

# ***The Role of the United States as a Democracy Promoter: Impacts on Developing Countries***

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**Abstract:** In recent years, there has been a significant shift in the global landscape of democracy, particularly in developing countries. This has led to a re-evaluation of strategies for promoting democratic processes in different countries and has highlighted the role of the United States in this process. Thus, this paper examines this multi-level aspect by looking at how the U.S. contributes to promoting democratic values, especially in developing states. It also analyzes the pattern of U.S. democracy promotion, arguing that it has gone from the containment strategies as part of the Cold War era to the democratization activities of the post-Cold War period. From this, it can be inferred that democracy promotion is increasingly viewed as an instrument for augmenting national security interests, mostly as a result of 9/11, during which it was regarded as expanding the scope of the war on terror. Furthermore, it assesses the different types of democratic aid granted to the U.S., such as economic assistance, political training, cultural exchanges, and media freedom, whilst looking at their advantages and disadvantages, the infrastructures of developing countries. Through the South African and Iraqi case studies, U.S. initiatives in democracy promotion are thoroughly examined to obtain practical knowledge about their moral and pragmatic aspects. The U.S. should give democracy promotion primary importance by putting international cooperation above everything else, and also respecting national sovereignty, through which the sustainability of its democracy promotion initiatives will be guaranteed.

**Keywords:** U.S. Democracy Promotion, Political Stability, Economic Assistance, Cold War Containment.

## **1. Introduction**

The United States has been assumingly holding the position of the chief proponent of democracy. This was especially evident in the dealings with developing countries. Besides other forms of support like direct financial assistance and survivors' cultural interactions, the U.S. has always aimed to shape the political systems of these nations directly, most of which occurred in the post-Cold War period. However, the effectiveness of this approach has varied, with such an increase in controversy. These reflections are on the impact and the moral implications of similar fights in promoting democracy. On the other hand, it has also prompted ethical debates in which there is a clear contrast between the promotion of democracy and the protection of other nation's sovereignty [1]. Therefore, we will look at the multidimensional responsibilities of the U.S. regarding democracy promotion and discuss its effects on the Middle East and Africa. Through literature review and examples, it uncovers the

difficulties in enhancing democracy and the possibilities which the U.S. has. However, this research might inform a more profound understanding of the current state of U.S. foreign policy making and its strategic guidelines. It can also be of great use in future policy decisions, especially the balancing of national policies and the promotion of democracy.

## **2. Historical Background of U.S. Democracy Promotion**

### **2.1. The Cold War Era: Ideological Containment**

While formulating the United States' strategy in the Cold War period, largely, their policies concerning democracy promotion worked for curtailing the spread of communism. Marshall Plan targeted the economic recovery and the ideological containment of the Soviet Union at the same time [2]. By granting financial assistance to countries in Western Europe, the US sought to support the development of nations that were economically liberal and, thus, resistant to the influence of the USSR. Regained strength of the USSR and left-wing regimes [3] in Latin America such as Guatemala and Chile, provoked U.S. intervention (economic and political support, with occasional military interventions) aimed at the creation or preservation of regimes that would be in favor of U.S. interests. On the other hand, U.S. intention of promoting democracy during this period was mainly based on geopolitical concerns and, as a result, a fight for free-market economies and democracies on a global level [4].

### **2.2. Post-Cold War Shift: Embracing Global Democratization**

The breakup of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics sparked a major realignment of the foreign policy of the United States, which became a sole focus on the global promotion of democracy [5]. The two decades at the end of the 20th century may be remembered as the years when democracy became a top priority for international relationships, with the U.S. government openly prioritizing the protection of human rights, the establishment of the rule of law, and the promotion of democratic governance in all U.S. foreign policy endeavors. In this respect, the creation of the National Endowment for Democracy (NED) back in 1983 can be considered the application of this strategy, which dedicated the resources and support to promote democracy on behalf of the NED and its allied organizations throughout the world. At the same time, democratic assistance programs expanded a lot, aiming at Central and Eastern European positions of power, Africa, and Latin America, these programs functioned mainly to encourage political reform and democratic change [6]. Fostering this strategic tilt came into being in line with the Democratic Peace Theory, which indicates the fact that the chances of war developing between democratic states are way lower than those among non-democratic states, which thus leads to the shaping of U.S. international strategies.[7]

### **2.3. 21st Century: Democracy Promotion in a Changing World**

After the attacks, the phrase “promoting democracy” was often used as one of the weapons in the arsenal of global antiterrorism strategies. The Bush administration tended to see the promotion of democracy as an important aspect of national security, which meant that the US government equated democratic nations with lesser chances of fall under the rule of terrorism [8]. Such U.S military interventions were argued to be strategies to contain the potential genesis of those terrorists by building democratic states. Also, it surfaced the glaring shortcomings of this approach, especially in the absence of a comprehensive understanding of all aspects of the social and cultural environment, which presented unavoidable obstructions to democratic nation-building and a reassessment of the external policy [9]. Consequently, this period of the experience prompted a thorough re-examination

of the part played, the goals pursued, and the modus operandi of U.S. democracy promotion globally, working towards the generation of more context-sensitive and flexible strategies in the global context.

### **3. U.S. Democracy Assistance: Forms and Impacts**

The U.S. democracy assistance encompasses various forms, aiming to promote the development of democracy worldwide through economic support, political training and cultural exchanges. This has profound implications across political, economic, and military dimension.

#### **3.1. Specific Forms of U.S. Democracy Assistance**

##### **3.1.1. Direct Support: Economic Aid and Political Training**

Economic help is one of the mainstays of democracy promotion in the United States. Programs funded by USAID (U.S. Agency for International Development) Associate Aid with specific democratic reforms, which means fundamentals like free elections, judicial independence, and civil society development are implemented as requirements [10]. An example of this is the Millennium Challenge Corporation, which assists by leading individuals who adhere to a set of governance standards and as a result develops healthy political structures in the countries. Moreover, U.S. NGO-type organizations and think tanks provide political training to political parties, electoral commissions, and civic organizations on democratic governance, election administration, and civic engagement as another key component of direct support. During the transitional period from authoritarian government to democracy, the contributions of the U.S. to capacity-building of electoral monitoring tools and mechanisms and civic engagement in Tunisia have been seen as effective [11].

##### **3.1.2. Indirect Support: Cultural Exchanges and Media Freedom**

Medium-term support is offered through programs of cultural exchange and through the encouragement of freedom of the press. The Fulbright Program and the International Visitor Leadership Program (IVLP) represent initiatives of foreign policy that take promising leaders from developing nations to the United States of America for research on democracy, the rule of the law, and social inclusion, and thus, these programs facilitate the commitment to democratic values [12]. To add more, the media is also one of the components that is very significant. Financial allocation and training for journalists is one of the ways through which the United States ensures fair journalism by independent media. RFE/RL has been one of the major press-freedom success stories in sub-Saharan Africa, and has been instrumental in doing so by providing alternative news to state-controlled media [13]. This kind of indirect help not only guarantees that households in recipient countries are becoming media literate but also makes them understand and accept democracy values at large.

#### **3.2. Political and Economic Dimensions of U.S. Democracy Assistance**

##### **3.2.1. Economic Stability: Foundation for Democracy**

It is generally understood that the way down the road is right through economic growth, which is regarded as a base for democratic governance. The USA gift aid is in the form of projects that are of priority such as building transportation lines, health care services, and schools. The aim is to create an environment that is most favorable for democratic governance [14]. Such funding is obviously designed both to satisfy economical requirements in the short term and to fulfill the agenda of long term development as well. For instance, USAID in Ghana has helped create better living conditions for many through the provision of roads, potable water, and sanitary facilities [15]. On the other hand,

education investment ensures professionalism in a workforce that is characterized by civic mindedness and population capabilities.

### **3.2.2. Political Influence: Driver of Policies**

The United States as a matter of policy through its aid programs is providing not only material assistance but also to some degree interference in recipient countries' foreign and the internal policy through some authoritarian regimes. This is illustrated by the coherence of an aided country's stance being almost the same on international matters with that of the United States of America in global forums, including the central adoption of policies that are typical of the U.S. as internal domestic policies [16]. A well-known instance is that of Jordan, which demonstrates the massive reach of US funding. To be specific, King Abdullah II ended up closely cooperating with the US in the areas of war against terrorism and peace negotiations with Israel. This is beneficial to the US as it achieves its strategic goals, including the consolidation of political stability in Jordan [17]. Moreover, U.S. aid typically has pronouncements avoided such as recommending better governance, human rights observance, and guaranteeing the law supremacy. Critically, this makes it very hard for recipients of US aid not to consider US values of democracy and good governance in their policy-making process, which in return increases policy change. Nevertheless, in many cases, the assistance provided by the United States has brought about effective governmental efforts in such domains as electoral transparency, anticorruption measures, and civil rights protection.

### **3.2.3. Military Interventions: Catalyst for Change**

While the core of the U.S. democracy assistance program consists of economic and political support, more often than not, the country has employed military means when facing challenges to the true values of democracy. The purpose of good governance is not only about forming a government or governing but also the essence, capacities, opinion, morality, and principles of a country. The U.S. strategic responses to global security challenges can be seen, for instance, in military actions such as those in Iraq and Afghanistan, where the main objectives were to topple autocratic regimes and set up democratically governed countries [18]. Though many people see military interventions as the ultimate solution to civil strife and terrorism, it is difficult not to notice the scenarios of post-war instability. This shows that military interventions are not enough to fix complex societal problems that require other means. The evidence indicates that external intervention only plays an ancillary role when local political and social conditions allow for the establishment of democracy. The Secretary of State played a major role for the U.S. on the roadmap to ending apartheid through economic sanctions and diplomatic pressure. This shows that a democratic process which can continue to be sustainable must have bases that are stable socially, effective governance structures, and people that can be convinced to embrace democratic principles [19]. Despite the fact that military interventions are often able to effect rapid regime changes, implementing a democratically constitutional system in a war-torn country is a seriously complicated task that many countries lack the resources to effectively execute. Thus, the utmost importance is given to the paradigms of integration and coordination of external assistance to the process of democratization. Such support should encompass multiple political, economic, and cultural dimensions, integrated with the political culture and social structure of the recipient country. It is through the advocacy of the fundamental tenets on which democracy is based, the reinforcement of the rule of law, the investment in civil society, and the promotion of the equality of educational and economic opportunities, that a deep and sustainable threat to democracy can be created [20].

## **4. Impacts of U.S. Democracy Promotion on Developing Countries**

### **4.1. Positive Impacts**

Democracy assistance in the U.S. has been contributing in significant ways to economic development and political stability on several fronts, especially Liberia [12], where it has promoted its post-war reconstruction and democratic elections by bringing appropriate stability to a country which had gone through a civil war for many years. This support not only served the size of funds necessary and helped improve the investment climate, which discussed foreign investments and developed the role of the private businesses, hence, laying the foundation for the future development of the nation. In addition to the aforementioned effectiveness of the U.S. programs, they were instrumental in the struggle for human rights and the exchange of legal reforms. In the case of Kenya, for instance, projects and programs aimed at independence of the judiciary and anti-corruption, as they are essential building blocks of a democratic governance system [21]. These reforms have led to the improvement of the justice system's transparency and fairness, as well as these social satisfaction and stability. The strengthening of different forms of law and the protection of citizens' rights by these means have played a major role in establishing democracy standard, which lays the foundation for sustainable development.

### **4.2. Negative Impacts**

International Democracy Aid from the US can be targeted with some main reproaches. Second, it may create dependency for the developing nations, making it hard for them to erect independent economic and governance systems; therefore, poor governance and local accountability set in, making the development process slow [22]. Furthermore, U.S.-initiated democracy promotion is presented as meddling in the domestic affairs of other countries, so this leads to a rise of the nationalism and anti-America attitudes further. For instance, in Venezuela, an enormous challenge to the opposition has come from the strong perception of the U.S. as an imperial threat [23]. This has further aggravated internal divisions as well as social tensions. Moreover, one of the consequences of forcing democratisation is to create instability, particularly when the authoritarian regimes are removed without replacements of trusted democratic institutions. This could create a vacuum of power and fuel the outbreak of conflict. The arena of Libya in 2011 military intervention provides an example [16]; while it succeeded in a relatively short period of time in rehiring the regime, the outcome was a troubled situation in the country where civil war broke out and the problems of the absence of external intervention without a complete grasp of local social and political situations became visible.

## **5. Conclusion**

The United States has emerged as a key player when it comes to ensuring that democracy and rights are shared globally. While the model could be a focus of criticism about unilateralism and insensitivity, the expectation and hope behind this approach could also be questioned. Consequently, respecting national boundaries alongside the enthronement of democratic values remains a continual impediment. The next phase requires the U.S. to embrace a more united and comprehensive course in the promotion of democracy. Countries must engage multilateral institutions, deepen their understanding of local species dynamics, and find discounts off-the-shelf alternatives. Furthermore, the attention must be given to supporting indigenous democratic development rather than dictating external models given a proper understanding of local culture and the uniqueness of political situations. In other words, the U.S. can enhance the ongoing democratic process in the world and even help in ensuring a peaceful international environment whenever it leads from such a perspective.



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