinton encouraged democratization in Russia by supporting Boris Yeltsin and also in Haiti. In addition; democracy promotion was a major priority area within USAID; during the Clinton administration.

US democracy promotion became very much controversial in recent years under George W. Bush administration; particularly due to his approach towards the Middle East region. It was a well evident fact that; the US foreign policy underwent a huge shift in the aftermath of the 9/11 attack. President George W. Bush gave a greater priority for democracy promotion in Middle East; mainly through measures of economic aid and military force. It was the Iraq war which became the subject of controversy during this period; severely criticizing Bush policy. In both the cases in Iraq and Afghanistan; the objective of US invasion was not democracy promotion; but it was only a core part in their counterterrorism strategy in the region.

President Obama gave a greater emphasis in his foreign policy for democracy promotion; “because governments that respect these values are more just; peaceful and legitimate. We also do so because their success abroad fosters an environment that supports America’s national interests” [29]. However; an “unprecedented forcefulness” has been not used by Obama as done under the Bush administration [30]. Obama’s intervention in the Middle East region is an important topic of study due to many crises that took place recently in the region including the Arab spring and ongoing Syrian Crisis.

Conclusion

Thus when summarizing all this; it becomes evident that; the priority given to democracy promotion as a foreign policy tool has been embedded in its foreign policy; since the inception of the United States government. But the nature of promoting democracy has been changing from time to time and under different US administrations. In the early period; democracy promotion confined only to verbal support and diplomatic recognition. President McKinley adopted a reactive democracy promotion policy in Philippines and Cuba after defeating Spain. US invasion of Cuba and Philippines are considered as the first US attempts at democracy promotion; even though; democracy was adopted only as an afterthought of the invasion. Most of the US presidents adopted democracy promotion as a strategy to attain US security interests; while some combined it with economic prosperity and market liberalization. It was President Woodrow Wilson who took an idealistic approach towards democracy and turned a new chapter in US foreign policy prioritizing democracy promotion as a major foreign policy tool. Ever since; all US presidents adopted it in their foreign policies by and large.

The end of the World War II and the beginning of the cold war marked a transition period in the US foreign policy. During the cold war; democracy promotion was adopted as a means to contain communism and thereby ensuring US national security. This period saw the US intervention in Eastern Europe in promoting democracy to

suppress the threat of Soviet expansionism. A second major transition period in US foreign policy occurred in the aftermath of the 9/11 attack; making US Middle Eastern policy a subject of controversy. Even before that US presidents like Eisenhower and Clinton have considered Middle East region as a priority area in their foreign policies mainly due to its interests in oil resources as well as the US interest in the state of Israel. But in the aftermath of the 9/11 attack the US administrations; particularly the Bush administration sought democracy promotion as a counter-terrorism strategy.

This study which was conducted with the aim of investigating the roots of modern US strategy of democracy promotion has been able to materialize the main objective of assessing how democracy promotion measures and tools have differed from time to time under different US administrations. Accordingly; democracy promotion has been sought by many of the US administrations in order to achieve its national interests in terms of economic prosperity at one time and ensuring security interests at other times. The study is evident of the fact that the measures and policy initiatives of promoting democracy abroad have differed; depending on the international political scenario during different eras.

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