



Why Promoting Democracy is Smart and Right

Center for American Progress and Center for Strategic and International Studies

The Center for American Progress and the Center for Strategic and International Studies released a bipartisan statement of principles signed by members of a high-level working group to emphasize the role of the United States in supporting democratic reforms and inclusive societies abroad as a central pillar of our national security strategy. The statement recommends more partnerships with nongovernmental institutions and our international allies to further this aim.

A freer and more democratic world helps create a virtuous circle of improved security, stronger economic growth, and durable alliances—all of which better serve the long-term interests of the United States. Accountable, effective, and democratic governments make better and more reliable trading partners and provide the cornerstones of international stability. Given their modest scale and numerous benefits, America's official investments in promoting democracy and governance abroad deserve to be sustained even as we deal with very real budget challenges in this current era of fiscal austerity.

Because of their benefits to and strong reflection of America's longest-standing values, international democracy and governance programs have historically enjoyed bipartisan support. In the past decade, however, this support has undergone strain in the wake of the war in Iraq. Given the recent democratic openings in the Middle East, Africa, and Southeast Asia, however, we are again reminded of the value of people-driven programs to assist civil society and accountable governance. Assistance from the United States and others in the international community is an important tool in helping countries to achieve their own aspirations for more representative governance.

As Nobel Prize-winning economist Amartya Sen and others have noted, economic and political freedoms are mutually reinforcing, and broader democratic promotion can have a powerful effect in making overall development efforts more effective. A number of important studies further substantiate the central importance of political freedom and good governance in promoting long-term economic prosperity while advancing U.S. priorities.

A variety of countries are seeking to transition to democracy and are actively seeking America's help to establish free media; attack corruption; manage public resources

effectively; establish property rights; protect the rights of individuals, religious groups, and minorities; ensure the right to petition their elected officials; organize political campaigns; ensure free and fair elections; and establish think tanks. Other newer democracies are trying to deliver on the promise of democracy by governing justly and in ways that promote meaningful economic opportunities and growth. If they fail, the cause of democracy will be set back, and we will live in a darker world. Women, minority, and religious groups are seeking our help to ensure that their voices are heard. Finally, there are a number of countries that continue to repress their own citizens in ways that are almost unthinkable in the 21st century. We need to work with labor unions, church groups, civil society organizations, the private sector, dissident groups, and diasporas to ensure that positive change happens and that societies can create governments that are responsive, accountable, and respectful of human rights.

As we move forward under a second Obama administration, there is an opportunity to reincorporate democracy and governance into the development dialogue in a more central way, and we look forward to helping to do so. Promoting free and accountable governance is both morally and substantively imperative. We, the undersigned, fully support a responsible approach to America's budget challenges that preserves our important and longstanding leadership in nurturing democracy around the globe. With continuing fiscal austerity all programs are at risk, but democracy and governance assistance should be protected in this process. These expenditures are not only good for the recipients, but they also support the American national interest as well.

Madeleine Albright (Co-Chair), Former Secretary of State

Vin Weber (Co-Chair), Former Congressman (R-MN); former Chair of National Endowment for Democracy

Morton Abramowitz, Former Ambassador to Turkey and Thailand

Brian Atwood, Former Administrator, U.S. Agency for International Development

Tom Carothers, Vice President for Studies, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace

Norm Coleman, Former Senator (R-MN)

Lorne Craner, President, International Republican Institute; former Assistant Secretary of State for Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor

Larry Diamond, Senior Fellow, the Hoover Institution

Paula Dobriansky, Former Under Secretary of State for Democracy and Global Affairs

Martin Frost, Former Congressman (D-TX)

Bill Galston, Former Deputy Assistant to President Clinton for Domestic Policy

Michael Gerson, Former Chief Speechwriter for President George W. Bush

Stephen Hadley, Former Assistant to President George W. Bush for National Security Affairs

Andrew Natsios, Former Administrator, U.S. Agency for International Development

John Norris, Executive Director, Sustainable Security and Peacebuilding Initiative, Center for American Progress

John Podesta, Chair, Center for American Progress; former Chief of Staff to President Bill Clinton

Daniel Runde, William A. Schreyer Chair in Global Analysis, Center for Strategic and International Studies

Steve Sestanovich, Former Senior Director for Policy Development, National Security Council

Anne-Marie Slaughter, Former Director of Policy Planning, U.S. Department of State

Jennifer Windsor, Former Executive Director of Freedom House; former Deputy Assistant Administrator and Director, Center for Democracy and Governance, U.S. Agency for International Development

Ken Wollack, President, National Democratic Institute

Statement of Principles: Democracy, Democratic Governance, and Transparent Institutions in the American Interest

Center for American Progress and the Center for Strategic and International Studies

As the events of the Arab Spring demonstrate, there is a growing sense of urgency among peoples around the world to participate in open and free societies. At the same time, the United States faces a critical juncture: Following the election, Congress narrowly avoided the fiscal cliff, pushing difficult budget decisions back by just a few short months. Regardless, our national support for democracy and governance assistance overseas must be protected. Given their modest scale and numerous benefits, America's official investments in promoting democracy and governance abroad deserve to be sustained even as we deal with very real budget challenges in this current era of fiscal austerity.

Investments in democracy and governance through the U.S. government's foreign assistance budget play a critical role in America's security, shared global prosperity, and moral imperative, and they boast a long history of bipartisan support. Today's "Three Ds" of U.S. international engagement should acknowledge this critical role and become "Four Ds": defense, diplomacy, development, and democracy. Our foreign assistance budget should reflect these priorities. We, the undersigned, recognize the vitality of American investments in democracy and governance—to national security, to foreign relations, and to the global economy—and we seek to sustain and protect our investments in the democracy and governance sector.

In recent years democracy and governance funding became a subject of some controversy in certain circles on both sides of the political aisle. Some shied away from democracy promotion, associating the terminology with the controversy over the Iraq war. Others were tempted by isolationism, expressing broader weariness about maintaining America's engagement in the world, and still others became nostalgic for unsustainable arrangements with autocratic regimes in the Middle East.

Nevertheless, the democracy and governance sector continues to enjoy bipartisan support, as it has for many years. President Ronald Reagan, who fostered the creation of the National Endowment for Democracy to ensure ongoing American support for democratic principles, believed that the United States was obligated to "take actions to

assist the campaign for democracy,” and that these actions were vital to combat the spread of communism abroad. During his presidency, Jimmy Carter demonstrated a dedication to the promotion of human rights; he continues his personal support with the Carter Center’s mediation and election-observing programs. Promoting democracy abroad was one of the three central goals of President Bill Clinton’s National Security Strategy of Engagement and Enlargement. And in the wake of 9/11, President George W. Bush saw the spread of democracy as a vital element in the war against terrorism. President Barack Obama gave concrete expression to his public commitment to democratic principles by supporting the democratic aspirations of citizens in Egypt and Libya, among other places.

We are at a critical juncture not only in the history of the United States, but in the history of human freedom, with pressing challenges that need to be addressed and opportunities that we should urgently seize. The recent democratic opening in Burma, the presence of both democratic progress and conflict in Africa, ongoing popular unrest in Iran, and the volatile and complex changes in the Middle East present the United States with challenges and opportunities to help shape a freer world—and a freer world directly benefits our own security, prosperity, and international standing. If we do not remain engaged and sustain our investments, however, we not only jeopardize the chances of those pushing for greater freedom in their countries, but we also risk forsaking the benefits to the United States that accompany increased freedom abroad. The returns in U.S. security alone are tremendous, especially considering the small scale of investments made to promote and maintain global stability.

The pace of technological change makes democracy support even more vital, in both closed societies and also emerging and nascent democracies. Autocrats have become more sophisticated in using new technologies to repress their citizens. Surveillance and monitoring of social media have been used to identify, map, and track democracy activists and to suppress domestic political reform. While technology has the potential to allow citizens broader access to information and to connect people around the globe, autocrats have increasingly used a host of sophisticated technologies to filter and censor information and online speech. The use of these tools has also been the subject of authoritarian learning, with Iran providing technology and assistance in Syria to stifle citizens who have risen up against the Assad regime. Those who seek to remain in power against the will of the people have become adept at tracking activists, jamming communications, and offering propaganda via social media.

On the positive side, technology has opened a world of possibility for improved citizen engagement in democratic politics by making it easier for citizens to monitor elections, access information about their governments, express their views, and organize politically. Initiatives such as the Open Government Partnership and the improved transparency that they foster can strengthen public integrity and government accountability, as well as improve service delivery and foster economic development. At the same time, technology provides new challenges to transitional democracies. While social media was widely used by

democracy activists in the Middle East to organize protests against authoritarian regimes, in order for democracy to take root, popular demands for political participation must ultimately be channeled from the street to democratically elected representative institutions. These institutions must be able to effectively aggregate interests, engage in deliberative discourse, and find areas of compromise. Technology can empower citizens to have a voice in their government, and the institutions of representative democracy must find ways to utilize this technology and other means to channel and respond to citizens' demands.

In many parts of the world, U.S. investments are pivotal in effecting improvements in democracy and governance. Although the resources that the United States allocates to these endeavors are quite limited, together with our strategic partners—other governments, intergovernmental organizations, and nongovernmental organizations—we ensure that our investments generate the maximum impact for each assistance dollar while at the same time maintaining some influence and control over the programs we fund. These partnerships also soften any impression that the United States is seeking to export its own system, rather than supporting the people's own desire for a voice. Even alongside the vital investments of other bilateral and multilateral donors and critical philanthropic dollars, U.S. funding is often necessary to reach the minimum level of investment needed to succeed in politically complicated or risky situations. The U.S. government is often the only funder who has the will, the ability, and the stamina to cover the resource gap.

Democracy is a process, not an event. The United States needs to take a longer view of these investments. The advent of democracy changes people, but that change is not instantaneous. That societal transformation can take 10 years, 15 years, or even longer, and auditors, evaluators, and diplomats need to accept more realistic timelines in achieving these goals. The long-term challenge is to help fledgling democracies deliver better lives for their citizens, thereby building support for democratic governance that prevents alternatives from gaining ground.

American investments in democracy and governance matter. A comprehensive 2006 study completed by broad collaboration between USAID and Professors Steven E. Finkel, Aníbal Pérez-Liñán, and Mitchell A. Seligson examined the effects of U.S. foreign assistance on democracy building from 1990 to 2003 and found that U.S. democracy and governance programs led to statistically significant improvements in democracy worldwide. Of course, the United States cannot bring about democracy and good governance by itself; we must work with multiple elements in societies seeking to bring about that change. The United States has a broad set of partners in the international community that bring many assets to the table to help in this great challenge, including civil society groups, religious leaders, and our traditional allies.

We define democracy as a government characterized by an inclusive and meaningful competition for political power, a high level of political participation among citizens, and political and civil freedom. We define good governance, equally important to the

success of a society, as the mechanisms by which a country's economic, political, and social authority is apportioned and exercised, and the institutions available to citizens to express their opinions, exercise their rights, and fulfill their obligations. Sometimes societies can improve the quality of their governance while remaining unfree, such as a number of countries in Asia. But these examples are rare, and improved governance in the absence of democracy will be short lived. In this interconnected world, the desire for human dignity, freedom, and political voice is universal. In the long run, the policy of the United States should be to support democratic governance and strengthen those institutions that support economic and political liberty. Policy reform, the strengthening of civil society, and partnerships with political parties, parliaments, labor, business groups, the media, and courts are unglamorous but critical investments. U.S. policy should prioritize reducing corruption and increasing transparency.

Two of the challenges in ensuring adequate support for these investments within the United States are that it takes a long time to bring about change and that the changes are technically complex and the outcomes less immediate than those of other investments, such as providing food aid or medicine for the treatment and prevention of disease. Nevertheless, studies have also found that democratic practices and institutions matter—and America has experience supporting the development of these practices and institutions around the world. Outside expertise, training, and funding are critical for creating, building, and shaping institutions in ways that are accountable to their publics, transparent, and deliver a variety of critical public goods. The United Nations Development Programme's landmark 2002 Human Development Report rightfully concludes that democratic participation is a critical end of human development as well as a means of achieving it.

As Nobel Prize-winning economist Amartya Sen and others have noted, economic and political freedoms are mutually reinforcing, and broader democratic promotion can have a powerful effect in making overall development efforts more effective. Studies have shown that political and economic freedom can go hand in hand and that a freer world is often a more prosperous world. In *The Democracy Advantage: How Democracies Promote Prosperity and Peace*, Mort Halperin, Joseph Siegle, and Michael Weinstein examined 50 countries—both democratic and undemocratic—and found overwhelming evidence that democracy supports development and reduces the likelihood of violent conflict. In that vein, Steve Radelet's 2010 book, *Emerging Africa: How 17 Countries Are Leading the Way*, looked at the track records of 17 high-performing sub-Saharan African countries and found that they are challenging the traditional understanding of African regional development by making significant, if oft-overlooked, progress. Among several key differences, most of these high-performing countries were democratic and enjoyed comparatively good governance.

One of the challenges for the United States and other countries is to promote cooperation between those who seek increased trade and support for private-sector-led growth and those who work in the related areas of democracy and governance. In many aid bureaucracies, these sectors are stovepiped even where they are inter-related. Economists, investors,

civil society experts, and political scientists must work more closely together. Democracy-support organizations must look more deeply at political economy issues in program design. At the same time, socioeconomic development assistance must also be designed to advance democratic development. While there is an opportunity for greater collaboration between economic and democratic development assistance, it is important that democracy support be both mainstreamed and supported separately. Democracy assistance involves much more than mechanisms for public input on development projects; it also requires sustained and broad engagement to support the development of the rule of law, democratic institutions, and inclusive political participation.

One of the big opportunities and challenges over the next 10 years is going to be how developing countries manage the coming bonanza—and possible curse—of managing extractive wealth. Recently, initiatives such as the Extractive Industry Transparency Initiative have helped countries tap into expertise and raised awareness on the potential and perils of this wealth. Some developing countries have managed their extractive wealth relatively well, including Chile, Botswana, and Timor Leste. Unfortunately, however, there are many examples of countries that have failed to manage these volatile resources, creating opportunities for corruption and profligacy. Societies which have more successfully managed this wealth will eventually be weaned off of foreign aid and have the chance to become middle- or even high-income societies.

Of particular importance are sustained investments to support political pluralism in the Arab World. Free elections are going to have a variety of outcomes, and whatever those outcomes are, governments need to support human rights and respect international agreements. If individual and collective rights are to be protected, international norms and agreements to be respected and held accountable, and pluralist institutions to be created, the international community must remain engaged and invest in the individuals and institutions that will form the backbone of emerging democratic societies. Helping parliamentarians become more responsive to citizen concerns, professionalizing civil society, building modern, moderate political parties, supporting independent media and think tanks, and improving the institutions that create the rules of the game for trade and investment are all critically important undertakings. Protection of ethnic and religious minorities is also important to U.S. policy, as support for tolerance and diversity will help ensure that the tenets of democracy are not broken by those seeking to impose their beliefs on others.

The United States is blessed with an ecosystem of partners in democracy assistance, starting with the National Endowment for Democracy and the so-called NED family of core institutions: the Solidarity Center; the Center for International Private Enterprise, or CIPE; the International Republican Institute, or IRI; and the National Democratic Institute, or NDI. Additionally, there is a broad network of specialty, nonprofit groups focused on electoral systems, independent media, and rule of law, all of which bring unique expertise to improving governance. Along with the NED and its core institutes, these organizations have estab-

lished extensive global relationships that can contribute to their democratic development efforts. This ecosystem is a strategic partner for the United States.

The United States should also work closely with religious organizations, as they often have a history of seeking greater human liberty and have reach and credibility that the United States alone often does not have.

In addition, the United States has many friends and allies who will be able to draw upon their own experience of building democratic governance institutions and serve as effective partners.

A large number of Eastern European countries, including Poland, Slovakia, and the Czech Republic, and other countries such as Spain, South Africa, Turkey, and Indonesia all have unique assets to bring to expanding human freedom and, in partnership with American groups, are already sharing their experiences and knowledge with others.

Therefore, we, the undersigned, believe that:

- The United States should view democracy and governance as a central pillar of national security.
- The United States should sustain our official investments in democracy and governance funding even as we deal with very real budget challenges.
- In contributing to democracy and governance, the United States should increase its focus on opportunities for synergistic partnerships with nongovernmental organizations.
- The United States should continue to work closely with our friends and allies, many of which have become democracies in living memory, and leverage their unique assets and experiences.
- The United States' investments in democracy and governance should reflect a strong understanding of democracy as a process, not an event, and support good governance of newly democratic societies.
- The United States should seek to promote inclusive societies that protect the rights of minorities—religious, ethnic, and otherwise.
- The United States should continue to support democratic reformers in autocratic regimes in Latin America, Eastern Europe, the broader Middle East, Africa, and Asia.
- The United States should maintain an adequate level of investment to support developing countries in effectively managing the upcoming natural resource boom.