

Faulty Correlation, Foolish Consistency, Fatal Consequence: Democracy, Peace, and Theory in the Middle East

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June 15, 2007

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Prepared for Steven Hook, editor, Democratic Peace and Promotion: Critical Perspectives

A foolish consistency is the hobgoblin of little minds, adored by little statesmen and philosophers and divines.

--Ralph Waldo Emerson (1841)

Democracy, a messy gimmick for aggregating preferences, has proven not only to be at least somewhat superior to alternative methods, but also a remarkably simple form of government that can rather easily be established, or imposed, whenever elites take a mind to so and remain uninhibited by thugs with guns. However, it has been cultured by philosophers and divines into something of a mystique in which it is maintained that democracy not only aggregates preferences, but creates them. In addition, the rise of democracy has corresponded with the growing acceptance of another, essentially unrelated, idea, war aversion, and this faulty correlation has been seized upon to be causal.

Putting theory into practice, American statesmen have sought to impose democracy on the Middle East partly operating under the foolish, if theoretically consistent, belief that this will cause peace and preferences favorable to American (and Israeli) foreign policy to blossom in the area. The consequences have been fatal.

Democracy as a superior gimmick

Democracy is a device for aggregating and expressing policy preferences. In my view, it is characterized by government that is necessarily and routinely responsive--although this responsiveness is not always even, fair, or equal--and it comes into effect when the people effectively agree not to use violence to overthrow the government and the government effectively leaves them free to criticize, to pressure, to organize, and to try to overthrow it by any other means.¹ One is free to try to increase one's

¹ For further development of these ideas, see Mueller 1999, ch. 6. This approach can be used to set up a sort of sliding scale of governmental forms. An authoritarian government may effectively and sometimes intentionally allow a degree of opposition--a limited amount of press disagreement, for example, or the freedom to complain privately, something sometimes known as the freedom of conversation. But it will not tolerate organized attempts to overthrow it, even if they are peaceful. A totalitarian government does not allow even those limited freedoms found under authoritarianism. On the other end of the scale is anarchy: a condition which holds when a government "allows" the use of violence to try to overthrow it--presumably mainly out of weakness or ineffectiveness.

political importance by working in politics or by supplying money in appropriate places, or one can reduce it by succumbing to apathy and neglecting even to vote. In practice, then, democracy is a form of government in which the individual is left free to become politically unequal.²

Essentially, then, democracy is characterized by minority rule and majority acquiescence, and most of what democratic governments actually do on a day by day basis is the result not of elections, but of pressure and petition--lobbying, it's called--and of the reactions and policy initiatives of the government. The history of the oldest large democracy supplies much evidence for this: although it is often against the interests and the desires of the majority, bee-keepers gain price supports for honey, selected industries are insulated from competition, gun enthusiasts get protection from seizure, artists are given medals and subsidies.

The ultimate appeal of democracy is not that it is, or could become, a perfect or ideal form of government, but that, however imperfect, it has distinct advantages when compared to other forms. In an essay first published in 1939, E. M. Forster adopted just such an appropriate comparative approach when he observed that democracy "is less hateful than other contemporary forms of government." Or, as it is usually put: democracy is the worst form of government except for all the rest.³

Democracy is, and will always be, distressingly messy, clumsy, and disorderly, and people are permitted loudly and irritatingly to voice opinions that are clearly erroneous and even dangerous. Moreover, decision-making in democracies is often muddled, incoherent, and slow, and the results are sometimes exasperatingly foolish, short-sighted, irrational, and incoherent.⁴ And some, including James Bryce, have lamented that democracies do not often promote the best people in the society to political leadership (assuming, presumably, that the society would be better off with the best in those positions rather than in science, business, or medicine) (Hess 1987). But the key question is, "Compared to what?"

One might begin by looking at the quality of the people democracies have generally selected and compare them to leaders who have emerged in non-democratic societies. In general, democracy looks pretty good when one compares the leadership and decision-making qualities of the Tsars of Russia or the Kaisers of Germany or the Kings of Saudi Arabia or the dictators of just about any place with the prime ministers of Britain or Canada or the presidents of the United States. Only democracies generally have been able to establish effective review and succession arrangements and thereby solve an elemental problem of governance. Moreover, democracy furnishes a safety valve for discontent: those with complaints may or may not ever see relief of their grievances, but rather than wallowing in frustration, they are supplied with the opportunity to express themselves and potentially to change things in a direction they prefer.

In the end, William Riker's perspective on all this seems sound: democracy is characterized not

² See also Schmitter and Karl 1991, 83-84; Dahl 1956, ch. 4.

³ Forster 1951, 69-70. The most famous expression of this sentiment comes from Winston Churchill who, referring perhaps to Forster, observed in a House of Commons speech in November 1947 that "It has been said that Democracy is the worst form of government except all those other forms that have been tried from time to time" (1950, 200). Twenty years before Forster, William Ralph Inge had put it this way: "Democracy is a form of government which may be rationally defended, not as good, but as being less bad than any other" (1919, 5).

⁴ Alexis de Tocqueville, for example, argued in the 1830s that, particularly with respect to foreign policy, democracy "can only with great difficulty regulate the details of an important undertaking, persevere in a fixed design, and work out its execution in spite of serious obstacles. It cannot combine its measures with secrecy or await their consequences with patience" (1990, 235).

by "popular rule" but by various devices which provide for "an intermittent, sometimes random, even perverse, popular veto" which "has at least the potential of preventing tyranny and rendering officials responsive." Riker agrees that this is "a minimal sort of democracy," but he contends that it "is the only kind of democracy actually attainable" (1982, 244-46).

The rise of this superior gimmick has essentially been the result of a 200-year competition of ideas, not the necessary or incidental consequence of grander changes in social, cultural, economic, or historic patterns. Democracy's promoters needed, first, to undermine the competition, to seize upon, and to bring out its defects. Since democracy's chief competitor initially was monarchy, a rather bizarre form of government that had unaccountably been around for ever (but was to become extinguished in most of the world in just one century), this was not a terribly difficult task. They also needed to create demand for values which, if embraced, would rather automatically help their product to be accepted. For example, democracy will be aided (but its success will not necessarily be assured) if the notion becomes accepted that the government owes its existence and its perpetuation not to the dictates of God as expressed in the genetic process, but to the general consent and approval of the people at large. In addition, the product had to be market tested--put into practice somewhere, to show it could actually work. Promoters of democracy were lucky that they first test marketed their product in Britain and America (in the United States it was explicitly called "the American experiment") because, in the process, democracy came to be associated with countries which were held to be admirable--that is, which became fashion leaders or role models--for reasons that were often quite irrelevant to the institution itself. War also played a role. As European monarchy met its demise in World War I, Fascism and Nazism, together with Japanese militarism, died, bloodied and discredited, in World War II.

In the last 30 years democracy has gained particularly wide acceptance (Huntington 1991; Mueller 1999, 214-27). The promoters improved neither the product nor the packaging. What changed was the receptivity of the customers: democracy caught on, at least among political elites, as an idea whose time had come. Indeed, just about the only set of countries where democracy has yet to penetrate deeply are the Islamic ones. As Samuel Huntington has observed, Islam often associates democracy with the Western influences many in the religion oppose (1984, 216). Thus the elites in many Islamic countries specifically do not find the Western democracies to be attractive fashion leaders, even as those in, say, Hungary, do. However, something similar was once said about Catholicism. Moreover, where leaders have allowed elections in the Middle East, as in Algeria and Iran in 1997, the voters displayed considerable ability to differentiate and express their interest even though the choice of candidates and the freedom of speech was limited. And some Muslim states, such as Mali, Turkey, Pakistan, and Qatar have certainly been able to move substantially toward democracy. That democracy could become fashionable even in the Middle East is suggested by a comment by the rather progressive emir of Qatar. "Looking around the world," he has noticed, he sees the most progress in those countries which are "practicing democracy."⁵

Democratic development, then, has principally been a matter of convincing leaders to do democracy.⁶ In practice, it seems to be about as difficult to put on as a new suit of clothes, and it has spread not so much because it has been made cosmically inevitable by various economic or social developments, but because it has come into style: it's what just about everyone who is anyone is wearing this season. It is easy to establish and maintain because it is essentially based on giving people the freedom to complain--and, importantly, the freedom to organize with other complainers to attempt to

⁵ As interviewed on "60 Minutes," CBS, 3 August 2003. On Qatar, see also Jehl 1997. On Iran, see Bakhsh 1998.

⁶ On elite transformations, see Higley and Gunther 1992.

topple or favorably influence the government. Complaining comes easily to most. Thus, as Americans should surely know by now, any dimwit can do democracy.

Democracy can also be established by force. However, absent favorable market conditions, the forceful imposition of democracy has generally not worked very well. For example, the United States has repeatedly and often evangelically urged democracy upon its neighbors to the South, and it has often been quite prepared to use money (and sometimes military force) to gild the philosophic pill. Those efforts seem rarely to have made much lasting difference. Thus, in 1913 President Woodrow Wilson dramatically declared the United States to be the "champion" of democracy in the Americas and, to show he meant business, sent U.S. troops to Nicaragua, Haiti, and the Dominican Republic to establish democracy, but all three countries subsequently lapsed into extended dictatorships (Whitehead 1986, 6). Latin America's remarkable move toward democracy after 1975 was accomplished almost entirely by the people there themselves when market conditions improved.

However, when conditions are propitious, force may work. The times seem to have been right at the end of World War II in some places. At the war's end the victorious democracies set about foisting their form of government upon the portion of Germany they occupied and upon Italy, Austria, and Japan. By 1945, it must have seemed to the people of these countries that even democracy at its worst was better than the alternative that had just brought catastrophe upon them, and they took up--or lapsed into--democracy without a great deal of apparent effort. Similarly, when Panama's Manuel Noriega calmly stole an election that went against him in 1989, in the midst of Latin America's transition, he was deposed by an American military invasion and, liberated from this anachronistic tyrant, the country became a democracy. The United States also successfully imposed, or reimposed, democracy on Grenada in 1983. However, a somewhat similar process in Haiti in the 1990s met with far less success.

The democratic peace: faulty correlation

When ideas have filtered throughout the world in the last few hundred years, they have tended to do so in one direction. Without passing on the quality or value of the ideas so transmitted, it does seem that there has been, for better or worse, a long and fairly steady process of what is often called "Westernization": Taiwan has become more like Canada than Canada has become like Taiwan; Gabon has become more like Belgium than Belgium has become like Gabon (see also Nadelmann 1990, 484). Major ideas that have gone from the developed world to the less developed world include Christianity, the abolition of slavery, the acceptance of democratic institutions and Western economic and social forms, and the determined application of, and faith in, the scientific method. Not all of these have been fully or readily accepted, but the point is that the process has largely been unidirectional and that there has so far been little in the way of a reverse flow of ideas--the few that suggest themselves include cuisine, of course (including the use of MSG), karaoke, acupuncture, and some elements in the arts.

In the last couple of decades there has been a burgeoning and intriguing discussion about the connection between democracy and war aversion.⁷ Most notable has been the empirical observation that democracies have never, or almost never, gotten into a war with each other. This relationship seems more correlative than causal, however. Like many important ideas over the last few centuries, the idea that war is undesirable and inefficacious and the idea that democracy is a good form of government have largely followed the same trajectory: they were embraced first in northern Europe and North America and then gradually, with a number of traumatic setbacks, became more accepted elsewhere. In this view, the rise of democracy not only is associated with the rise of war aversion, but also with the decline of slavery, religion, capital punishment, and cigarette smoking, and with the growing acceptance of capitalism,

⁷ See, for example, Doyle 1986, Russett 1990, Singer and Wildavsky 1993, Russett and Oneal 2001.

scientific methodology, women's rights, environmentalism, abortion, and rock music.⁸

While democracy and war aversion have taken much the same trajectory, however, they have been substantially out of synchronization with each other: the movement toward democracy began about 200 years ago, but the movement against war really began only about 100 years ago (Mueller 1989, 2004). Critics of the democracy/peace connection often cite examples of wars or near-wars between democracies. Most of these took place before World War I--that is, before war aversion had caught on.⁹

A necessary, logical connection between democracy and war aversion, accordingly, is far from clear. Thus, it is often asserted that democracies are peaceful because they apply their domestic penchant for peaceful compromise (something, obviously, that broke down in the United States in 1861) to the international arena or because the structure of democracy requires decision-makers to obtain domestic approval.¹⁰ But authoritarian regimes must also necessarily develop skills at compromise in order to survive, and they all have domestic constituencies that must be serviced such as the church, the landed gentry, potential urban rioters, the nomenklatura, the aristocracy, party members, the military, prominent business interests, the police or secret police, lenders of money to the exchequer, potential rivals for the throne, the sullen peasantry.¹¹

Since World War I, the democracies in the developed world have been in the lead in rejecting war as a methodology. Some proponents of the democracy-peace connection suggest that this is because the democratic norm of non-violent conflict resolution has been externalized to the international arena. However, developed democracies have not necessarily adopted a pacifist approach, particularly after a version of that approach failed so spectacularly to prevent World War II from being forced upon them. In addition, they were willing actively to subvert or to threaten and sometimes apply military force when threats appeared to loom during the Cold War contest. At times this approach was used even against regimes that had some democratic credentials such as in Iran in 1953, Guatemala in 1954, Chile in 1973, and perhaps Nicaragua in the 1980s (Rosato 2003, 590-91). And, they have also sometimes used military force in their intermittent efforts to police the post-Cold War world (Mueller 2004, chs. 7, 8).

It is true that they have warred little or not at all against each other--and, since there were few democracies outside the developed world until the last quarter of the twentieth century, it is this statistical regularity that most prominently informs the supposed connection between democracy and peace. However, the developed democracies hardly needed democracy to decide that war among them was a bad idea.¹² In addition, they also adopted a live-and-let-live approach toward a huge number of dictatorships and other non-democracies that did not seem threatening during the Cold War--in fact, they often aided and embraced such regimes if they seemed to be on the right side in the conflict with Communism.

Moreover, the supposed penchant for peaceful compromise of democracies has not always served them well when confronted with civil war situations, particularly ones involving secessionist demands. The process broke down into civil warfare in democratic Switzerland in 1847 and savagely so in the United States in 1861. Democracies have also fought a considerable number of wars to retain colonial

⁸ On this process, see Mueller 1995, 181-82; 1999, ch. 8; Nadelmann 1990, 484.

⁹ For example, Layne 1994; Rosato 2003, 591-92; Elman 1997, chaps. 1-3; Pietrzyk 2002.

¹⁰ For a discussion, see Russett and Oneal 2001, 53-58.

¹¹ See also Rosato 2003, 593-94, 596-97.

¹² Nor is it likely they needed "American preponderance" to do so, as Rosato suggests (2003, 599-600).

possessions--six by France alone since World War II--and these, as James Fearon and David Laitin suggest, can in many respects be considered essentially to be civil wars (2003, 76). To be sure, democracies have often managed to deal with colonial problems peacefully, mostly by letting the colonies go. But authoritarian governments have also done so: the Soviet Union, for example, withdrew from his empire in Eastern Europe and then dissolved itself, all almost entirely without violence.

Thus, while democracy and war aversion have often been promoted by the same advocates, the relationship does not seem to be a causal one. And when the two trends are substantially out of step today, democracies will fight one another. Thus, it is not at all clear that telling the elected hawks in the Jordanian parliament that Israel is a democracy will dampen their hostility in the slightest. And various warlike sentiments could be found in the elected parliaments in the former Yugoslavia in the early 1990s or in India and then-democratic Pakistan when these two countries engaged in armed conflict in 1999. If Argentina had been a democracy in 1982 when it seized the Falkland Islands (a very popular undertaking), it is unlikely that British opposition to the venture would have been much less severe. "The important consideration," observes Miriam Fendius Elman after surveying the literature on the subject, does not seem to be "whether a country is democratic or not, but whether its ruling coalition is committed to peaceful methods of conflict resolution." As she further points out, the countries of Latin America and most of Africa have engaged in very few international wars even without the benefit of being democratic (for a century before its 1982 adventure, Argentina, for example, fought none at all) (1997, 484, 496). (Interestingly, although there has also been scarcely any warfare between Latin American states for over 100 years or among Arab ones or European ones for more than 50--in all cases whether democratic or not--this impressive phenomenon has inspired remarkably few calls for worldwide Arab colonialism or for the systematic transplant of remaining warlike states to Latin America or Europe.)

And, of course, the long peace enjoyed by developed countries since World War II includes not only the one that has prevailed between democracies, but also the even more important one between the authoritarian east and the democratic west. Even if there is some connection, whether causal or atmospheric, between democracy and peace, it cannot explain this latter phenomenon.

Democracy and the democratic peace become mystiques: the role of philosophers and divines

Democracy has been a matter of debate for several millennia as philosophers and divines have speculated about what it is, what it might become, and what it ought to be. Associated with these speculations has been a tendency to emboss the grubby gimmick with something of a mystique. Of particular interest for present purposes is the fanciful notion that democracy does not simply express and aggregate preferences, but actually somehow *creates* (or should create) them. In addition, the (rough) correlation between democracy and war aversion has also been elevated into a causal relationship.

Creating policy preferences

Democratic philosophers and divines have often come to conclude that, rather than simply being a process of interest aggregation, democracy actually creates, inspires, or requires certain modes of thought or policy preferences. However, although democracy does by definition require that opposition and contention and special interest activity be peacefully preserved, and although it may be a (comparatively) desirable gimmick for aggregating policy preferences, it does not create the policy preferences themselves. This should be clear from experience.

Over the course of time, democracies variously have banned liquor and allowed it to flow freely; raised taxes to confiscatory levels and lowered them to next to nothing; refused women the right to vote and granted it to them; despoiled the environment and sought to protect it; subsidized certain economic groups and withdrawn subsidies; stifled labor unions and facilitated their creation; banned abortion and permitted and subsidized the operation; tolerated drug use and launched massive "wars" upon the

practice; embraced slavery and determinedly sought to eradicate it; persecuted homosexuals and repealed or systematically failed to enforce the laws that did so; seized private property and turned over state assets to the private sector; discriminated against racial groups and given them preferential treatment; banned pornography and allowed it to be distributed freely; and tolerated the organization of peaceful political opposition and voted themselves out of existence by withdrawing the right to do.

Moreover, they have welcomed or committed naked aggression and fought to reverse it; devolved into vicious civil war and avoided it by artful compromise; embraced colonialism and rejected the practice entirely; tolerated and sometimes caused humanitarian disaster in other parts of the world and sought to alleviate it; adopted protectionist economic policies and been free traders; and gone to war with enthusiasm and self-righteousness and sought to outlaw the institution.¹³

Causing peace

Philosophers and divines not only encased democracy in a vaporously idealistic or ideological mystique, they have done the same for the democracy-peace correlation. After all, if correlation is taken to be cause, it follows that peace will envelop the earth right after democracy does. Accordingly for those who value peace, the promotion of democracy, by force or otherwise, becomes a central mission.

This notion has been brewing for some time. Woodrow Wilson's famous desire to "make the world safe for democracy" was in large part an antiwar motivation. He and many others in Britain, France, and the United States had become convinced that, as Britain's Lloyd George put it, "Freedom is the only warranty of Peace" (Rappard 1940, 42-44). With the growth in the systematic examination of the supposed peace-democracy connection by the end of the century, such certain pronouncements became commonplace. Notes Bruce Russett, sentiments like those have "issued from the White House ever since the last year of the Reagan administration" (2005, 395).

Foolish consistency, fatal consequence: the role of little statesmen

It was left to George W. Bush to put mystique into practice. As he stressed to reporter Bob Woodward during the runup to his war with Iraq, "I say that freedom is not America's gift to the world. Freedom is God's gift to everybody in the world. I believe that. As a matter of fact, I was the person that wrote that line, or said it. I didn't write it, I just said it in a speech. And it became part of the jargon. And I believe that. And I believe we have a duty to free people. I would hope we wouldn't have to do it militarily, but we have a duty" (2004, 88-89). And in an address shortly before the war, he confidently proclaimed, "The world has a clear interest in the spread of democratic values, because stable and free nations do not breed the ideologies of murder. They encourage the peaceful pursuit of a better life" (quoted, Frum and Perle 2003, 158).

In this, Bush was only trying to be consistent (foolishly so, perhaps, but nonetheless), a quality that endears him to so many of his followers. If democracy is so wonderful, and if in addition it inevitably brings both peace and creates favorable policy preferences, then forcefully jamming it down the throats of the decreasing number of nondemocratic countries in the world must be all to the good. He had already done something like that, with a fair amount of success, in Afghanistan; his father had crisply slapped Panama into shape; Reagan had straightened out Grenada; and Bill Clinton had invaded Haiti and bombed the hell out of Bosnia and Serbia with the same lofty goal at least partly in mind. Further, the Australians had recently done it in East Timor and the British in Sierra Leone (Mueller 2004, ch. 7).

Critics have argued that democracy can't be spread at the point of a gun, but these cases, as well as the experience with the defeated enemies after World War II, suggests that it sometimes can be,

¹³ See also Schweller 2002, 184; Rosato 2003, 594-96.

something that supporters of the administration were quick to point out (Kaplan and Kristol 2003, 98-99. Frum and Perle 2003, 163).

Even Russett, a prominent democratic-peace analyst, eventually, if rather reluctantly, concedes the possibility (2005, 398-400; see also Peceny and Pickering 2006).

However, Bush and some of his supporters--particularly those in the neo-Conservative camp--foolishly, if consistently, extrapolated to develop an even more extravagant mystique. Not only would the invasion crisply bring viable democracy to Iraq, but success there would have a domino effect: democracy would eventually spread from its Baghdad bastion to envelop the Middle East. This would not only bring (it needs hardly to be said) blissful peace in its wake (because, as we know, democracies never fight each other), but the new democracies would also adopt all sorts of other policies as well including, in particular, love of, or at least much diminished hostility toward, the United States and Israel (because, as we know, the democratic process itself has a way of making people think nice thoughts). Vice President Dick Cheney attests, reports Woodward, to Bush's "abiding faith that if people were given freedom and democracy, that would begin a transformation process in Iraq that in years ahead would change the Middle East" (Woodward 2004, 428).

Moreover, since force can establish democracy and since democracies rather automatically embrace peaceful and generally nice thoughts, after Iraq was forced to enter the democratic (and hence peaceful and nice-thinking) camp, military force would be deftly applied as necessary to speed up the domino-toppling process wherever necessary in the area. Such extravagant, even romantic, visions fill war-advocating neo-Conservative fulminations. In their book, The War Over Iraq, Lawrence Kaplan and William Kristol apply due reverence to the sanctified correlation--"democracies rarely, if ever, wage war against one another"--and then extrapolate fancifully to conclude that "The more democratic the world becomes, the more likely it is to be congenial to America" (2003, 104-5). And war architect Paul Wolfowitz also seems to have believed that the war would become an essential stage on the march toward freedom and democracy (Woodward 2004, 428). In a 2004 article proposing what he calls "democratic realism," Charles Krauthammer urges taking "the risky but imperative course of trying to reorder the Arab world," with a "targeted, focused" effort that would (however) be "limited" to "that Islamic crescent stretching from North Africa to Afghanistan" (2004 23, 17). And in a speech in late 2006, he continued to champion what he calls "the only plausible answer," an ambitious undertaking that involves "changing the culture of that area, no matter how slow and how difficult the process. It starts in Iraq and Lebanon, and must be allowed to proceed." Any other policy, he has divined, "would ultimately bring ruin not only on the U.S. but on the very idea of freedom." And Kaplan and Kristol stress that "The mission begins in Baghdad, but does not end there....War in Iraq represents but the first installment...Duly armed, the United States can act to secure its safety and to advance the cause of liberty--in Baghdad and beyond" (2003, 124-25).

With that, laments Russett, democracy and democratic peace theory became "Bushwhacked" (2005). Democratic processes of pressure and policy promotion were deftly used by a dedicated group to wage costly war to establish both peace and congenial policy in the otherwise intractable Middle East. It could be argued, then, that the little statesmen of the Bush administration had the courage of the mystical convictions of the democracy and democratic peace philosophers and divines.

However, although Bush's simple faith in democracy may perhaps have its endearing side, how deeply that passion is (or was) really shared by his neo-Conservative allies could be questioned. That is, did they really believe that the United States which, as Francis Fukuyama notes, "cannot eliminate poverty or raise test scores in Washington, DC," could "bring democracy to a part of the world that has stubbornly resisted it and is virulently anti-American to boot" (2004, 60)?

Although they hype democracy, David Frum and Richard Perle carefully caution that "in the Middle East, democratization does not mean calling immediate elections and then living with whatever happens next," but rather "opening political spaces," "creating representative institutions," "deregulating the economy," "shrinking and reforming the Middle Eastern public sector," and "perhaps above all" changing the educational system (2003, 162-63). Similarly, Krauthammer's "democratic realism" approach doesn't seem, actually, to stress democracy all that much. (Its wildly extravagant calls for massive warfare over a very substantial portion of the globe--only "limited" in comparison to Bush's exuberant crusadery--suggests it is rather lacking in realism as well.)

Most interesting is a call issued by neo-Conservatism's champion guru, Norman Podhoretz, in the runup to the war. He strongly advocated expanding Bush's "axis of evil" beyond Iraq, Iran, and North Korea "at a minimum" to embrace "Syria and Lebanon and Libya, as well as 'friends' of America like the Saudi royal family and Egypt's Hosni Mubarak, along with the Palestinian Authority." However, Podhoretz proved to be less mystical (or simply less devious) than other neocons about democracy by pointedly adding "the alternative to these regimes could easily turn out to be worse, even (or especially) if it comes into power through democratic elections." Accordingly, he emphasized, "it will be necessary for the United States to impose a new political culture on the defeated parties."¹⁴ (Although Podhoretz may be more realistic than others about democracy, his extravagant notion that the US would somehow have the capacity to impose a new political culture throughout the non-Israeli Middle East is, like Krauthammer's comparable vision, so fantastic as to border on the deranged.)

Indeed, after one looks beneath the boilerplate about democracy and the democratic peace, what seems to be principally motivating at least some of these people is a strong desire for the United States to use military methods to make the Middle East finally and once and for all safe for Israel (Drew 2003, 22; Fukuyama 2004; Roy 2003). All of them are devoted supporters of Israel, and they seem to display far less interest in advocating the application of military force to deal with unsavory dictatorial regimes in other parts of the world that do not seem to threaten Israel--such as Burma, Zimbabwe, Sudan, Haiti, or Cuba.

As John Mearsheimer and Stephen Walt point out in their discussion of what they call "The Israel Lobby" (2006), such policy advocacy is entirely appropriate and fully democratic: "There is nothing improper about American Jews and their Christian allies attempting to sway US policy" (although they also note that Jewish Americans generally actually were less likely to support the war than was the rest of the population). Democracy, as noted earlier, is centrally characterized by the contestings of isolated, self-serving, and often tiny special interest groups and their political and bureaucratic allies. What happened with Iraq policy was democracy in full flower.

It does not follow, of course, that policies so generated are necessarily wise, and Mearsheimer and Walt consider that the results of much of the Lobby's efforts--certainly in this case--have been detrimental to American (and even Israeli) national interest, although their contentions that the Lobby was "critical" or "a key factor" in the decision to go to war or that that decision would "have been far less likely" without the Lobby's efforts would need more careful analysis. It is also their view that the Lobby has too much influence over U.S. foreign policy--a conclusion, as it happens, that is shared by 68 percent

¹⁴ Podhoretz 2002, 28, emphasis in the original. At a speech given at the Army War College as Baghdad was falling in 2003, neocon Richard Perle triumphantly issued a similar litany of targets, adding for good measure, and possibly in jest, France and the State Department. He also suggested that "a short message" should be delivered to other hostile regimes in the area: "You're next" (Mearsheimer and Walt 2006).

of over 1000 international relations scholars who responded to a 2006 survey.¹⁵

However that may be, it could certainly be maintained that, as an Israeli scholar puts it, the United States by its action eliminated what Israel considered at the time to be a most "threatening neighbor" (Baram 2007). Following this line of thinking, then, the Israel Lobby and its allies skillfully and legitimately used democracy to Bushwhack the democracy and democratic peace mystiques as part of its effort to nudge, urge, or impel the United States into a war that, as it happens, has proven to be its greatest foreign debacle in its history after Vietnam.

It should be noted, however, that, although Bush and Cheney and at least some of the neocons may actually have believed their pre-war fantasies about the blessings that imposed democracy would in turn impose on the Middle East, the arguments they proffered for going to war stressed national security issues, not democracy ones--the notion that Saddam's Iraq was a threat to the United States because of its development, or potential development, of weapons of mass destruction and of its connections to terrorist groups out to get the United States (Roy 2003). The democracy argument rose in significance, notes Russett, only after those security arguments for going to war proved to be empty (2005, 396). As Fukuyama has crisply put it, a prewar request to spend "several hundred billion dollars and several thousand American lives in order to bring democracy to...Iraq" would "have been laughed out of court" (2005). Moreover, when given a list of foreign policy goals, the American public has rather consistently ranked the promotion of democracy lower--often much lower--than such goals as combating international terrorism, protecting American jobs, preventing the spread of nuclear weapons, strengthening the United Nations, and protecting American businesses abroad (see Figure 1).

Nonetheless, support for the Iraq War has eroded rather slower than what one might have expected given the demise of the main reasons for going to war and the subsequent unexpectedly high American casualty levels (Mueller 2005, 45). This may reflect the fact that many people still connect the effort there to the campaign--or "war"--against terror, an enterprise that continues to enjoy huge support, and, in addition, the toppling of Saddam Hussein remains a singular accomplishment, one the American people had been spoiling for since the Gulf War of 1991 (Larson and Savych 2005, 132-37). Some of it, however, may derive from the fact that the American public, despite its pervasive cynicism about democracy in practice, has substantially bought into some of the democratic mystique so sonorously spun out by democratic philosophers and divines over the decades.

Saving democracy and peace from little statesmen, philosophers, and divines

The cynicism (or realism) about democracy expressed by Podhoretz has proved to be sound, of course. As peace-builders in Bosnia have repeatedly discovered, elections lead to the rise of people who can best engage and manipulate the political process to attract voters, and the winners are not necessarily the ones preferred by intervening foreign well-wishers.

Thus if the people detest Israel and the United States and let that passion influence their vote, they will elect politicians who voice--indeed, stoke--hatred for Israel and the United States. Such hatreds have been very much enhanced by the American and British invasion of Iraq and by Israel's military actions against Palestinians during an internal rebellion between 2000 and 2005 and later against Lebanon in 2006. As Gregory Gause (2006) has pointed out, nearly two-thirds of those elected to the Iraq parliament in late 2005 explicitly advocated a stronger role for Islam in politics, Muslim Brotherhood candidates did very well in Egyptian elections at the same time and would have done even better had it not been for great electoral restrictions imposed by the government, and the militantly anti-Israel group,

¹⁵ Maliniak et al. 2007, 66. The complete survey results are at www.wm.edu/TRIP.

Hamas, triumphed in elections in Palestine in January 2006.

This is not to argue, however, that efforts to force democracy on Iraq have necessarily failed. Using the minimal--but realistic--definitions of democracy proposed at the outset of this paper, Iraq is acting very much like a standard democracy, albeit one with an exceptionally high crime and violence rate. Politicians are squabbling continuously, interest groups are seeking to loot the public treasury as best they can, people are rather freely expressing themselves even where this may entail the airing of ethnic and racial hatreds (those who use violence to do so are not democratic, however), and politicians are seeking to manipulate the system to advantage their supporters.¹⁶ If the violence eventually comes under control, it is entirely possible that the country will remain democratic--though the demand for security may lead to a takeover by a strongman welcomed by the desperate population. However, even if democracy does survive in Iraq, it is to be expected that those in charge will remain loyal to the wishes of their constituencies and that may well mean, as Podhoretz suggests, intensified hostility to Israel and ungrateful animosity toward Iraq's naive, clumsy, and destructive democratic liberators.

On the brighter side, there is at least some hope the disastrous experience in Iraq will terminally undercut both the democracy mystique and the democratic peace mystique that are so adored by philosophers, divines, and little statesmen. There are some signs that this may already be in process. Before the Egyptian election administration spokespeople made innumerable speeches seeking to prod that country into a more democratic direction, but this cheerleading pretty much stopped after that event with its discouraging, if democratic, results. It is all rather similar to the non-reaction of George H. W. Bush when the Algerian military in 1992 cancelled elections likely to bring Muslim fundamentalists to power there shortly after Bush had taken deep umbrage, and instituted sanctions, against Haiti where the military had done much the same thing.

There is, however, a considerable danger that the disastrous experience with what was prominently billed as democracy-promotion in the Middle East will become a major setback to the rise of democracy there. The unwillingness of the United States to accept the results of elections in Egypt and especially in Palestine because they didn't come out right has led to understandable, and essentially correct, accusations of hypocrisy. And an additional danger is that the disastrous chaos visited upon Iraq by the American invasion will come to be associated with democracy, substantially discrediting the institution in the area.

In the end, maybe someone will explore the possibility that the supposed democracy/peace connection has been reversed in all this. The correlation between democracy and peace may not mean that democracy causes peace, but that peace causes, or at any rate facilitates, democracy--at least when other conditions are right.

This already seems to hold for the relationship between peace and trade. Although expanding trade and interactions may enhance or reinforce the process, attitude toward war is likely to be the key explanatory variable in the relationship. Thus, it has frequently been observed that militarized disputes between countries reduce trade between them (Pollins 1989a; Pollins 1989b; Li and Sacko 2002). By contrast, if a couple of countries that have previously enjoyed a conflictual relationship lapse into a comfortable peace and become extremely unlikely to get into war, businesses in both places may well become inclined to explore the possibilities for mutually beneficial exchange.

Similarly, although international institutions and norms often stress peace, they, like expanded trade flows, are not so much the cause of peace as its result. Many of the institutions that have been

¹⁶ Alternatively, using the notions sketched out in note 1, Iraq could be considered mostly to be in a state of anarchy because of the inability of the government sufficiently to police political violence.

fabricated in Europe--particularly ones like the coal and steel community that were so carefully forged between France and Germany in the years following World War II--have been specifically designed to reduce the danger of war between erstwhile enemies. However, since it appears that no German or Frenchman in any walk of life at any time since 1945 has ever advocated a war between the two countries, it is difficult to see why the institutions should get the credit for the peace that has flourished between those two countries for the last half century and more.¹⁷ They are among the consequences of the peace that has enveloped Western Europe since 1945, not its cause. As Richard Betts puts it for institutions of collective security, "peace is the premise of the system, not the product."¹⁸

Something like that may hold for the democracy/peace connection: peace causes--or, more likely, facilitates--democracy (see also Pietrzyk 2002, Payne 2006). Countries often restrict or even abandon democracy when domestic instability or external military threat seems to loom. An Iraqi who had been imprisoned by the Saddam Hussein regime and who gleefully helped pull down a statue of the tyrant in 2003 became disillusioned by subsequent calamity and concluded in 2007, "We regret that Saddam Hussein is gone, no matter how much we hated him" (Raghavan 2007). And after the chaos of the 1990s, Russians continue highly to approve of their order-providing, if democracy-eroding president, Vladimir Putin.

By the same token, when they are comfortably at peace, people may come to realize that they no longer require a strongman to provide order and can afford to embrace the comparative benefits of democracy even if those might come with somewhat heightened uncertainty and possibly with the potential for less reliable leadership.

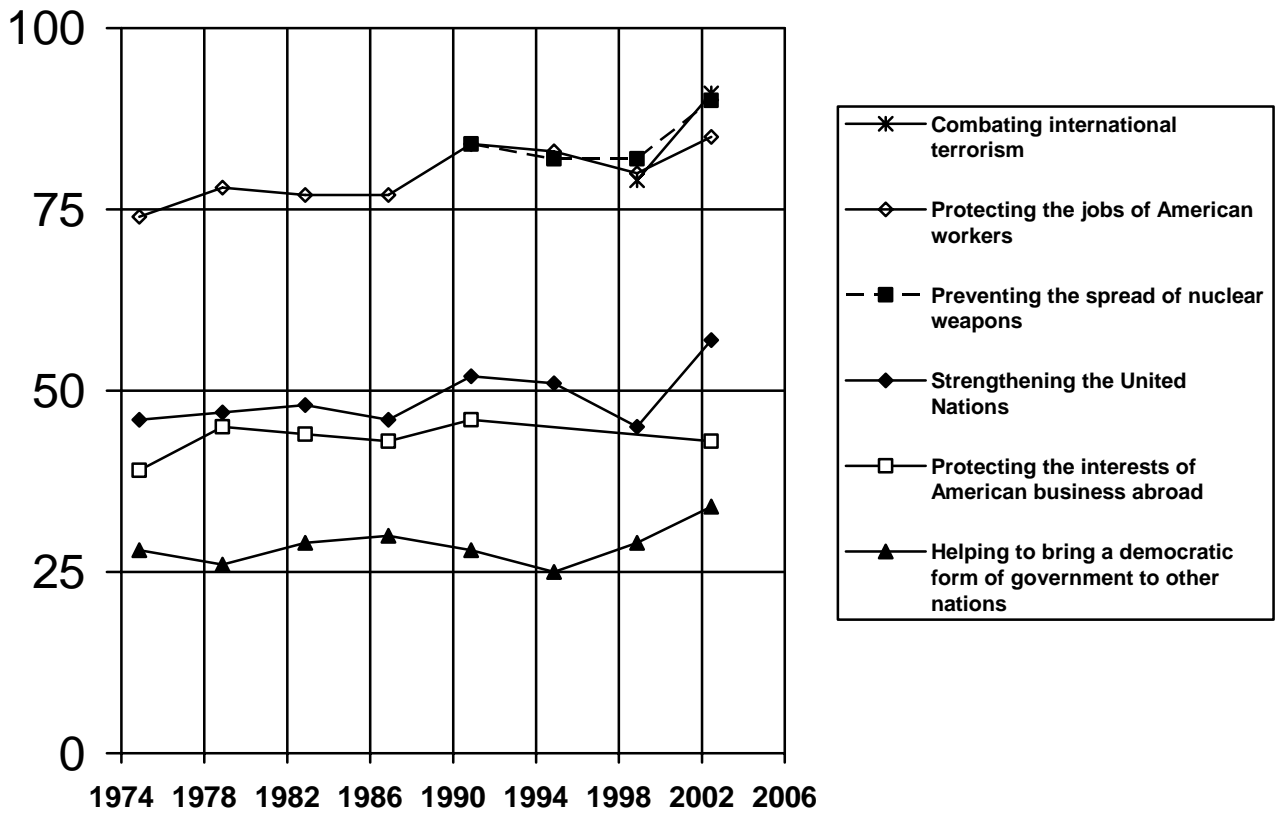
If this is so, the prospects for continued democratization seem to be quite good. As it happens, there has been a remarkable decline in the incidence of war--both civil and international--over the last decade to the point where, outside of Iraq, scarcely any exist anywhere in the world (Mueller 2007). That is, although there has been a considerable increase in the number of democratic countries in the world as noted earlier, trends in war aversion seem to have considerably outrun it. Thus if this pattern holds and if fashionable yearnings for democracy continue to grow, peace may help these yearnings to be realized. If so, however, this desirable development is not likely to owe much to little statesmen, philosophers, and divines and to the damaging and sometimes fatal mystiques they cherish and nurture.

¹⁷ But they do: "The creation of a security community has made armed conflict between France and Germany...unthinkable" (Russett and Oneal 2001, 158). See also Ikenberry 2001, ch. 6.

¹⁸ Betts 1992, 23-24, emphasis removed. See also Schweller 2001, 183.

Figure 1
Foreign Policy Goals

percent saying "very important"



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