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Tereza Klimešová

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Tereza Klimešová

**The Implications of the Intervention in Iraq for
the United States' Policy of Democracy
Promotion**

Master Thesis

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Author: Tereza Klimešová

Supervisor: PhDr. Jan Hornát, Ph.D.

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Declaration of Authorship

1. The author hereby declares that he compiled this thesis independently, using only the listed resources and literature.
2. The author hereby declares that all the sources and literature used have been properly cited.
3. The author hereby declares that the thesis has not been used to obtain a different or the same degree.

Prague, July 26, 2021



Signature

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Master Thesis Proposal

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Faculty of Social Sciences
Charles University in Prague



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Author:	Tereza Klimešová	Supervisor:	PhDr. Jan Hornát, Ph.D.
E-mail:	Klimesova.T@seznam.cz	E-mail:	jan.hornat@fsv.cuni.cz
Phone:	+420 773 667 588	Phone:	+420 778 701 145
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The United States' policy of democracy promotion after the intervention in Iraq.

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Topic characteristics / Research Question(s):

The aim of my thesis is to analyze the implications of the intervention in Iraq in 2003 for the United States' policy of democracy promotion. The thesis will be structured as follows: in the introductory part, I will deal with the concept of democracy, democracy promotion and I will also review the policy of democracy promotion before the intervention in Iraq in 2003. In the second part, I will overview the intervention itself and explain why it was a turning point in the US' democracy promotion policy. In the third and main part, I will focus on the implications of the intervention in three key areas. First, what impact the intervention had on the policy as such, that is, how have the institutions, the budgets, or the number of direct military interventions changed. Second, I will analyze the change of rhetoric of the US government regarding democracy promotion and lastly, I will evaluate the change of the public perception (domestically as well as internationally) of the United States as the major democracy promoter. The thesis will mainly focus on the administrations of presidents George W. Bush and Barack Obama, but it will also consider the one term of President Donald Trump.

The main sources of the theoretical part of this thesis will be books and articles from scholars such as Robinson, Diamond, Carothers, Ikenberry, Mitchell, and many others who have dedicated a large part of their work to the topic of democracy promotion. Other substantial sources will be official governmental press releases, working papers, speeches, and various public opinion polls.

Working hypotheses:

The nature of this thesis will be rather interpretative. I generally aim to study the constitutive relationship between the 2003 intervention in Iraq and the subsequent design and practice of US democracy promotion. Here I present three hypotheses that I find plausible: *The policy as such has not changed dramatically* (#1), however, *what changed is the public perception of the United States' role in promoting democracy abroad towards more a negative view* (#2) and also *the rhetoric of the US' government on this topic has moderated* (#3).

Methodology:

The methodology that will be applied in the first two parts of the thesis is qualitative literature review. I will focus on the work of the main scholars and experts in this area (mentioned above). The main third part will be based on the qualitative content analysis of various official governmental press releases, working papers, speeches, but also public opinion polls. I will analyze and assess the changes (if there will be some) in the three aforementioned areas – the policy as such, the rhetoric and the public perception regarding democracy promotion.

Outline:

1. **Introduction**
2. **Democracy promotion in the US foreign policy**
 - 2.1 The Concept of Democracy
 - 2.2 Theoretical Justification for Democracy Promotion
 - 2.3 History of Democracy Promotion by the United States
3. **Methodology**
4. **Intervention in Iraq as a Turning Point**
 - 4.1 Background of the Conflict
 - 4.2 ...
5. **Implications of the intervention in Iraq for the Democracy Promotion Policy**
 - 5.1 Implications for the practice of Democracy Promotion Policy
 - 5.2 Implications for the US Government Rhetoric Regarding Democracy Promotion
 - 5.3 Implications for the Public Perception of Democracy Promotion
 - 5.3.1 Domestic Support for Democracy Promotion
 - 5.3.2 International Community's Perception of United States as a democracy promoter
6. **Conclusion**
7. **Bibliography**

List the most important papers/books you are going to use (specify at least 5 relevant references).

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Bibliographic note

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Abstract

Democracy promotion has been an integral part of US foreign policy for more than a century. Particularly at the end of the 20th century, democracy flourished worldwide as autocratic regimes collapsed at large and scholars talked about the “End of History.” Nevertheless, the current situation is very different, and substantial democratic backsliding is observable. Many scholars are tracing the origins of this decline to the Bush’s Freedom Agenda, particularly the intervention in Iraq in 2003, arguing that it was the initial turning point for US democracy promotion. However, this thesis argues that the invasion and the subsequent war were pivotal only in part. The most visible implications were within the public perception of democracy promotion. Due to the US engagement in Iraq, domestic support deteriorated substantially. Moreover, the international community’s perception of the US as a benign democracy exporter crumbled as well. Another change was observable within the rhetoric of President Obama after taking office in 2009. In order to distance himself from the previous Administration, he visibly toned down his rhetoric on democracy promotion. However, due to various factors, he eventually engaged in expansive pro-democratic discourse as Bush did. And last, regarding the changes in the actual policy practice, even though the Obama Administration was rather cautious and reluctant to promote democracy actively, especially at the beginning, a deeper analysis of the policy has proved that the actual policy practice stayed within the semi-realist framework that has been characteristic for the US foreign policy for decades.

Keywords

democracy, democracy promotion, democratization, intervention, invasion, Iraq, Bush, Obama, policy practice, rhetoric

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Introduction

Democracy promotion has been an integral part of US foreign policy for more than a century. The commitment to spread democracy abroad was historically firm. Nevertheless, in some periods the United States played rather a passive role, serving as an example for the rest to follow, while in other periods it was exporting democracy more actively. Monten (2005) identifies the passive approach as “exemplarism” and the active one as “vindicationism.” The early proponents of the exemplarist promotion were already the Founding Fathers, while the later model prevailed at the turn of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries with the Spanish-American War and reached its peak in the form of Bush’s Freedom Agenda (Hornát, 2019).

The motivation of the United States behind democracy promotion has been a subject of many disputes. However, two main rationales appear in most of the literature. First, the Americans believe in the universal applicability of democracy as the best system of governance, and therefore, they feel it is their mission to export it (Hornát, 2019). At the same time, the second rationale maintains that it is instrumentally useful to promote democracy since it yields both security and economic benefits for the United States. Furthermore, as Sedaca & Bouchet (2014) argue, despite variations between different administrations, this twofold motivation has remained one of the underlying constants in American engagement abroad since the end of the Cold War.

With the collapse of the Soviet Union, the most prominent ideological opponent of the Western liberal democracy was gone, and thus the process of democratization could accelerate. Authors such as Fukuyama (1992) were talking about reaching an endpoint of social evolution where liberal democracy is prevailing. The 1990s were indeed a triumphant era for the US democracy promotion bringing tangible results in the form of an unprecedented number of countries becoming democratic with the assistance of US institutions and financing (Mitchell, 2016). Furthermore, the United States was enjoying an unchallenged ideological hegemony being generally accepted as a democratic role model.

However, the situation has changed considerably since then. The United States is no longer accepted as a benign promotor of democracy and many (including the recently elected US President

Joe Biden) are talking about the global decline of democracy. In his speech during Memorial Day on 21 May 2021, President Biden proclaimed that “*Democracy, the soul of America [...] is in peril, here at home and around the world*” (Biden, 2021). The question is, what caused this backslide of democracy and its promotion? Some authors (i.e., Sedaca & Bouchet, 2014; Plattner, 2015; Norris, 2017; Diamond, 2019) trace it back to the invasion of Iraq in 2003. Therefore, even if the scholars have been dealing with the topic of democracy decline already for more than a decade, the issue is still very relevant.

Thus, the main interest of this thesis is the intervention in Iraq as a major turning point of the US’ policy of democracy promotion. However, the question is, what exactly did the intervention cause? What implications did it have on democracy promotion by the United States, and what changes did it bring? And it is precisely these questions this thesis aims to answer.

Structure of the Thesis and Methodology

In order to answer the aforementioned research questions, this thesis consists of three main chapters. The first chapter provides the theoretical background. First, it deals with the concept of democracy from the normative point of view, presenting its main characteristics and different variants. Second, democracy promotion as such is defined, followed by presenting different theoretical justification for promoting democracy abroad. And last, democracy promotion is analyzed in the context of the United States. The subchapters of this part cover the US’ specific understanding of democracy, the history of democracy promotion by the US, and the institutional structure responsible for putting this policy into practice.

The second chapter deals with the invasion of Iraq, explaining why it was a pivotal event for the practice of democracy promotion. The chapter is organized chronologically. It starts with the events that led to the invasion, followed by the invasion itself. Later, the subsequent occupation and the process of democratization and state-building are explained. And last, the chapter ends with a depiction of after-war Iraq, and it also explains the major shortcomings that eventually caused the democracy promotion policy to fail.

The third and the main chapter aims to provide an answer to the research question: What are the implications of the intervention in Iraq for the United States' policy of democracy promotion? The implications are analyzed within three main areas. First, the implications for the public opinion (both domestic and international) are analyzed. Second, the implications for the rhetoric of the Bush and the Obama Administration are compared and explained. And last, the implications for the policy practice are presented. This last subchapter is further divided into three parts. The first one presents various figures regarding the funding of democracy promotion. The second part analyzes the policy practice of President Bush and the last one deals with the policy practice of President Obama. The three main areas where the implications will be analyzed were chosen quite logically. The areas of public opinion and rhetoric of the US Government were chosen because they are both highly discussed in the literature regarding the invasion of Iraq. The area of policy practice is essential as well since it reflects the tangible changes, and it is interesting to observe how and if the changes in these three areas are interconnected.

The analytical part of this thesis covers mainly the Administrations of President Bush and Obama since it was at this time when the implications of the invasion of Iraq were observable. Due to the limited space, the one term of President Trump is not within the scope of this thesis reaction to the invasion.

The methodology applied in the first two chapters is principally a qualitative literature review. The primary sources of the first chapter are books and articles from scholars of democratization studies and other related fields such as Thomas Carothers, Larry Diamond, Michael Cox, Milja Kurki, Nicolas Bouchet, Lincoln A. Mitchell, or my supervisor Jan Hornát. Other significant sources are studies from renowned institutes and think tanks such as the Freedom House, Chatham House, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, etc. The second chapter is essentially a history review based on books by Eduard Gombár, George Brown Tindall, David E. Shi, and various online articles by Reuters, CNN, and others.

The third main part is based on the qualitative content analysis of various sources. The first subchapter aims to interpret various public opinion polls by renowned agencies such as Pew

Research Center, Chicago Council on Global Affairs (formerly known as Chicago Council on Foreign Relations), or the German Marshall Fund. The second subchapter compares funds dedicated to democracy promotion in the years before and after the invasion. Those comparisons are based on official data provided by the Congressional Research Service, the US Agency for International Development, the National Endowment for Democracy, and OECD. And lastly, the third subchapter that analyzes the official rhetoric about democracy promotion is based predominantly on an analysis of major presidential speeches and is enriched with interpretations of other authors of this field.

1. Democracy promotion in the US foreign policy

As mentioned in the introduction, democracy promotion has a long history in the United States' foreign policy. However, to grasp it properly, it is essential to understand the notions of democracy and democracy promotion in general at first. Following that, this chapter will also deal with these two concepts in the specific context of the United States.

1.1. The concept of democracy

The term democracy dates back to about 500 B.C. in ancient Greece. Linguistically, it comes from the words *démos* which means people and *kratos* which means to rule. Therefore, from the very beginning democracy meant the rule of people as opposed to the rule of aristocracy. However, from today's point of view, the Greek city-states were hardly democratic. Not only because of the exclusion of women and foreigners from the political participation, but mainly due to the existence of slavery.

Throughout the centuries, the pace of the development of democracy varied in different places and different times and it is not in the scope of this thesis to cover that. However, it is important to mention, that the American democracy was largely shaped by the specific conditions under which it developed. While most of Europe was still under absolutist monarchies in the beginning of the 17th century, the first elected legislative assembly was constituted in America already in 1619. Apart from other well-known milestones such as the Declaration of Independence in 1776, Stromberg (2011) also points out the first peaceful transition of power between the first President George Washington and his successor. He argues that his peacefully stepping down was an important precedent that cemented the country's status as a stable, democratic state.

1.1.1. Main characteristics of democracy

What the concept of democracy means today is difficult to explain, because the perception of the term changes not only in time, but also in place. The philosopher W. B. Gallie (1956) coined it an "essentially contested concept." This refers to a concept with many different and often

contradicting definitions that are subject of endless discussions and disputes. Furthermore, during the 20th century, many different variations of democracy have evolved. However, there are some features and characteristics that are common for all these variations and used by many scholars when describing democracy. For instance, Schmitter & Karl (1991, p. 4) offer the following definition: *“Modern political democracy is a system of governance in which rulers are held accountable for their actions in the public realm by citizens, acting indirectly through the competition and cooperation of their elected representatives”*.

The “system of governance” Schmitter and Karl allude to, refers to a set of rules that define the way the society is governed. For the system to function, those rules have to be institutionalized, that is to say, well known, practiced and accepted by all the actors. The usual way of institutionalization is a written constitution, but often many political norms are left on the informal or traditional basis. The “rulers” are found in all kinds of political systems, however, only in democracies they are elected by the people and are held accountable for their decisions. The “public realm” is understood as a sphere where decisions that are made collectively, are binding on the society and are further supported by state coercion. The size of the public realms differs among various types. Another important distinctive feature of democracies are the *Citizens*. Even though historically the citizenship used to be restricted and only few people were able to vote or run for office, nowadays the inclusion of all citizens into the process is a standard. The last two aspects are “competition” and “cooperation”. The first one came to be an integral part of democracies only lately. In the Classic democracies of Ancient Greece, the decisions were taken through direct participation leading to consensus. There were no factions fighting for power, on the contrary the citizens were expected to identify common interests. The necessity of competition between different interest groups was recognized later and the author that is probably the most known for his ideas about this issue, Schumpeter, who argued that the *“democratic method is that institutional arrangement for arriving at political decisions in which individuals acquire the power to decide by means of a competitive struggle for the people’s vote”* (Schumpeter, 1942). The last element of Schmitter & Karl’s definition of democracy is “cooperation”. This feature has been in the core of democracy already since the Classical period where deliberation among citizens was expected and encouraged. In the contemporary political debate, this phenomenon became known as *civil society*,

an area where different ideas and identities are discussed and exchanged with the aim to pursue common good of the society as a whole.

The defining concepts above distinguish democracy from other systems that organize the relations in the society. However, they are rather abstract, and much more is needed for democracy to actually work. A specific set of procedural norms must be followed, and civil rights have to be respected and protected. Dahl (1982, p. 11) outlined seven principal conditions that are generally accepted as the prerequisite for a democratic society to function:

- 1) Control over government decisions about policy is constitutionally vested in elected officials.
- 2) Elected officials are chosen in frequent and fairly conducted elections in which coercion is comparatively uncommon.
- 3) Practically all adults have the right to vote in the election of officials.
- 4) Practically all adults have the right to run for elective offices in the government...
- 5) Citizens have a right to express themselves without the danger of severe punishment on political matters broadly defined...
- 6) Citizens have a right to seek out alternative sources of information. Moreover, alternative sources of information exist and are protected by law.
- 7) Citizens also have the right to form relatively independent associations or organizations, including independent political parties and interest groups.

1.1.2. Different variants of democracy

Since there is not a single set of values, practices and institutions, there is no default model of democracy. On the contrary, throughout time, many different variants of democracy have emerged and are currently studied by scholars. For purposes of this thesis, it is crucial to distinguish and specify the model that will be analyzed later.

Different authors categorize the various models of democracy differently, therefore the following list is not, and by its very nature cannot be, exhaustive. Kurki (2013) for instance, distinguishes

four main variants of democracy: the liberal democratic model; the socialist model and the social democratic model; the participatory democracy model and the radical democracy model; and the cosmopolitan and global democratic model(s). Diamond (1999), on the other hand, distinguishes between electoral democracy, liberal democracy and various types of pseudo-democracies. All these six different models will be briefly described in the following part.

Electoral democracy

The main element in this variant, as the name suggests, are the elections. Those have to be held regularly and enable multiparty competition and universal suffrage. Legislative and executive officers are chosen by this process within the margins of a constitution. Therefore, in this model of democracy, the elections are the minimal requirement for the constitution of a democratic society (Diamond, 1999). Moreover, for some scholars, the electoral procedure is the only requirement. One of its most prominent advocates was J. A. Schumpeter, who argued that democracy is a method or “*institutional arrangement for arriving at political decisions in which individuals acquire the power to decide by means of a competitive struggle for the people’s vote*” (Schumpeter J. A., 2003 [1942], p. 269).

Most scholars, however, argue that equating free and fair elections with democracy is too restrictive and narrow. It neglects the fact that even free and fair elections can bring into power undemocratic leaders (such as Hitler or Napoleon) or establish governments that would adopt undemocratic policies (such as gender discrimination or anti-abortion laws) (Berman, 2012).

Liberal democracy

The liberal model of democracy is probably the most prominent one, has the longest tradition, and gained its momentum in the 20th century. It has all the features of electoral democracy, plus additional elements such as the rule of law, civil liberties, equality among citizens, or independent judiciary are embedded in the constitution (Diamond, 1999). The tradition of liberal democracy began with liberal thought during the Enlightenment. It was a reaction to the absolutist monarch's unlimited power, mercantilists policies, and the powerful Church that greatly interfered with people’s personal lives.

The main element of liberal democracy is the idea of the *individual* and his freedom. Hobbes argued in his Leviathan that only by virtue of an absolutist ruler can society escape the “state of nature”, which, according to him, meant war of all against all (Hobbes, 1968 [1651]). Early liberals such as J. S. Mill, Locke and Montesquieu, on the other hand, argued that the individual has a right to be protected from the state’s coercive powers and that he can actively object to it when the state is endangering his individual security or interests. This is where the idea of a *limited state* emerged. Contrary to Hobbes, the liberals argued that it is the men, not the state, that know best their own good. Locke (1960 [1689]) emphasized the need for a limitation of the executive or absolute sovereign by a legislative body and Montesquieu (1989 [1748]) followed by introducing the idea of checks and balances, that is, the separation of powers between the legislative, executive and judiciary (Kurki, 2013). Another important feature that was largely emphasized by another liberal thinker, J. S. Mill (2001 [1861]), is the idea of *representation*. It is important to note, that in the early liberal thought the idea of democracy was almost a “dirty word” and was equated with the rule of mobs. However, most liberals in thinking about the limited state, had in their minds a ‘representative’ form of government. Therefore, as Kurki (2013) argues, some form of democracy seems to have been relevant to liberalism from the start. Nevertheless, it is important to note that the classical liberal ideas argued for rather limited notions of democracy, defined by representation of (only some) people, separation of powers and emphasis on rights.

It is evident that liberal values engaged with the idea of democracy from the very beginning, even if in a different form than we know it today. The contemporary understanding of liberal democracy in the United States will be discussed in the following chapters.

Socialist and social democratic model

However popular liberal democracy may have become in the 20th century, it did not go unchallenged. On the contrary, already since the 19th century, there were many critics of liberal democracy. The most prominent one, Karl Marx, argued that the idea that liberal democracy would solve political and economic inequality was merely illusionary. On the contrary, it only deepened the social division and exacerbated the class conflict (Kurki, 2013).

This critique is not entirely unfounded. The situation after the unification of Germany under Bismarck in 1871 or the unification of Italy in the same year can serve as examples here. Germany, after the unification, was not a fully-fledged democracy. It instead combined democratic aspects while still preserving some monarchical elements. However, this system proved dysfunctional when it only intensified the political tensions between the working class and the elites. According to Berman (2012), it was this social discontent that influenced how German's rushed to war in 1914. A similar situation occurred in Italy, where even after the unification, most of the citizens were still excluded from political participation, and the deep North-South divide remained unresolved, which once again intensified the social conflict (Berman, 2012).

All these social tensions served as fuel for Marxism to thrive in some of the European but also non-European countries. However, the way how Marxist ideas were developed under Lenin completely discredited the ideology. The Soviet Union was far from democratic and failed greatly to live up to many of the idyllic ideas envisioned by Marx (Kurki, 2013).

Therefore, most of the 20th century was dominated by the polarized ideological debate between liberalism (associated with thinkers such as Smith and Hayek) and socialism (understood essentially as a variant of Marxist thinking). Therefore, for a long time, it seemed that the socialist ideas and the core liberal beliefs could not function together. However, the social-democratic model that emerged in the first half of the 20th century and gained importance, especially after 1945, demonstrated that the liberal and the socialist understandings of democracy could indeed be combined. This model builds on the liberal capitalist system as the most efficient producer of economic wealth but considers the socialist criticism of capitalism (Kurki, 2013). It was the large-scale destruction caused by the two world wars and the economic depression of the 1930s (that led many to think that capitalism had simply failed) that enabled this paradigm shift in Western Europe. After World War II, it was clear that Europe must be reconstructed in a way that will accommodate the relationship between economy, markets, and civil society better than in the liberal model. The governments realized that if they wanted democracy to survive and their citizens not to fall for the false promises of (communist) extremism, they would have to restore the functioning of the states towards a model where the state would be a guardian of the society rather than the economy – a social democratic state that would provide economic growth while protecting the society from

capitalism's destabilizing effects (Berman, 2012). Nowadays, it is predominantly the Scandinavian countries that are given as an example of the most developed social democracies. However, as Berman (2006) argues, most European countries today that are often considered liberal democracies are actually social democracies up to some extent.

Pseudo-democracies, non-democracies, and illiberal democracies

Apart from the different variants of democracy mentioned above, Diamond (1999) also distinguishes regimes that are democratic only in form but not practice. Even though some aspects of democracy (such as the elections or multiple parties) are present in those regimes, he argues that this pseudo-, non-, or illiberal democracies are only marginally different from authoritarian regimes. An example of pseudo-democracies would be hegemonic party systems with a well-institutionalized ruling party that uses its influence (for instance, through media control) to prevent fair competition for political power. Non-democracies, on the other hand, lack even more democratic aspects and are usually described as semi-authoritarian or authoritarian regimes even though they might hold elections in some cases. And lastly, what Diamond (1999) describes as illiberal democracies, are regimes that hold free and fair elections regularly but do not provide or protect civil liberties and political rights to the masses. This topic was central for the critics of democracy promotion by the Bush Administration. Carothers (2007) argues that past democracy promotion efforts were focused too heavily on free elections and ignored other essential aspects of democracy, such as the rule of law, freedom of the press, or tolerance for minority views.

1.2. Theoretical justification for democracy promotion

In the previous part, the concept of democracy was explained, taking into account the main characteristics, the procedural elements, and variations developed throughout time. In this part, I will focus on the explanation of the different justifications for promoting democracy abroad.

1.2.1. What is democracy promotion?

Before proceeding to the theoretical debate about the justification of democracy promotion, it is important to delimit the concept. Throughout the literature, terms such as democracy assistance, democracy consolidation, democracy dissemination, or democracy advocacy are often used interchangeably with democracy promotion. Nevertheless, many authors agree that the term democracy promotion serves as an umbrella term that encompasses diverse activities conducted by state institutions or private organizations that are directed to develop, improve and sustain democracy within the recipient country (Acuto, 2008).

To put things into perspective, the opposite action to democracy promotion is democracy demotion, that is – the direct or indirect acts undertaken by an external force to hamper, disrupt or reverse the democratization process in a given country (Hornát, 2019, p. 7). An example of this practice can be Saudi Arabia’s “counter-revolutionary” engagement in the Arab Spring uprisings (Hornát, 2019), but also the recent Russian operations, such as rescuing the regime of President Bashar al-Assad in Syria, the annexation of Crimea, or the destabilization of eastern Ukraine (Diamond, 2019).

1.2.2. From Kant’s Perpetual Peace to Fukuyama’s End of History

When considering democracy promotion, one will always end up with the dilemma this issue is bringing. Promoting democracy abroad automatically means interfering with other state’s internal affairs. Since the Peace of Westphalia in 1648, when the system of sovereign states was created, non-interference in domestic affairs of other countries became the new expected standard. Therefore, the dilemma that face in the Westphalian system is the question how to defend human rights without violating the rights of the sovereign states?

It was already Kant who devoted a significant part of his work to this issue. His Perpetual Peace essay was essential for developing the democratic peace theory that became one of the cornerstones of the justification of democracy promotion in the 20th and 21st century. According to Wilkins' (2007) interpretation, Kant did not see a direct contradiction between defending both human rights and non-intervention by the states. However, he argued that the states should self-reform rather than being reformed from the outside. The only circumstance under which, according to Wilkins'

reading, the intervention would be justified, was the case where a state would create such a life for its citizens that would be no better than they would find in a state of nature, which for Kant was the worst possible scenario (similarly to Hobbes).

Later, building on Kant's perpetual peace, Doyle (1986) developed the democratic peace theory. The essence of this theory which has a significant empirical grounding is straightforward – democratic countries do not go to war with one another. However, sometimes they go to war against non-democratic states. The difference between Kant and the modern (Doylean) liberalism is, as mentioned above, that Kant is, in general, not in favor of external intervention. On the other hand, Doyle argues that a state that does not authentically represent and respect the human rights of its citizens ceases its right of non-interference and, therefore, cannot expect other states to respect its sovereignty (Doyle, 1986).

The theory of democratic peace dominated much of the 1990s research and policy agenda of Western international relations. However, as Cox, Lynch & Bouchet (2013) argue, it was Francis Fukuyama who provided a popular version of this theory. After the end of the Cold War, he authored *The End of History and The Last Man* (Fukuyama, 1992), where he argued that the collapse of communism would enable humanity to reach the endpoint of its ideological evolution. He argued that liberal democracy would acquire the dominant role and eventually become the form of government to which all the countries would converge. The fact that Fukuyama's predictions about the unchallenged domination of liberal democracy did not come true does not make it any less important because, in its time, it was a truly influential and generally accepted worldview.

1.3. United States and democracy promotion

In the previous two chapters, the notions of democracy and democracy promotion were described from the general point of view. In this chapter, I will first focus on the United States' specific understanding of these two concepts. This will be followed by a brief overview of the history of democracy promotion as a part of their foreign policy. Last, the institutional structure for democracy promotion will be presented.

1.3.1. The United States' understanding of democracy

As mentioned beforehand, democracy is an essentially contested concept. There is no universally valid definition, no generally accepted description. On the contrary, there are diverse variants of democracy that differ greatly despite having the main characteristics in common. Moreover, to complicate it a bit more, the specific variants of democracy are understood differently in different places. In this part, and in this thesis in general, I will focus on liberal democracy, since this is the political reality in the United States and, most importantly, the model of democracy the country promotes abroad. However, to be able to really understand the values that are at stake, it is crucial to explore the specificities of the United States' understanding of liberal democracy.

In academic but also non-academic literature, we often find the term West which encompasses both the United States and the European Union as some form of a monolithic bloc with shared values and worldview. Even though this simplification might be valid up to a certain point when it comes to the perception of democracy, and specifically liberal democracy, to which both entities adhere, we can trace fundamental differences. And these are later reflected in the different ways democracy promotion is conducted.

The difference between the American and the continental understanding of liberal democracy stems from the specific perception of liberty. Political philosopher Isaiah Berlin in his essay *Two Concepts of Liberty* (2014 [1958]) distinguishes two different notions of freedom. Firstly, there is the notion of 'negative freedom', also called 'freedom from.' Even though this concept was named in such a way by Berlin in the 1950s, this idea was present already in the political philosophy of Thomas Hobbes, John Locke, and John Stuart Mill, who exercised a formative influence on the American political tradition (Shapiro & Steinmetz, 2018). According to this perception, an individual is free when nobody is interfering with his liberty. Any form of deliberate coercion is unacceptable and leads to unfreedom. The role of the state in this concept should be minimal. The state itself should not interfere with individuals' personal lives and should only secure that nobody else will. Therefore, the essence of this conception is the protection and non-interference with individual liberty. The second concept is called 'positive liberty' or 'freedom to'. It is connected with philosophers such as Jean-Jacques Rousseau and Immanuel Kant and corresponds with the European thinking about freedom. This notion posits that much more is needed for an individual

to be truly free. The concept of autonomy plays an important role here – an individual is free only when he is the master of his own actions. Therefore, the role of the state is much more significant in this conception. The state should assist individuals in order for them to be able to realize themselves (Berlin, 2014 [1958]).

Following that, two different models of liberal democracy developed out of these two different perceptions of liberty within the realm we nowadays call the West. The notion of negative freedom and the emphasis on protecting individual liberty is the cornerstone of an American understanding of liberal democracy. On the other hand, the concept of positive freedom and the idea that much more than simply non-interference is needed for one to be truly free is connected with the European thinking about liberal democracy (Hornát, 2019).

This old philosophical debate can be translated into a more current discussion that regards two different conceptions of democracy – procedural vs. substantive (where again, the first conception is linked to the US understanding and the second to the European). The first one emphasizes the laws, the institutions, and the electoral process. The latter, on the other hand, while acknowledging the importance of democratic procedures, emphasizes the outcome and equality (Mitchell, 2016). The differences between these two models have conversely different implications for democracy promotion. Therefore, promoting procedural democracy is easier since the main focus is on the system's structure, that is the laws, and the constitution. On the other hand, substantive democracy requires much more. The goal here is a fundamental change of political and social reality, focusing on a just and equal outcome (ibid).

Furthermore, according to Hornát (2019), these two models of democracy can be linked to two conceptions of democracy, the so-called minimalist vs. maximalist definition of democracy. The procedural model corresponds with the minimalist definition and the substantive model with the maximalist definition. Starting with the minimalist conception, it is essential to point out that there is no single coherent definition. However, authors such as J. Schumpeter, A. Przeworski, and K. Popper are usually connected with this model, and the central topic is the elections. After considerable simplification, in the minimalist conception, the elections are the central democratic procedure where parties compete for peoples' votes, where new leaders are elected, and where

governments are checked and can be peacefully overthrown when people are not satisfied. Therefore, also the transition of power is an essential procedure here (Hornát, 2019).

The critique of the minimalist conception by the proponents of the maximalist one is analogical to the difference between the procedural vs. substantive model or the difference between the negative vs. positive liberty. In this case, once again, much more than fair elections is necessary in order to create a functional democracy. As Merkel argues, the minimalist conception “[...] reduces democracy to the correct procedure of democratic elections, but it does not include sufficient institutional guarantees that assure that those elections are meaningful” (Merkel, 2004, p. 37).

From all mentioned above, it is clear that the United States’ understanding of democracy is very unique and that there are substantial differences even within the realm usually referred to as West. Furthermore, Mitchell (2016) presents another essential distinction. He argues that contrary to the Europeans, for the Americans, democracy is not only a policy but also a core ideology and a central part of their identity. Therefore, they perceive democracy promotion as an extension of this identity. Hornát (2019) adds another distinctive feature – a profound “sense of mission” that, according to him, *encourages the US policymakers to follow democracy promotion in a particularly coercive and interventionist manner*. Furthermore, many Americans believe in the universal applicability of liberal democracy as the best system for the organization of socio-political relations. This belief was especially strong after the collapse of the Soviet Union. However, as will be discussed in the following chapters, it has been losing its force in the past decade.

1.3.2 History of democracy promotion by the United States

The origins of the US democracy promotion are usually traced back to the end of the First World War and are attributed to President Woodrow Wilson. (Patterson, 2012) (Kurki, 2013) (Mitchell, 2016) (Cox, Lynch, & Bouchet, 2013). However, Smith (1994) argues that the very roots of democracy promotion go back to one of the founding fathers – Thomas Jefferson. According to him, Jefferson could be considered an early advocate of the democratic peace theory because he held that the expansion of democracy was vital for the security of the United States.

Nevertheless, it was Wilson who built the foundations of American democracy promotion with his *Fourteen Points* speech in 1918. He proposed a new structure of the international order that would be based on (1) *the cooperation among democratic governments*; (2) *linked in economic openness*; (3) *through well-structured multilateral institutions*; and (4) *under the United States that willingly assumed the responsibilities of leadership* (Cox, Lynch, & Bouchet, 2013). Furthermore, Wilson's vision also included features such as national self-determination, freedom of the seas or open treaties "openly arrived at," and, last but not least, the creation of the League of Nations. Even though the success of this organization is debatable, the impact of Wilson's ideas is indisputable because he was the one who brought the necessity of international cooperation to the table.

Unfortunately, Wilson's vision did not come to fruition immediately, and another world war had to occur for the states to realize that cooperation was vital for achieving peace finally. After the disastrous Second World War, the United States took up the leading role in another post-war reconstruction. Under the US leadership and just before the end of the war, two important international organizations – The International Monetary Fund and The International Bank for Reconstruction and Development – were established. Later, the democracy promotion in Europe was materialized in creating the Marshall Plan and in the foundation of NATO to counterbalance the rising Soviet Union (Patterson, 2012). The broader US strategy was based on the Truman Doctrine that President Harry Truman formulated in 1947. Among other things, he declared: "*I believe it must be the policy of the United States to support free peoples who are resisting attempted subjugation by armed minorities or by outside pressures. [...] I believe that we must assist free peoples to work out their own destinies in their own way...*" (cited by Patterson, 2012). According to Mitchell (2016), one of the greatest achievements of post-war democracy promotion was the successful democratization of Germany and Japan.

However, in the following years, due to the fear of the spread of communism during the Cold War, US democracy promotion changed notably. The geostrategic interests and national security prevailed over democracy promotion, and the main objective of the foreign policy was the fight against communism. Therefore, in this period, the United States often sided with or even supported authoritarian regimes as long as they were anti-communist (Kurki, 2013). The US was also actively involved in overthrowing democratically elected governments such as those in Iran or Guatemala (Congressional Research Service, 2019). It was also in this period, in 1961, when the pillar of the

US democracy promotion, the USAID, was established (this agency will be discussed in detail in the following chapter).

Nevertheless, it was still during the Cold War when the foundations of the current democracy promotion as an integral part of the US foreign policy were established. Since the second half of the 1970s, and especially during President Carter's Administration, human rights and democracy gained prominence again. In the early years of his presidency, he used assistance aid to advance human rights, largely through the use of negative conditionality – that is, reducing aid to human rights violators, particularly military aid to Latin America (ibid). According to Patterson (2012), this shift towards larger focus on human rights was criticized as a disregard for geopolitical realities and the national interests of the United States. Nonetheless, Carter was not such an idealist as many ascribed to him. Despite this paradigm shift, he maintained strategic relations with authoritarian leaders, most notably the Shah of Iran and oil-rich Saudi Arabia (Patterson, 2012).

With President Reagan taking office in 1981, another shift occurred, but more importantly, key institutions for democracy promotion were established. Comparing to Carter, the Reagan Administration adopted a different approach to democracy promotion. It restarted the aid to Latin America in cases where Carter suspended it and shifted its focus mainly on fighting against Communism rather than on democracy promotion as such. Nevertheless, human rights remained an important part of the agenda. Democracy promotion, therefore, became part of the anti-communist agenda, and democracy assistance was used as a primary tool rather than punitive restrictions on aid (Congressional Research Service, 2019). In 1982, Reagan's famous Westminister speech served as a necessary push for further development of the US democracy promotion policy. He stated: *"The objective I propose is quite simple to state: to foster the infrastructure of democracy – the system of a free press, unions, political parties, universities – which allows a people to choose their own way to develop their own culture, to reconcile their own differences through peaceful means"* (Reagan, 1982). Following this, the National Endowment for Democracy (NED) was established in 1983. The objective of this grant-making foundation is to distribute funds to private, non-governmental organizations to promote democracy abroad. NED is said to be non-governmental; however, it is funded by the government (the structure and the functioning of NED will be discussed in detail in the following chapter). However, what remained similar to Carter's

Administration is the ambivalent relationship with resource-rich and/or anti-communist regimes that were in fact authoritarian (Patterson, 2012).

With the end of the Cold War and the collapse of the Soviet Union, democracy promotion changed once again. First, the focus shifted from Latin America to Eastern Europe and former Soviet states. President George H. W. Bush saw this as an opportunity to stabilize the region and expand the democratic realm further East (Congressional Research Service, 2019). Second, after the failure of the communist planned economies, liberal democracy gained an important momentum and went unchallenged for almost two decades. Therefore, promoting this model seemed very natural and attractive for the recipient countries (Kurki, 2013). And last, since the collapse of the Soviet Union, democratic capitalism has no competing ideology with a global appeal comparable to the one communism had during the Cold War. Therefore, in the early post-Cold War years, the American hegemony stemmed not only from economic and military power but also from ideological supremacy (Mitchell, 2016).

Even though compared to the 1990s, the world has become more multipolar and the United States is not an unchallenged hegemon anymore, the rise of countries such as China, Russia, or Saudi Arabia is based on their economic or/and military power, not an ideological one. Therefore, the 1990s were a triumphant era for the US democracy promotion. Not only was there strong confidence of the American leaders, but also large public support and tangible results. As Mitchell (2016) argues, countries as diverse as Poland, South Africa, and Chile, which were authoritarian in 1980, were now democratic.

Therefore, when President Clinton was elected in 1992, his Administration was the first one in almost half a century that did not inherit a fully formulated strategic concept of foreign policy. Since the Soviet Union did not exist anymore, the policy of *containment* became irrelevant, and there was a need for a new strategy. During his election campaign, he had loosely outlined three main foreign policy goals: updating and restructuring American military and security capabilities, elevating the role of economics in international affairs, and promoting democracy abroad (Poppe, 2010). Later, Clinton Administration came up with the concept of democratic enlargement (Cox, Lynch, & Bouchet, 2013). This was firstly formulated in Anthony Lake's, Clinton's national security adviser, speech in 1993: "*The successor to a doctrine of containment must be a strategy*

of enlargement of the world's free community of market democracies" (Lake, 1993). The novel term market democracies was supposed to highlight free markets as an integral part of democracy and democracy promotion. Already Clinton's well-known campaign slogan for the 1992 presidential election, "It's the economy, stupid!" implied where the emphasis of Clinton's foreign policy would lie (Poppe, 2010).

However, Clinton has been criticized for being too slow to develop a coherent foreign policy and not matching his actions with his rhetoric. The criticism was coming from both ends of the political spectrum: the realists criticized him for the over-the-top democracy rhetoric and called for a reduction of US concern with democracy abroad. The idealists, on the other hand, were irritated with Clinton about China¹ and apprehensive about the rising anti-internationalist attitudes in the Republican Party, argued for a greater US attention to democracy and human rights abroad (Carothers, 2004). Richard Haass, the former advisor to the Secretary of State Colin Powell, goes even further, accusing Clinton of having "*inherited a world of unprecedented American advantage and opportunity and [doing] little with it,*" overseeing an era of "*underachievement and squandered potential*" (Haass, 2000). However, as Carothers (2004) argues, to Clinton's defense, not even the containment strategy was fully developed in the immediate aftermath of the Second World War. On the contrary, its designers often had to improvise, and it took them years, perhaps even decades, before the strategy was consolidated.

Overall, the Clinton foreign policy can be described as a Wilsonian idealism where the morality of promoting democracy abroad and "doing good" is a central issue, combined with a pragmatic realism that aims to consolidate American hegemonic position in the world through economic engagement (Poppe, 2010). Carothers (2000) summarizes this approach as a rediscovery of semi-realism.

With President George W. Bush taking office in 2001, many expected a shift in priorities concerning foreign policy. During the campaign, Bush distanced himself from the idealism of which he was accusing Clinton and proclaimed that realism would re-enter the White House as

¹ More about Clinton's administration relationship with China in: Carothers, T. (2000). The Clinton Record on Democracy Promotion. *Democracy and Rule of Law Project*.

soon as he is elected. However, the unprecedented terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, meant a fundamental change in the US foreign policy, and democracy promotion around the world became the central objective once again as a tool to combat terrorism (Carothers, 2003). Although, in this case, it was not about spreading democracy merely from altruistic reasons, it became the vital question of national security.

Therefore, Bush's foreign policy and democracy promotion efforts were focused mainly on the Middle East. Following the rationale of the democratic peace theory, the Administration assumed that the democratization of this area would also mean more security not only there but also for the United States. Therefore, the security part of democracy promotion was crucial. Carothers (2006) described the overall line of Bush's foreign policy as semi-realist in the sense that he was promoting democracy in some countries, but on the other are still maintaining relationships with undemocratic autocrats when it served the US security interests. More specifics of democracy promotion under Bush will be discussed in the following chapters.

1.3.3. Institutional structure of the US' democracy promotion

In the previous chapters, democracy promotion was described from normative and historical perspectives. This part will offer an insight into the practice of democracy promotion. I will focus on explaining the complicated structure of various governmental and non-governmental agencies that are all part of what Melia (2005) referred to as the "democracy bureaucracy." Despite the negative connotation the word bureaucracy usually evokes, Mitchell (2016) argues that the evolution of a structured system made the policy stronger because it brought more transparency and accountability into the process.

United States Agency for International Development (USAID)

According to the Congressional Research Service (2019), 95% - 99% of US democracy promotion aid has been financed within USAID and the Department of State budgets in the recent years. Therefore, USAID is by far the largest player in the democracy promotion area not only in terms of budget, but also in term of countries where it operates, or number of partners at home and abroad.

It was established in 1961 by President John F. Kennedy, and the initial aim was exclusively the traditional development work. As Hornát (2019) points out, USAID did not engage in democracy assistance until the Office of Democratic Initiatives (ODI) emerged in 1984. Currently, the programs are largely planned, managed, and supervised by USAID officials at the mission level, contracting non-governmental partners for their implementation.

Since 2012 the Center for Excellence on Democracy, Human Rights and Governance (DRG, which replaced the Office of Democracy and Governance, established in 1985) is the central hub within the USAID that supports democracy promotion activities in the field missions. Its primary focus is the protecting and promoting human rights, ensuring the possibility for free and fair elections, combating disinformation, strengthening digital safety, both for new and traditional media, and incorporating the rule of law and justice in our human rights programming (USAID, 2021).

Another body of the USAID with democracy promotion in its scope is The Office of Transition Initiatives (OTI), established in 1994. Unlike the DRG, which mostly focuses on long-term programs, OTI was designed to offer short-term, flexible, and rapid assistance targeted at fundamental political transition and stabilization needs in countries that are in political crisis (USAID, 2021).

Department of State

The State Department shares the primary responsibility for democracy assistance with USAID. The State implements its programs mainly through its Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor (DRL), established in 1977 (US Department of State, 2021). The activities of the State and USAID complement each other in many ways; however, they differ greatly in two main aspects. First, DRL focuses on short-term or emergency assistance rather than long-term programs. Second, DRL operates on a grant-making basis providing funds to local and international NGOs engaged in promoting human rights and democracy. These budgets are provided through the Human Rights and Democracy Fund (HRDF), administered by DRL and founded in 1998 (Congressional Research Service, 2019). The HRDF is an instrument that operates within the bottom-up approach, therefore, focuses more on the non-state actors and civil society rather than state institutions. The two more extensive programs worth mentioning that DRL administers are both regional democracy assistance programs. The first one is the Support for Eastern Europe Democracy (SEED),

established in 1989 to support the Eastern European countries through the transition to democracy (funded together with USAID and other institutions). The second program (which will be further discussed in Chapter 3.3.2.) is the Middle East Partnership Initiative (MEPI), that was founded in 2003 as a part of President Bush's Freedom Agenda in the Middle East and whose main objectives are "Supporting Democracy Builders," "Empowering Women," "Inspiring Youth" and "Fostering Economic Opportunity" (Hornát, 2019).

Other programs, offices, or bureaus of the State that have some democracy promotion element are, for instance, the International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs (INL) office, the programming on atrocity prevention and countering violent extremism conducted by the Bureau of Conflict and Stabilization Operations (CSO) or the State's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA).

Departments of Justice, Defense, and Labor

While the Department of State and the USAID are the primary managers of US democracy promotion efforts, other US government entities contribute to this objective even though it is not their primary goal. First, the Department of Justice implements international programs on the rule of law and administration of justice. In 1991, an Office of Overseas Prosecutorial Development Assistance and Training (OPDAT) was established to provide expert assistance and case-based mentoring to foreign counterparts to develop justice systems that can combat transnational crime, corruption, and terrorism consistent with international standards (Department of Justice, 2021). Secondly, the Department of Defense administers the International Military Education and Training (IMET). This project not only serves as an exchange program for military officers and personnel, *enabling the acquirement of technical knowledge, but it also exposes foreign military and civilian personnel to the important roles democratic values and human rights can play in governance and military operation.* (cited by Hornát, 2019, p. 149). And lastly, some of the activities of the Department of Labor's worker rights can also be considered as a contribution to democracy promotion efforts.

National Endowment for Democracy (NED)

The National Endowment for Democracy is one of the most important and visible components of the American pledge to promote democracy worldwide. It was established as a bipartisan non-governmental organization in 1983 after the impulse given by President Ronald Reagan in his famous Westminster speech one year earlier. Its goal is to foster the growth of a wide range of democratic institutions abroad, including political parties, trade unions, free markets and business organizations, as well as the many elements of a vibrant civil society that ensure human rights, an independent media, and the rule of law (National Endowment for Democracy, 2021).

It operates on a similar basis as the State Department's DRL – it does not design or execute its own projects but instead provides funding to various NGOs engaged in democracy promotion and human rights. Each year, NED provides funds to more than 1 600 projects of non-governmental organizations abroad who are working for democratic goals in more than 90 countries. Furthermore, it serves as an umbrella organization to its four principal grantees - International Republican Institute, National Democratic Institute, the American Center for International Labor Solidarity, and the Center for International Private Enterprise (National Endowment for Democracy, 2021). More than half of all NED grants are attributed to these four organizations (Melia, 2005).

The reason for establishing an endowment outside of the state structures was its planned autonomy. Even though it receives a significant portion of its funds from the US Congress, its independence is always emphasized. The decision-making in NED is independent of official US policymakers since the Board of Directors reviews all the programs on a case-to-case basis. Therefore, since NED is not a government organization, it can fund programs in places where USAID or other official bodies are limited by law or diplomatic considerations (Congressional Research Service, 2019).

Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC)

Another organization engaged in democracy promotion is the Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC). It was established as an independent agency by the US Congress in 2004. Even though its primary objective is not democracy promotion as such, its activities enhance this goal indirectly.

MCC provides time-limited grants promoting economic growth, reducing poverty, and strengthening institutions (Millennium Challenge Corporation, 2021).

As Hornát (2019) points out, MCC is the only US instrument that formally employs conditionality. Provision of the funds is conditioned by various must-pass indicators related to civil liberties and political rights. The 16 official criteria fall into three categories: “encouraging economic freedom,” “investing in people,” and “ruling justly.” Therefore, the selection process itself indirectly incentivizes and promotes democracy and human rights. Also, the MCC closely monitors the compliance of the recipient countries with the indicators, which further enhances good democratic governance (Congressional Research Service, 2019).

2. Invasion in Iraq as a turning point

When considering the history of democracy promotion by the United States, many paradigm shifts fundamentally changed this policy. Many authors (i.e., Carothers, 2007; Hinnebusch, 2007; Whitehead, 2009; Kurki, 2013; Diamond, 2019) argue that in recent history, it was the intervention in Iraq that sparked a long sequence of events that changed the policy in many ways and for a long time. Therefore, before proceeding to the main part of this thesis that deals with the implications the intervention had for the democracy promotion policy, it is crucial to understand the intervention itself. In this chapter, I will explain the background of the intervention, its rationale, and also the criticism that the Bush Administration had to face.

2.1. Prelude to the invasion

Since the end of the Gulf War in 1991, the United States and its allies tried to keep Saddam Hussain’s regime under check by the policy of containment towards Iraq. This policy involved various economic sanctions by the UN Security Council, the implementation of no-fly zones declared by the US and the UK, and the presence of the UN inspectors to monitor the compliance with disarmament and non-production of chemical weapons (Tindall & Shi, 2008).

In 1998, two critical events occurred. First, after the expulsion of the UN weapon inspectors from Iraq, the US Congress passed the Iraq Liberation Act (1998). Thus, removing the Iraqi government became one of the official US foreign policy goals. And second, Congress established the Rumsfeld Commission that focused on investigating the possibility of nuclear weapons threat posed by North Korea, Iran, and Iraq. As Draper (2020) argues, this Commission provided the former secretary of defense Donald Rumsfeld and other like-minded officials a platform to develop scenarios that might allow Iraq to obtain nuclear weapons and target America in a very short time.

With the election of President George W. Bush in 2000, a more aggressive stance towards Iraq was established, and some Republicans called for the full implementation of the Iraqi Liberation Act. However, only a little formal action was taken before 11 September 2001. Nevertheless, the unprecedented terrorist attacks completely changed the course of action. They exposed the substantial threat to the US from the Middle East and Muslim world that needed to be addressed. Therefore, the officials in Bush's cabinet who had supported an attack on Iraq even before 9/11 wanted to seize this opportunity to rally support for a war that could be pivotal in transforming the Middle East to conform with the US interests (Hinnebusch, 2007).

In September 2001, at a joint session of Congress, Bush famously announced the "War on Terror," which was accompanied by the doctrine "pre-emptive" military action that was later coined as the Bush Doctrine. This new foreign policy agenda culminated in the National Security Strategy of 17 September 2002 (Poppe, 2010). Jervis (2003) identifies four central elements in the Bush Doctrine as follows:

"[...] a strong belief in the importance of a state's domestic regime in determining its foreign policy and the related judgment that this is an opportune time to transform international politics; the perception of great threats that can be defeated only by new and vigorous policies, most notably preventive war; a willingness to act unilaterally when necessary; and, as both a cause and a summary of these beliefs, an overriding sense that peace and stability require the United States to assert its primacy in world politics" (Jervis, 2003, p. 365).

The official rationale for the war against Iraq was two-fold. First, the Administration argued that Saddam Hussein was linked to al-Qaida (which was responsible for the 9/11 attacks). Second, he was actively developing weapons of mass destruction that he might provide to terrorists, and thus that Iraq represented an imminent threat to the United States. However, these accusations have not only been refuted, but, more importantly, there is robust evidence that the officials supporting the war deliberately exaggerated the unfounded claims and knew that Iraq was not a real threat to the United States (Hinnebusch, 2007). The report by Carnegie Endowment for International Peace explicitly states that: *“Iraq’s WMD programs represented a long-term threat that could not be ignored. They did not, however, pose an immediate threat to the United States, to the region, or to global security. [...] With respect to nuclear and chemical weapons, the extent of the threat was largely knowable at the time. [...] Iraq’s nuclear program had been dismantled, and there was no convincing evidence of its reconstitution”* (Cirincione, Mathews, Perkovich, & Orton, 2004, p. 47).

Even though the National Security Strategy mentions the possibility of unilateral action, the Bush Administration at first tried to seek backing from the international community. On 12 September 2002, President Bush addressed the United Nations General Assembly seeking support for the invasion. However, many countries were against the military solution, and a long round of negotiations was to last until November. In the meantime, in October 2002, the US Congress passed The Authorization for Use of Military Force Against Iraq Resolution of 2002, informally known as the “Iraq Resolution” that authorized the military action against Iraq. Nevertheless, this resolution encouraged the President’s diplomatic efforts to *“[...] strictly enforce through the U.N. Security Council all relevant Security Council resolutions regarding Iraq”* and *“obtain prompt and decisive action by the Security Council[...]*” (United States, 2002).

However, on 8 November 2002 it was clear that the UN Security Council would not authorize the military intervention. The outcome of the exhaustive negotiations was the adoption of the UN Security Council Resolution 1441 (2002) that was offering Iraq *“a final opportunity to comply with its disarmament obligations”* that stemmed from the previous resolutions. It also approved the renewal of weapons inspections by the United Nations Monitoring, Verification and Inspection Commission (UNMOVIC) and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and promised “serious consequences” for non-compliance. However, this resolution did not authorize any kind

of military operation, which was explicitly confirmed by both the US and the UK ambassadors that were present (UN Security Council, 2002).

In the following months, the United States continued to seek support from the UN, but unsuccessfully. Therefore, at the beginning of 2003, the United States, United Kingdom, and their allies began preparing for the invasion of Iraq with a public relations campaign and military moves. In that situation, when it was clear that the United Nations would not support the invasion, the United States decided to act unilaterally without the UN Security Council mandate. On 16 March 2003 in the Azores, the US President and the UK Prime Minister Tony Blair met with the Spanish Prime Minister, José María Aznar, and the Prime Minister of Portugal, José Barroso, to discuss the invasion. The outcome was support from both Spain and Portugal (Gombár & Pecha, 2013). The following day, 17 March 2003, President Bush declared an ultimatum to Hussein, giving him and his two sons 48 hours to surrender and leave Iraq. The ultimatum was rejected (Tindall & Shi, 2008).

2.2. The invasion

After Saddam refused to leave Iraq, the invasion officially called “Operation Iraqi Freedom” began on the morning of 20 March 2003 with the bombing of several targets. Within days, the ground forces of “the coalition of the willing” invaded Iraq from their southern base in Kuwait. These forces were composed of approximately 148 000 American soldiers, 45 000 British soldiers, 2 000 Australian soldiers, and 194 Polish soldiers from a special force unit GROM. However, not all the soldiers eventually took part in the combat operations. These invasion forces were further supported by 70 000 Iraqi Kurdish peshmerga fighters (Gombár & Pecha, 2013). On the other side, the estimated number of the Iraqi forces was much larger but also very poorly equipped due to the embargo. The Iraqi Army consisted approximately of 375 000 soldiers, and the Iraqi Republican Guard had between 50 000 and 60 000 soldiers. The paramilitary forces of Fedayeen Saddam had approximately 30 000 soldiers and Special Republican Guard had another 12 000 (ibid).

“The coalition of the willing” did not meet with much resistance from the regular Iraqi Army. In fact, many Iraqi soldiers opted not to oppose the coalition forces as they advanced. The greatest

resistance to US forces was from the paramilitary groups of the ruling Baath Party supporters, known as Saddam's Fedayeen. Between April 3 and April 12, the battle of Bagdad took place. The capital was guarded by a heavily armed paramilitary group associated with the ruling party – the Republican Guard. However, on April 9, Baghdad's resistance crumbled, and the US troops seized control of the city. On that same day, the statue of Saddam Hussein was famously toppled. In the following days, the coalition took over the control of other important cities. On April 10, the city of Kirkuk was seized, and Mosul was conquered on April 11. The last stronghold of the regime, Saddam's hometown of Tikrīt, fell with little resistance on April 13 (Tindall & Shi, 2008). In the following days, isolated groups still loyal to the regime continued to battle. Nevertheless, on May 1, US President G. W. Bush declared an end to the major combat in his famous (but later very criticized) speech on the aircraft carrier Abraham Lincoln (Gombár & Pecha, 2013). Standing under the "Mission Accomplished" banner, he stated that Operation Iraqi Freedom was "a job well done" and that "In the battle of Iraq, the United States and our allies have prevailed" (Bush, 2003c). As will be discuss later, from today's perspective, knowing that the war would last another eight years, it is clear why the speech was later so heavily criticized.

The estimates of the casualties of the invasion vary greatly, especially the numbers of civilians. The numbers of military personnel are more accurate – 139 American soldiers and 33 British soldiers died during the invasion. The casualties on the Iraqi side vary between 7 600 and 45 000. The number of civilian casualties is estimated to be between 3 200 and 4 300, but another source estimates it to be up to 7 269 (Gombár & Pecha, 2013).

It took another half a year for the US forces to finally capture Saddam Hussein. He was detained on December 13, 2003 and handed over to Iraqi authorities in June 2004 to face charges of various crimes. He was convicted of crimes against humanity and executed on December 30, 2006 (National Public Radio, 2006).

2.3. The Iraq War and the US' democratization efforts

Unfortunately, the collapse of the Baathist government and Saddam Hussein's execution three years later was not the end of the conflict. On the contrary, it unleashed a massive sectarian civil war that lasted another eight years and took an enormous toll on the Iraqi nation.

After the invasion, Iraq found itself in a power vacuum. The plan was to implement liberal democracy with a market economy to establish a functioning democratic state. The United States wanted to follow the model of the successful democratization of Germany and Japan after the World War II (Wong, 2008). However, initially, the Administration did not plan for the US troops to stay in Iraq for long. In the beginning, it even rejected the idea of creating a formal occupation authority, so the Office for Reconstruction and Humanitarian Assistance (ORHA) was formed instead. Furthermore, planning the civilian side of the after-invasion occupation (for which ORHA was responsible and which included providing public order, administering state institutions, or initiating the democratic political process) significantly lagged behind military planning. ORHA was given only eight weeks to prepare for the post-invasion mission compared to the military planning that started already in late 2001. Moreover, President Bush was briefed on the post-invasion occupation plan only a week before the intervention began (Gordon & Trainor, 2006).

However, due to the overwhelming events that followed after the fall of the Iraqi regime, the Bush Administration was forced to institute a more structured occupation authority. The Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA) was established in March 2003. CPA was put in charge of all the features of the country's reconstruction: security and stability, economic infrastructure reconstruction, and democratization of political institutions and civil society (CPA, 2003).

The first executive order of CPA concerned the "de-Baathification" of Iraqi politics, which meant eliminating former Baath party elites from public and quasi-public offices and banning them from future employment in the public sector. The problem was that these people represented the vast bulk of the administrative experience, and without them, the political institutions and the public sector were severely weakened. The following order that dissolved the Iraqi armed forces, the Ministry of Defense and the Iraqi Intelligence Service, had a similar effect. It left the Iraqi government without the ability to restore or maintain public order, which resulted in an almost total collapse in the aftermath of the invasion (Monten, 2014).

Furthermore, as Bridoux & Russell (2013) argue, due to the political pressure to bring tangible evidence of democracy before restoring the Iraqi sovereignty, the whole process of democratization was hurried and only a “light” version of liberal democracy was being implemented. This concerned a quick creation of institutions and procedures without focusing on the content of democracy. Thus, new political parties were formed, funded, and trained to compete for votes; laws and legislation to ensure free elections on a regular basis were created; and educational programs about the practice of democracy were established and distributed at grass-root level. The equality between Iraqi people was defined in terms of political involvement, but little attention was paid to social and economic injustice (Bridoux & Russell, 2013).

Another problem was the different pace of the democratization process in Bagdad and the provinces. This was largely shaped by the very different security situations in these areas. While Bagdad was safe-guarded due to substantial military presence, most of the provinces were still torn in the sectarian violence (Gombár & Pecha, 2013). Therefore, it is no surprise that the democratic institution-building on the national level progressed much faster, while it lagged behind on the provincial and local levels. This problem was further reinforced by the CPA’s need to maintain good relations with traditional elites. These were crucial for the reconstruction programs to build up the infrastructure necessary for a free-market economy and liberal democracy to develop (Bridoux & Russell, 2013).

These power relations also brought another problem for democratization. As Docena (2004) argues, due to these relations, local and provincial elections had little to do with democracy. They were rather a process of selection. The result *was that local elites who derived their position through the exercise of tribal, religious, or other traditional power relations found their situation strengthened, often with political legitimacy provided by a democracy label derived from this selection process* (Docena, 2004).

Nevertheless, this does not mean that the democratization programs on lower levels did not function at all. US military personnel and USAID did a great deal of grassroots work to promote social and political transformation. However, as the postwar action report showed, the US army was ill-prepared regarding governance in newly liberated Iraq. The soldiers lacked specific guidance on what the Coalition’s governance objectives were and how they might help the Iraqis

remake their institutions (Wright & Reese, 2008). One of the US officers put it: *“Because we didn’t receive any guidance for governance or reconstruction, and certainly not for spreading democracy, I had to make up everything as I went, based on the situation on the ground and what I remembered from my Special Forces training and a handful of political science classes”* (Wright & Reese, 2008, p. 401).

Through their work in the field, the US military and USAID workers experienced first-hand the friction between democratic and the deeply rooted traditional power structures. However, this knowledge, which could have helped with understanding the local and cultural realities, was not used to shape the overall concept of democracy that was being implemented. Therefore, as Bridoux & Russell (2013) argue, this lack of synchronization between the structural implementation of democracy in Baghdad and its social adoption at the local level was one of the main reasons why the democratization failed.

In July 2004, the direct occupation administration formally ended, and a provisional government was formed. This was followed by a series of multi-party elections in 2005 where a new government of Shia Nouri al-Maliki was elected. However, this only further inflamed the Sunni Arab insurgency against the coalition forces. Throughout the years after the invasion, the resistance to the coalition was not coming only from Sunnis but also Shiites, primarily due to the many well-documented human rights violation by the US soldiers (UN Human Rights Council, 2013).

The security situation got into the worst point between 2006 and 2007 when approximately one hundred Iraqis were killed every day. Also, by the end of 2006, the number of internally displaced people reached almost 2 million (Gombár & Pecha, 2013). The United States responded to the deteriorated security situation with a military build-up to around 170 000 soldiers in 2007 (Reuters, 2011). It provided Iraq’s government and the military more power to secure that the situation would not deteriorate anymore. This move proved successful, and even the most prominent critics of the military surge, such as Hilary Clinton (Faever, 2015) or Barack Obama (NBC News, 2008), eventually acknowledged it.

In November 2008, Iraq and the United States signed a treaty requiring Washington to withdraw its forces by the end of 2011. The withdrawal was completed in December 2011, leaving only 150 troops that were attached to the US Embassy in Bagdad (Reuters, 2011).

2.4. After-invasion Iraq and criticism

The invasion and the subsequent occupation and democratization of Iraq remain one of the most controversial issues of the United States' foreign policy for many reasons. To point out the main ones: first, the original rationale for the invasion (Iraq possessing nuclear weapons) was dismantled already at the beginning of the conflict. Second, the occupation and the war took much longer than initially anticipated, and the toll in the form of injured or lost soldiers also exceeded the expectations largely. Third, the human rights abuse by the American soldiers and a large number of civilian casualties. Fourth, the enormous financial cost of the war did not resonate well with the US taxpayers. Fifth, the ultimate goal of the invasion – to bring democracy to Iraq – failed as well (Whitehead, 2009).

The reasons why the democratization of Iraq failed are many, and most of them were implied in the previous subchapter. Many authors (i.e., Bridoux & Russel, 2013; Carothers, 2009; Kurki, 2013; Kerr, 2009; Monten, 2014; etc.) agree that one of the main problems was that too much focus was given to the design of an institutional framework and procedures, such as the constitutional process, electoral procedures, promotion of the rule of law, or defense of individual freedoms. On the other hand, comparatively much less attention was paid to local realities and challenges and socioeconomic issues at the grass-root level. The top-down imposition of the liberal democratic model simply could not address the social injustices that drove discontent and violence within civil society. Moreover, the poor security situation in the provinces outside of Bagdad further undermined comprehensive democracy assistance at the grass-root level. Nevertheless, even when some programs that focused on the social transition on the lowest levels were in motion, they were never adequately synchronized with the institutional and structural democratization implemented at the top level in Bagdad (Bridoux & Russell, 2013).

Furthermore, the prospect of implementing democracy in Iraq was constantly undermined by sectarian and religious violence, terrorist activities targeting coalition troops, numerous cases of corruption in the public and private sectors, the resistance generated by traditional power structures, all of which impeded democratic progress (Bridoux, 2011).

All this left the country in chaos and torn by violence, which ultimately resulted in another civil war between the Iraqi government and the Islamic State of Iraq and Levanta (ISIL, also ISIS) that

lasted from 2013 until 2017. The details of this war are outside of the scope of this thesis. Nevertheless, it is essential to take it into account when assessing the implications of the 2003 invasion.

In conclusion, because of all mentioned above, many authors have seen the invasion and the following war in Iraq as a turning point for democracy promotion policy. For instance, Carothers (2007) argues that President Bush damaged the democracy promotion agenda by labeling the war as a democratizing mission and thus weakening its legitimacy. Whitehead (2009) emphasizes that since Iraq, democracy promotion is connected with coercion and forced regime change and that it had shaken the conceptual foundations of the Western pro-democracy consensus.

3. Implications of the invasion for democracy promotion policy

The implications of the invasion for Iraq and the whole Middle East were far-reaching. Not only did it change the interstate balance of power (increasing Iran's influence, helping to destabilize Lebanon, and posing a problem for Turkey with a resurgent Kurdistan), but it also changed the balance of power between the Sunnis and Shias and further undermined secular variants of Arab nationalism (Whitehead, 2009). However, the main focus of this thesis lies in the implications the invasion had for the US policy of democracy promotion itself.

Many authors argue that the invasion of Iraq was a significant turning point causing an extensive change of the US democracy promotion. Whitehead (2009) argued that: *“If the political configuration in Iraq [...] is to be officially classified as a ‘success’ for pro-democratic regime change, then most analysts must do some serious explaining to clarify what is to be understood by the term ‘democratization’, and how it is to be evaluated.”* Plattner (2015) talked about a “darkening mood” among supporters of democracy while Norris (2017) called it a “gloomier mood,” both arguing that it started around the mid-2000s as a result of the disillusionment from the war in Iraq.

Diamond (2019) adds to the argument by also tracing the origins of the current backsliding of democracy in the invasion of Iraq: “[...] *the democratic recession has been much deeper and more protracted than a simple bend in the curve. Something is fundamentally different about the world today. The Iraq war was the initial turning point. Once it turned out that Saddam Hussein did not, in fact, possess weapons of mass destruction, the Bush Administration’s “freedom agenda” became the only way to justify the war retrospectively*” (Diamond, 2019).

Therefore, the focus of the following main part of this thesis will be the implications of the invasion in three specific areas. First, the changes in the public opinion on democracy promotion policy will be discussed. Second, the changes in the Bush and the Obama Administrations’ rhetoric regarding this policy will be assessed, and last, the differences in the policy practice of the two Administrations will be analyzed.

3.1. Implications for the public opinion on democracy promotion

One of the primary and largely noticeable implications of the invasion in Iraq is the change of the public perception of democracy promotion. When President George W. Bush labeled the invasion as a democratizing mission, it caused irreversible damage to the policy’s image, and it questioned its legitimacy (Carothers, 2007). Since then, an apparent decrease in public support for the United States’ engagement abroad is evident from various polls. Furthermore, the image of the United States abroad as an exporter of democracy has deteriorated as well precisely because of the link between democracy promotion and the atrocities of the war in Iraq. Carothers and Brechenmacher describe this shift as follow:

“When the pushback trend first made itself felt, it appeared to be a reaction to a particular juncture in international politics. President George W. Bush’s use of democracy promotion as a frame for the US-led military intervention in Iraq and the US war on terror more generally (with its emphasis on Bush’s ‘Freedom Agenda’) changed many people’s views of the democracy promotion enterprise. Western democracy assistance was no longer seen as a post–Cold War effort to foster a globalizing set of political values, but instead as the hard political edge of a newly militaristic, interventionist US geostrategy” (Carothers & Brechenmacher, 2014, p. 2).

In this chapter, the domestic public opinion will be examined at first, and second, the public perception of the United States by other countries will be assessed.

When analyzing democracy promotion, it is important to mention that it was never one of the top priorities of the US long-term foreign policy goals in the eyes of American citizens. However, even if the popularity of this goal was always relatively low, we can observe some fluctuations during the years after Iraq. According to the Pew Research Survey (see Table 1), only 22% said promoting democracy abroad should be a top long-term priority for US foreign policy both in 1993 and 1997. In 2001, before the terrorist attacks, the support for democracy promotion rose to 29%. However, in 2004, a year after the invasion the numbers fell to 24% and in 2009 with the war still going on the support further decreased to only 21%.

Table 1: Public's Long-Term Policy Priorities

Promoting Democracy Low among Public's Long-Term Policy Priorities

	1993	1997	2001*	2005	2009
% saying each is a "top priority"...	%	%	%	%	%
Protect against terror attacks	--	--	80	86	85
Protect jobs of American workers	85	77	77	84	85
Stop spread of WMD	69	70	78	75	74
Reduce depend. on imported energy	--	--	--	67	64
Combat inter. drug trafficking	--	67	64	59	56
Reduce illegal immigration	--	42	--	51	46
Deal with global climate change**	--	--	44	43	40
Strengthen the United Nations	41	30	42	40	37
Promote human rights abroad	22	27	29	37	29
Improve living standards in poor nations	19	23	25	31	26
Promote democracy abroad	22	22	29	24	21

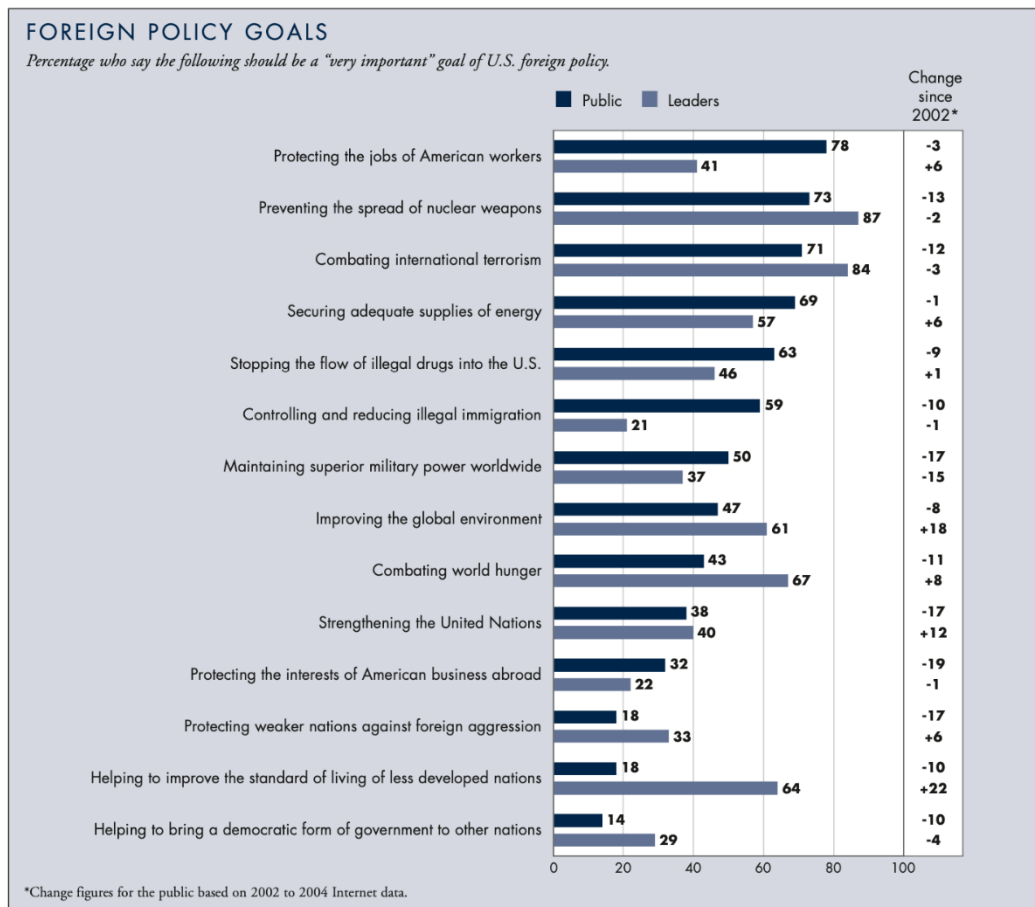
PEW RESEARCH CENTER America's Place in the World surveys.
 * 2001 surveyed completed Sept. 5.
 ** In 2001, the item was worded "dealing with global warming."

Source: Pew Research Center (2011)

Another survey from the Chicago Council on Foreign Relations confirms this trend. In general, the public seems to support democracy promotion, but once again, this support dropped significantly after the invasion. In 2002, 69% of the US public supported foreign aid and assistance to promote democracy abroad. However, a year after the invasion, the support has fallen off substantially by 16 points to just 53% (The Chicago Council on Foreign Relations, 2004).

When placing democracy promotion among other foreign policy goals, the trend is similar. In a survey asking what the public considers a “very important” goal of US foreign policy, the category of “Helping to bring a democratic form of government to other nations” scores very low in general (see Figure 1). Nevertheless, once again, the trend of decreasing support for democracy promotion is noticeable. In 2002, the percentage of people who thought this issue should be a very important US foreign policy goal was 24%. Just in two years and considering the events in Iraq, this number dropped to only 14% (The Chicago Council on Foreign Relations, 2004). In the following years, the figure rose slightly to 17% in 2006 and 2008 (The Chicago Council on Global Affairs, 2009) and up to 19% in 2010 (The Chicago Council on Global Affairs, 2010). However, after the Arab Spring broke out and brought instability and violence (more than democracy), the figure fell once again to only 14% in 2012 (The Chicago Council on Global Affairs, 2012).

Figure 1: Foreign Policy Goals

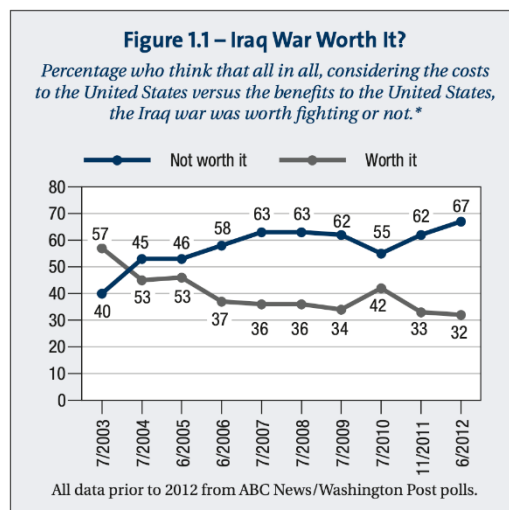


Source: The Chicago Council on Foreign Relations (2004)

The findings of the surveys above correlate with the public opinion on the Iraq war in general. This is not surprising, because as mentioned already, the public opinion was strongly shaped by President Bush’s rhetoric that linked the war to democracy promotion. Figure 2 shows the percentage of US citizens who think the Iraq war was worth it, considering all the costs and benefits. Considering the trillions of dollars that have been spent and thousands of lives have been lost, it is not surprising that the trend is declining. The public eventually has not considered the war as successful, seeing neither security benefits nor an increase in democracy in the Middle East due to the war (The Chicago Council on Global Affairs, 2012).

As Figure 2 shows, at the beginning of the war in 2003, a moderate majority of 57% thought the war was worth fighting. However, since then the figure was steadily declining until only 32% in 2012. The only year when the trend reversed, and the figure rose up to 42%, was in 2010. This was probably be attributed to the positive reactions to the announcement of the end of combat in Iraq by President Obama (The White House, 2010).

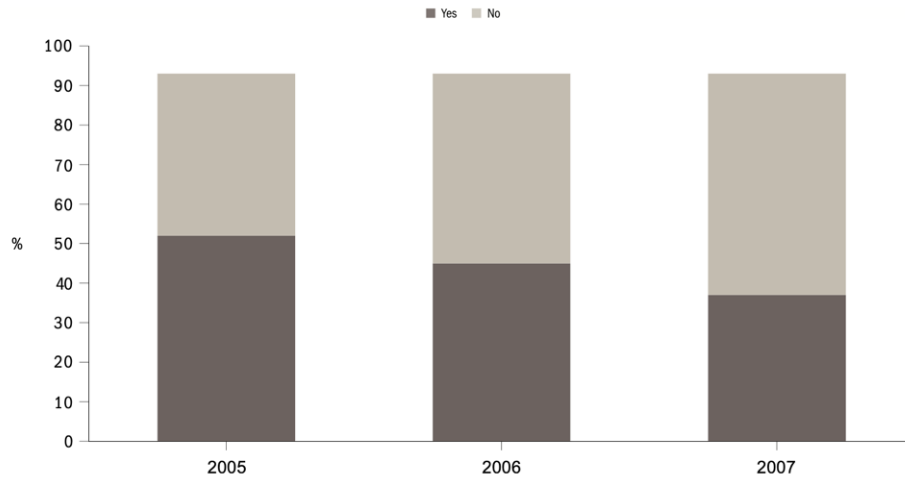
Figure 2: Was Iraq War Worth It?



Source: The Chicago Council on Global Affair (2012)

Another survey (see Figure 3) by Transatlantic Trends confirms the declining public support for democracy promotion. In 2005 a narrow majority of Americans believed that it was the role of the United States to help establish democracy in other countries. However, in the following two years marked by Iraq’s descent into greater chaos and Hamas winning a Palestinian Authority election, the support declined to 45% in and to only 37% in 2007.

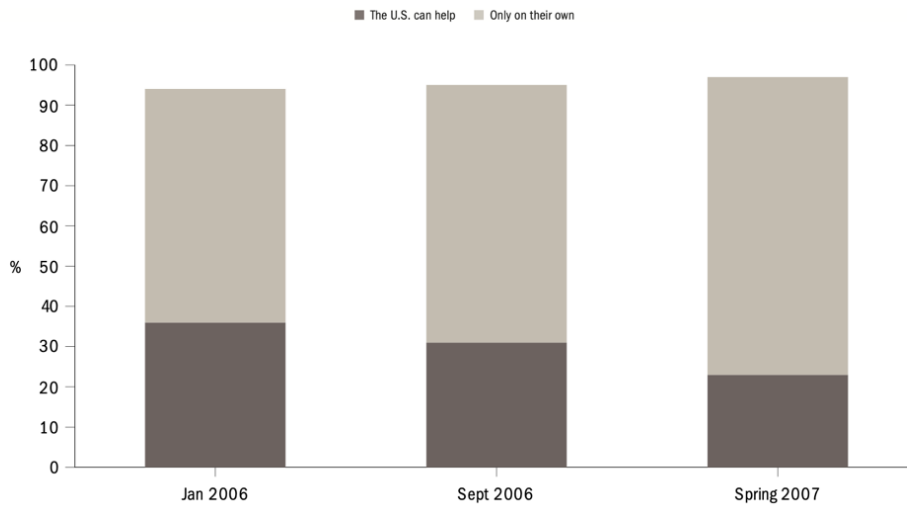
Figure 3: Is it the Role of the US to Help Establish Democracy in Other Countries?



Source: Transatlantic Trends (2007). Retrieved from DeBartolo (2008).

Figure 4 shows that in addition to the declining support for democracy promotion, the American public was also losing trust in the ability of the US to help other countries become democratic effectively. The number fell from 36% in January 2006 to only 23% in spring 2007.

Figure 4: Can the US Effectively Help Other Countries Become Democratic?



Source: Public Agenda and Foreign Policy magazine surveys² (2006; 2007). Retrieved from DeBartolo (2008).

² Public Agenda and Foreign Policy magazine surveys, April 3, 2007 (conducted Feb. 21 through March 3, 2007, with margin of error of +/-3%); Oct. 19, 2006 (conducted Sept. 5-18, 2006 with margin of error of +/-5%); and March 29, 2006 (conducted Jan. 10-22, 2006 with margin of error

The invasion of Iraq did not only change the domestic public opinion about democracy promotion and the US engagement abroad in general. It also changed the international perception of the United States as the leading democracy exporter. Table 6 shows the results of an extensive survey on the United States' favorability. Even though many variables shaped the public perception of the United States, the researchers from The Pew Research Center argue that a large part of the decline in America's image over the past years has been driven by the opposition to US foreign policy, especially the war in Iraq (Pew Research Center, 2008).

As Table 2 demonstrates, in most of the countries for which the data are available, the favorability of the United States dropped sharply after the invasion in 2003. For instance, in France, it went from 62% of the public seeing the US positively in 2002 to only 42% in 2003, plunging at 37% in 2004. This trend was similar in Germany where the favorability dropped from 60% in 2002 to 45% in 2003 and further to only 38% in 2004. While the declining popularity of the United States is a global phenomenon, it is most visible in Muslim countries. In Turkey, the figure halved from 30% in 2002 to 15% in 2003. Meanwhile, in Jordan, the percentage plummeted from 25% in 2002 to only 1% in 2003. Furthermore, with the Iraq war, anti-American sentiment spread to parts of the Muslim world where the US had previously been relatively popular. For instance, in Indonesia, the figure dropped from 61% in 2002 to only 15% in 2003. In Turkey, it plunged from 52% in the late 1990s to 15% in 2003. The declining and later stagnating favorability of the United States reversed only after the election of President Barack Obama in 2009. However, with the indecisive response to the Arab Spring (that will be discussed in the following chapter) the numbers started falling once again, particularly in the Arab countries.

of +/-4%). Question: "Do you think the US can effectively help other countries become democratic, or is democracy something that countries only come to on their own when they're ready for it?" Choices: 1) The US can help other countries become democracies; 2) democracy is something that countries only come to on their own.

Table 2: United States' Favorability

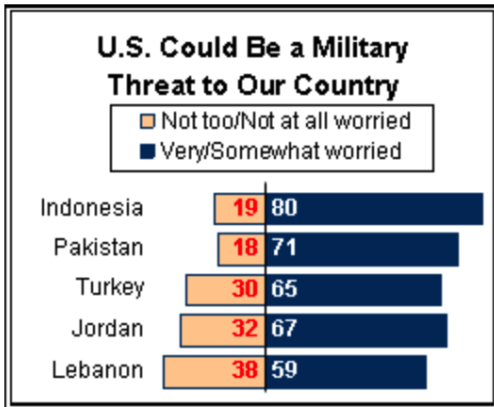
U.S. Favorability													
	1999/ 2000	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Canada	--	72	63	--	59	--	55	--	68	--	--	--	64
Britain	83	75	70	58	55	56	51	53	69	65	61	60	58
France	62	62	42	37	43	39	39	42	75	73	75	69	64
Germany	78	60	45	38	42	37	30	31	64	63	62	52	53
Italy	76	70	60	--	--	--	53	--	--	--	--	74	76
Spain	50	--	38	--	41	23	34	33	58	61	64	58	62
Greece	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	35	39
Poland	86	79	--	--	62	--	61	68	67	74	70	69	67
Czech Rep.	77	71	--	--	--	--	45	--	--	--	--	54	58
Russia	37	61	37	46	52	43	41	46	44	57	56	52	51
Turkey	52	30	15	30	23	12	9	12	14	17	10	15	21
Egypt	--	--	--	--	--	30	21	22	27	17	20	19	16
Jordan	--	25	1	5	21	15	20	19	25	21	13	12	14
Lebanon	--	36	27	--	42	--	47	51	55	52	49	48	47
Palest. ter.	--	--	0	--	--	--	13	--	15	--	18	--	16
Tunisia	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	45	42
Israel	--	--	78	--	--	--	78	--	71	--	72	--	83
Australia	--	--	59	--	--	--	--	46	--	--	--	--	66
China	--	--	--	--	42	47	34	41	47	58	44	43	40
Indonesia	--	--	--	--	38	30	29	37	63	59	54	--	61
Japan	77	72	--	--	--	63	61	50	59	66	85	72	69
Malaysia	--	--	--	--	--	--	27	--	--	--	--	--	55
Pakistan	23	10	--	21	23	27	15	19	16	17	12	12	11
Philippines	--	90	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	85
S. Korea	--	52	46	--	--	--	58	70	78	79	--	--	78
Argentina	--	34	--	--	--	--	16	22	38	42	--	--	41
Bolivia	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	55
Brazil	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	62	62	61	73
Chile	--	--	--	--	--	--	55	--	--	--	--	--	68
El Salvador	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	79
Mexico	68	64	--	--	--	--	56	47	69	56	52	56	66
Venezuela	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	53
Ghana	--	83	--	--	--	--	80	--	--	--	--	--	83
Kenya	--	80	--	--	--	--	87	--	90	94	83	--	81
Nigeria	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	81	--	--	69
Senegal	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	81
S. Africa	--	65	--	--	--	--	--	60	--	--	--	--	72
Uganda	--	74	--	--	--	--	64	--	--	--	--	--	73

1999/2000 survey trends provided by the U.S. Department of State.
PEW RESEARCH CENTER Q9a.

Source: Pew Research Center (2013)

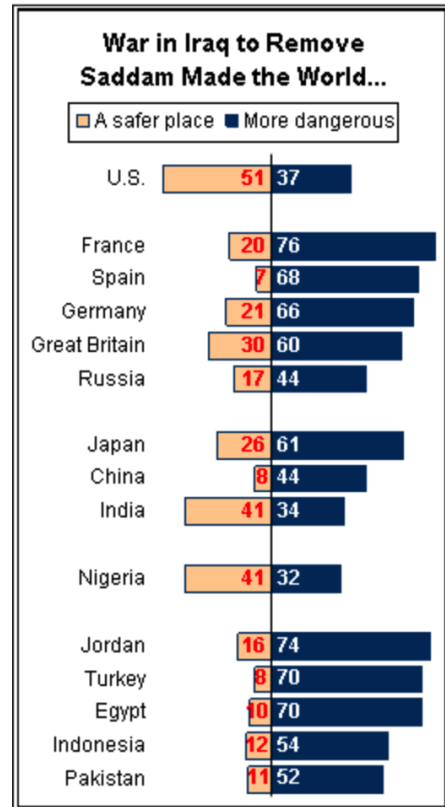
Another implication the surveys exposed was that after the Iraq invasion, many Muslim countries started to perceive the US as a threat to Islam (see Figure 5). A 2005 Pew study found that in all five majority Muslim countries surveyed, solid majorities said they worried that the US might become a military threat to their country. This also includes 65% in Turkey – a longstanding NATO ally.

Figure 5: Could the US Be a Military Threat? (2005)



Source: Pew Research Center (2007)

Figure 6: Is the World a Safer Place After Removing Saddam? (2006)



Source: Pew Research Center (2007)

Another survey from 2006 (Figure 6) shows that all of the interviewed countries (except the United States) believe that the removal of Saddam Hussein and the subsequent war in Iraq did not make the world a safer place. On the contrary, 76% of people in France believed the world was more dangerous, in Spain, it was 68% and in Germany 66%. This feeling was even stronger in Muslim countries - Jordan, Turkey, and Egypt, all scoring above 70%.

As evident from the data above, the invasion contributed significantly to the growing backlash against democracy promotion by the West, particularly by the United States. Many countries, not only in the Middle East but also elsewhere (for instance, Russia), started imposing heightened controls on local and foreign NGOs, making it increasingly difficult for them to operate. Furthermore, due to the forceful way democracy was promoted at that time, some autocrats even managed to win substantial public sympathy by arguing that opposition to Western democracy promotion is resistance not to democracy itself but American interventionism (Carothers, 2006).

3.2. Implications for the Administration's rhetoric on democracy promotion

This chapter will deal with the changes in rhetoric of the US Administrations regarding democracy promotion after the invasion in Iraq. Quite intuitively, both the Bush and the Obama Administrations will be covered.

3.2.1. President's Bush heightened rhetoric

When President Bush took office at the beginning of 2001, democracy promotion was not on top of his foreign policy priorities. On the contrary, already during the presidential campaign, he made it clear that he would not follow the idealistic steps of whose he was accusing Clinton and was proclaiming that realism would re-enter the White House as soon as he is elected (Carothers, 2003). This was reflected in his inaugural address in January 2001 that was focused mainly on domestic issues. Bush called for national unity (probably on purpose, not mentioning the 5-week ballot recount battle in Florida that led to Bush's delayed victory) and challenged Americans to become more engaged in the nation's civic life. The words free or freedom were mentioned six times and liberty just once (Bush, 2001).

However, not long after, a sharp switch in foreign policy priorities occurred after the 9/11 terrorist attacks. President Bush announced the "War on Terror" and launched the Freedom Agenda, an ambitious policy to increase the long-term stability of Arab countries and reduce the appeal of extremist ideology by advancing democratization of the region. With the change in the foreign policy goals, the rhetoric has changed as well. The rhetorical focus on democracy promotion

increased notably during the build-up to the Iraq war when President Bush was trying to gather domestic as well as international support for the invasion. Furthermore, as other rationales for the invasion turned out unsounded – especially the alleged possession of nuclear weapons by Saddam Hussein – the Administration emphasized the democracy rationale even more Carothers (2007). For instance, in February 2003, during his speech at the American Enterprise Institute, he declared that *“The world has a clear interest in the spread of democratic values because stable and free nations do not breed the ideologies of murder”* (Bush, 2003).

The same rhetorical line followed in the subsequent war years. Already in May 2003, the President addressed the “Mission Accomplished” speech (already discussed in Chapter 2.2.) where he proclaimed: *“In the images of celebrating Iraqis, we have also seen the ageless appeal of human freedom [...] And we will stand with the new leaders of Iraq as they establish a government of, by, and for the Iraqi people. The transition from dictatorship to democracy will take time, but it is worth every effort”* (Bush, 2003b). Mitchell (2016) argues that this part of the speech has revealed how the Administration viewed democracy promotion. According to him, with the reference to the “ageless appeal of human freedom,” the President exposed his belief in the universality of freedom and democracy, and it is this belief that underlaid much of Bush’s Freedom Agenda.

Another noticeable speech of Bush was delivered at the 20th anniversary of the National Endowment for Democracy in November 2003. Many interesting points were explaining further the opinions of the Administration. When Bush claimed: *“We are working closely with Iraqi citizens as they prepare a constitution, as they move toward free elections and take increasing responsibility for their own affairs”* (Bush, 2003c) it shows the emphasis given on the procedural part of democracy promotion. However, as explained in Chapter 1.1.2, much more is necessary for a democracy to be functional. And Iraq was a clear example of that.

In another part of the speech, he said: *“The advance of freedom is the calling of our time; it is the calling of our country. From the Fourteen Points to the Four Freedoms, to the Speech at Westminster, America has put our power at the service of principle. We believe that liberty is the design of nature; we believe that liberty is the direction of history”* (ibid). Saying that, he confirmed the specific American understanding of democracy and their unique sense of mission (discussed in

Chapter 1.3.1.). Also, with reference to “liberty as the design of nature” and by claiming that “liberty is the direction of history” he once again expressed his belief in the universality of this concept in the Fukuyaman sense. And lastly, he proclaimed that “*The establishment of a free Iraq at the heart of the Middle East will be a watershed event in the global democratic revolution*” (*ibid*). Mitchell (2016) argues that the claims referring to Iraq as a democracy were not only premature, but most importantly, they put into question the value of democracy because, at this time, Iraq was still rather an “illiberal democracy” as described by Diamond (1999) in Chapter 1.1.2. Also, by constantly describing a war-torn, violent, and destroyed country like Iraq as democratic, the Bush Administration made democracy much less appealing for other states.

Probably the most notable speech of President Bush was his second inaugural address from January 2005. Compared with the first inaugural speech, this one was focused primarily on the foreign policy agenda rather than on domestic issues. The main topics were unsurprisingly the spread of liberty, democracy, and personal freedom around the world. The words free/freedom were used 34x in the speech (comparing to only 6x in 2001), liberty was used 15x (compared to only once in 2001), and democracy/democratic were used 3x in both speeches. Most notably, President Bush set out what came to be known as his “freedom agenda,” declaring that: “*America is a nation with a mission, and that mission comes from our most basic beliefs.... It is the policy of the United States to seek and support the growth of democratic movements and institutions in every nation and culture, with the ultimate goal of ending tyranny in our world*” (Bush, 2005). This, once again, corresponds to the American specific sense of mission regarding democracy promotion (see Chapter 1.3.1.). In other part of the address, he also made a clear reference to the democratic peace theory when proclaiming: “*We are led, by events and common sense, to one conclusion: The survival of liberty in our land increasingly depends on the success of liberty in other lands. The best hope for peace in our world is the expansion of freedom in all the world*” (Bush, 2005).

Overall, Bush’s rhetoric on democracy promotion did not change dramatically after the invasion of Iraq. His strong (primarily rhetorical) commitment to spreading democracy and liberty started already after 9/11. However, during the years after the invasion, it was further reinforced, especially after the initial rationale of the invasion (the weapons of mass destruction) fell off. Despite the bad news coming from Iraq and Afghanistan, President Bush followed his optimistic rhetorical line

until the end of his mandate. According to Mitchell (2016), the gap between what was happening in these countries and how the Administration was referring about it was truly “staggering.”

3.2.2. President’s Obama mixed rhetoric

A clear shift in the rhetoric about democracy promotion occurred only after President Obama took office in 2009. Reflecting the domestic as well as international “backlash” against democracy promotion, he has decided to tone down the rhetoric (Cox, Lynch, & Bouchet, 2013).

However, the fact that Obama’s opinion on democracy and its promotion substantially differs from Bush-like coercive democratization was evident already during his years as a senator. In his 2007 address to the Council of Foreign Relations, he claimed, “*This yearning [to freedom] is not satisfied by simply deposing a dictator and setting up a ballot box. The true desire of all mankind is not only to live free lives, but lives marked by dignity and opportunity; by security and simple justice*” (Obama, 2007). Therefore, in Obama’s view, Schumpeterian proceduralism is clearly insufficient. Obama’s approach goes beyond a classical liberal model of democracy, which separates the economic and the political. Kurki (2013) describes Obama’s discourse as a reform liberal democracy which, in opposition to the classical model, brings economy and politics together to a more holistic view, and notions of equality and opportunity are attached to individual freedoms.

The departure from the heightened pro-democracy rhetoric was particularly noticeable in Obama’s inauguration address. In his speech, he very subtly condemned the actions taken by the Bush Administration and called for unity of the nation and pragmatism. Unlike Bush, Obama did not mention the word democracy, not even once. The words free or freedom were used five times and liberty only once (compared to 34x and 15x respectively in Bush’s second inaugural address). He also tried to open a way to ameliorate the damaged relations with some countries: “*To the Muslim world, we seek a new way forward, based on mutual interest and mutual respect. To those leaders around the globe who seek to sow conflict, or blame their society’s ills on the West, know that your people will judge you on what you can build, not what you destroy*” (Obama, 2009).

As Kurki (2013) notices, Obama's Secretary of State Hillary Clinton spoke in a similar tone. During her confirmation hearings, her formulation of 'the three Ds' – diplomacy, defense, and development – as a framework for American international engagement conspicuously forgot the potential fourth 'D' of democracy.

However, after many criticized the Administration for the lack of engagement in democracy promotion – lamenting about the “dramatic abandonment of democracy” (Muravchik, 2009) or regretting that the President had “changed entirely the focus” of American foreign policy away from democracy concerns (The Wall Street Journal, 2010) – the Administration began to engage in more active rhetoric about democracy promotion in the second half of 2009. Nevertheless, as Carothers (2012) argues, this did not mean a sharp shift away from the initial cautious line. It was rather a gradual stepping-up.

One of the most widely cited Obama's speeches is the one delivered at the University of Cairo in Egypt in June 2009. The speech was addressed mostly to the Muslim world. Already the name “A New Beginning” suggests the tone and the content of the speech. Among other things, Obama explicitly refused to impose democracy on other states by force, and by this, he clearly distanced himself from the previous Administration's strategy. Obama proclaimed: *“I know there has been controversy about the promotion of democracy in recent years, and much of this controversy is connected to the war in Iraq. So let me be clear: No system of government can or should be imposed by one nation by any other.”* However, he did not distance himself from democracy promotion as such, stating: *“That does not lessen my commitment, however, to governments that reflect the will of the people”* (Obama, 2009b).

Another important message and a clear departure from the previous Administration was the refusal of the universal applicability of liberal democracy that was so characteristic for Bush. President Obama also emphasized that the US would not export American-style democracy: *“Each nation gives life to this principle in its own way, grounded in the traditions of its own people. America does not presume to know what is best for everyone, just as we would not presume to pick the outcome of a peaceful election”* (Obama, 2009b).

Nevertheless, he stressed the US' strong commitment to support democratic movements and the universality of human rights: *“But I do have an unyielding belief that all people yearn for certain things: the ability to speak your mind and have a say in how you are governed, confidence in the rule of law and the equal administration of justice; government that is transparent and doesn't steal from the people; the freedom to live as you choose. These are not just American ideas; they are human rights. And that is why we will support them everywhere”* (Obama, 2009b).

The speech of the Secretary of State Clinton at Georgetown University in December 2009 follows the same lines – emphasizing the commitment of the US to promote democracy and universal human rights, but not imposing the American model: *“This Administration, like others before us, will promote, support, and defend democracy. We will relinquish neither the word nor the idea to those who have used it too narrowly, or to justify unwise policies. We stand for democracy not because we want other countries to be like us, but because we want all people to enjoy the consistent protection of the rights that are naturally theirs, whether they were born in Tallahassee or Tehran. Democracy has proven the best political system for making human rights a human reality over the long term”* (Clinton, 2009).

Another remarkable speech by President Obama was addressed the US State Department in May 2011: *“We have the chance to show that America values the dignity of the street vendor in Tunisia more than the raw power of the dictator. There must be no doubt that the United States of America welcomes change that advances self-determination and opportunity [...] The United States supports a set of universal rights. And these rights include free speech, the freedom of peaceful assembly, the freedom of religion, equality for men and women under the rule of law, and the right to choose your own leaders—whether you live in Baghdad or Damascus, Sanaa or Tehran ... it will be the policy of the United States to promote reform across the region, and to support transitions to democracy”* (Obama, 2011). This speech clearly reflects the democratization opportunity sparked by the Arab Spring and the US' firm commitment to support democratic movements.

From all mentioned above, it is evident, that after the cautious beginnings, Obama has eventually engaged in an expansive pro-democracy rhetoric, similarly as his predecessor Bush. Nevertheless, what democracy and its promotion stands for and what it means differs. The following subchapter

will examine how was the policy practice shaped by the invasion and whether the rhetorical commitments of the two Administration matched the reality.

3.3. Implications for the practice of democracy promotion policy

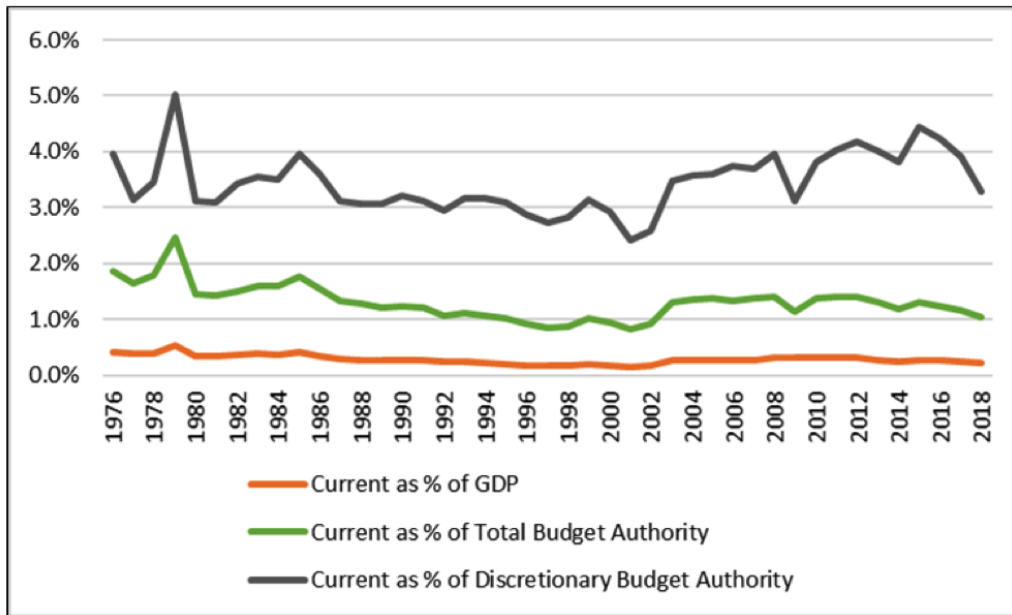
The previous two subchapters documented the deterioration of public opinion on democracy promotion and the differences in rhetoric about this issue between the Bush and the Obama Administration. This subchapter will follow by examining how were these two factors and the invasion more generally reflected in the actual policy practice. It will first focus on the funds dedicated to democracy promotion and how were they shaped by the invasion and the war in Iraq. Later, it will deal with the differences in policy practice as such, focusing mostly on the Obama Administration, since as will be discussed later, the policy practice of Bush did not change significantly.

3.3.1. Democracy promotion funding after Iraq

Firstly, it is important to note that the democracy promotion architecture is very complex. Many different actors ranging from the US government to various NGOs, are involved (see Chapter 1.3.3). Therefore, it is complicated to produce an overall figure that would cover all the financial flows that are connected to US democracy promotion. However, it is possible to observe some general patterns from the data that are available.

According to the Congressional Research Service (2019), 95% - 99% of US democracy promotion aid has been financed within the Department of State and USAID budgets in recent years. Figures 7 and 8 show the development of US foreign assistance over the past decades. Even though democracy promotion is just a part of the whole budget, an increasing trend after the invasion in Iraq is observable.

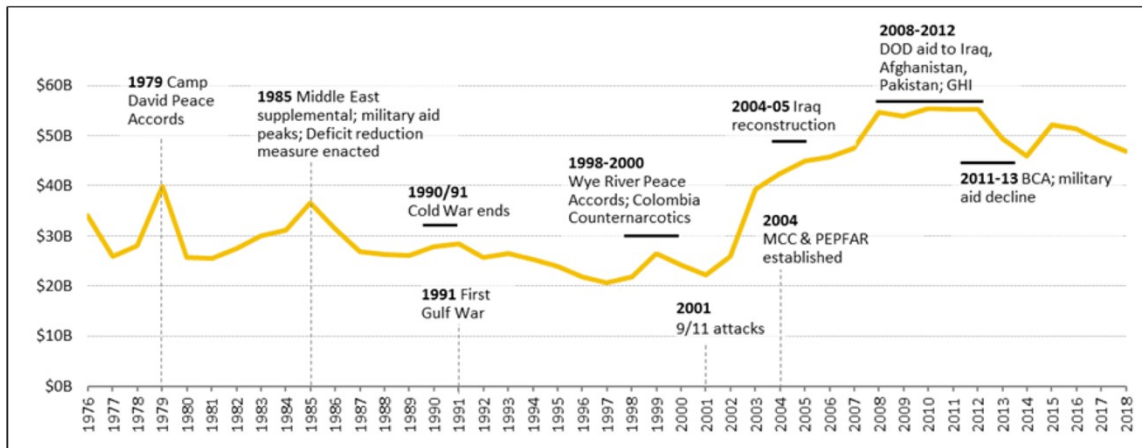
Figure 7: Aid As a Percentage of the Federal Budget and GDP, FY1976-FY2017 Estimate



Source: OMB Historic Budget Tables FY2021; USAID Explorer; CRS calculations. Retrieved from Congressional Research Service (2020).

Figure 8: Foreign Assistance Funding Trends, FY1976-FY2018 Estimate

(in billions of constant FY2018 U.S. dollars)



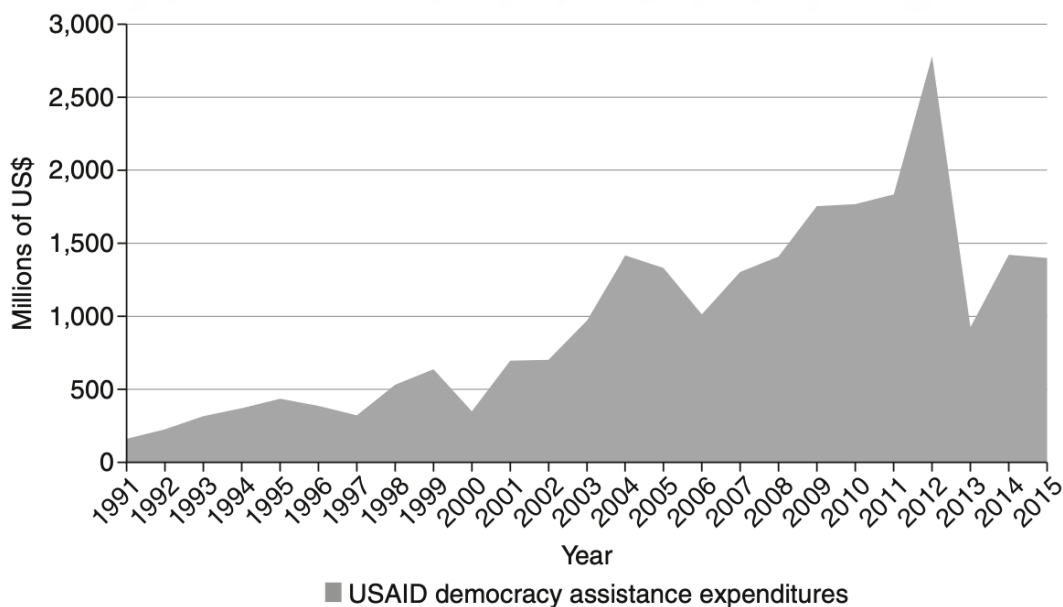
Notes: MCC = Millennium Challenge Corporation; PEPFAR = President’s Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief; GHI = Global Health Initiative; BCA = Budget Control Act; Human. = humanitarian.

Source: USAID Explorer. Retrieved from Congressional Research Service (2020).

As Figure 7 shows, foreign aid expenditures comprised, on average, around 3% of discretionary budget authority and just over 1% of total budget authority each year since 1977. However, the figures have sometimes varied considerably from year to year. Especially after the 2001 terrorist attacks and the subsequent invasions in Afghanistan and Iraq, the expenditures rose sharply. Regarding foreign aid as a % of gross domestic product, it consistently represented just over 1% in the decade following World War II. However, it fell gradually between 0.2% and 0.4% for most years in the past three decades. Therefore, the variance after the invasion is too small to be visible here.

Figure 8 shows the significant events in recent decades that influenced the levels of foreign aid spending. The sharp increase in spending in 2003 is even more evident here than in the previous Figure 7. However, the war in Iraq was not the only reason for the budget surges. The operations in Afghanistan and Pakistan, the creation of the Millennium Challenge Corporation, and growth in counter-narcotic activities have driven funding increases as well. Since 2008, when the gradual withdrawal of the US military forces from Iraq started, the budget stabilized and stopped rising. In 2012 it dropped for the first time in more than a decade, but due to the efforts to address the crisis in Syria, counter-ISIL activities, and humanitarian aid, the budget started increasing again 2014.

Figure 9: USAID Democracy Assistance Expenditures

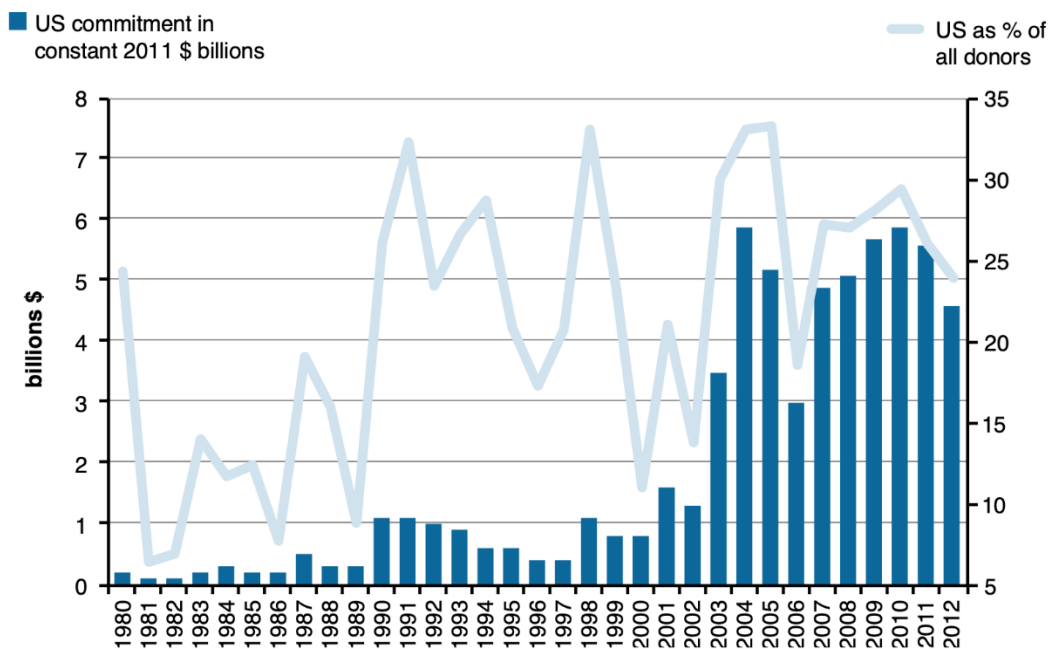


Source: USAID reports. Retrieved from Hornát (2019).

Figure 9 shows an even more precise picture of the democracy promotion funding. It shows the expenditures on democracy assistance of the USAID (under the program area Democracy and Governance). As seen in Figure 11, the budget has varied over time. Nevertheless, a sharp increase is observable after 2001, especially in 2003 due to the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Another set of relevant data dealing with the democracy promotion funding is provided by the Development Assistance Committee of the OECD. As seen in Figure 10, the budget experienced the first noticeable rise after the Cold War. However, the sharpest increases occurred, not surprisingly, at the beginning of the Iraq war in 2003 and 2004, when the budget peaked at \$5.9 billion. After decreasing in the following two years, the budget rose substantially again in 2007 due to the military build-up in Iraq (discussed in Chapter 2.3.). As for the US share of global democracy spending, the US commitment fluctuated considerably between 6.4% (1981) and 33.4% (2005).

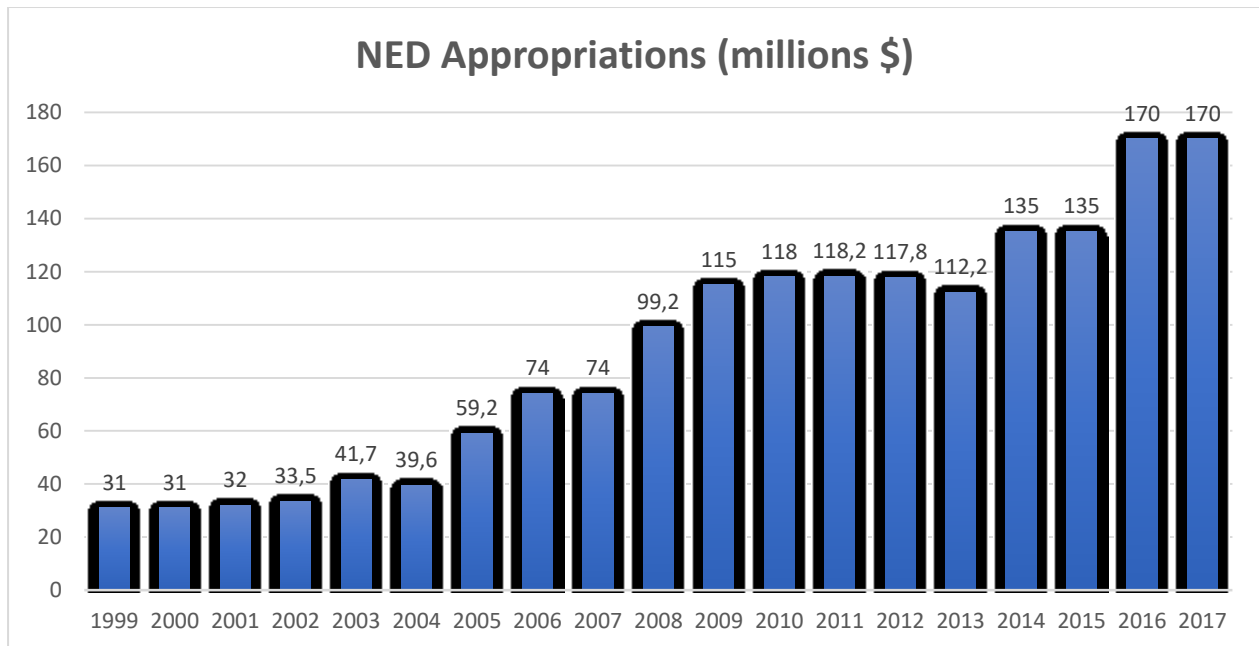
Figure 10: Official Democracy Promotion Spending in US Overseas Development Assistance, 1980-2012



Source: Data from OECD; Development Assistance Committee; Creditor Reporting System (CRS) Aid Activities database. Retrieved from Sedaca & Bouchet (2014).

This trend of increasing funding of democracy promotion through the US government and its agencies is paralleled in the funding of the principal democracy NGOs. The budget of the main one, the National Endowment for Democracy, reflects its work in the context of critical national security issues (see Figure 11). The first impulse for increased funding was the terrorist attacks in 2001, but the significant rise occurred in 2005. In his 2004 State of the Union speech, President Bush asked for a doubling of NED’s budget from less than \$40 million to nearly \$80 million, with the increased amount to be applied to programs in the Greater Middle East. However, Congress eventually approved only \$60 million. NED’s annual appropriations were constantly growing over the following years of the Obama Administration. Only in 2013, the budget decreased to \$112 million after being reduced by the across-the-board budget cuts resulting from sequestration (National Endowment for Democracy, 2020).

Figure 11: NED Appropriations, 1999-2014



Source: NED annual reports; Congressional Research Service (2019)

Overall, a clear trend of a sharp increase in democracy promotion funding after the invasion and during the war in Iraq is observable. However, it is important to keep these numbers in perspective. Foreign assistance accounts for only about one percent of the federal budget, and democracy promotion is just a tiny part of that percentage. It is also important to note that the increases in the

appropriations for democracy promotion programs in the decade after the invasion were accounted for (in some years almost entirely) by operations in Iraq, Afghanistan, and Pakistan (Sedaca & Bouchet, 2014).

3.3.2. Democracy promotion practice under Bush

The war in Iraq (as well as in Afghanistan) was reflected in the institutional architecture of the US democracy promotion. In 2003 the Bush Administration established the Middle East Partnership Initiative (MEPI) to support democracy proponents in the Middle East. The initiative's goals are to foster meaningful and effective partnerships between citizens, civil society, the private sector, and governments in the Middle East and North Africa region to resolve local challenges and promote participatory governance and economic opportunity and reform (The US Middle East Partnership Initiative, 2021). MEPI's approach was stated to be bottom-up, focusing on activities and programs at the grass-root level. However, as Hornát (2019) points out, a study conducted two years after the Initiative started revealed that a top-down approach focusing on regional Governments was applied instead in the majority of programs (Yerkes & Wittes, 2004). Moreover, Carothers (2007) criticized MEPI for not being ambitious enough and for staying safely within the comfort zone of autocratic leaders accustomed to engaging in partial political reforms for the sake of alleviating pressures for greater change.

Another institution established by the Bush Administration is Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC), already discussed in Chapter 1.3.3. This organization was the first to provide foreign assistance under various conditions related to civil liberties and human rights, and good governance (Millennium Challenge Corporation, 2021). The Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice also established a Foreign Assistance Framework that is still operational today, which includes Governing Justly and Democratically (GJD) as one of its key objectives (Congressional Research Service, 2019).

However, in general, Bush's democracy promotion has been widely discredited and overshadowed by its close association with the Iraq war. His policy in the rest of the Middle East temporarily shifted from the traditional course of supporting autocratic Arab allies but has returned to it at the end of his second term. Beyond the Middle East in countries such as China, Russia, Kazakhstan, Nigeria, Pakistan, and many other places, Bush's policy was semi-realist. Despite the sweeping

rhetoric, the actual policy practice was rather a combination of some low-key, pro-democracy diplomacy and assistance. However, this was primarily driven by economic and security interests that often conflicted with support for democracy (Carothers, 2007).

Mitchell (2016) argues that the positive effects of Bush's democracy promotion efforts were sparse. Despite hopes that the establishment of a free Iraq would be a watershed for global democracy and the thought that the Middle East was experiencing a "Baghdad Spring" in 2004-5, the region remained trapped in authoritarian rule. Furthermore, according to the Freedom House, when President Bush was leaving office, only four countries in the world were freer than at its beginning (85 in 1999 vs. 89 in 2009) (Freedom House, 2009). This is undoubtedly a vast simplification but looking at the data regarding specific countries where the United States tried to impose democracy by force, the outcome is not much better. Before the invasion, the Freedom House labeled Iraq a "not free," scoring 7 in both political rights and civil liberties on a 1-7 scale (with 1 being most free and 7 being least free). After more than six years of war, at the end of Bush's mandate in 2009, Iraq was still "not free," improving its score in both areas only marginally to 6. The situation in Afghanistan is similar. In 2002, the country scored 6 in both areas, labeled as "not free" and in 2009, it improved only in the area of political rights to 5, however still with the "not free" status (Freedom House, 2009).

In conclusion, the policy practice during the Bush Administration did not fundamentally change after the invasion of Iraq. It kept following the same semi-realist line that had been characteristic for the US democracy promotion in general for more than three decades. However, the (highly problematic) distinguishing features was the centrality of military intervention, the focus on the Middle East, and the association with the war on terrorism (Carothers, 2007).

Nevertheless, apart from considerable increases in democracy promotion funding and creating a few new institutions, the "democracy bureaucracy" continued its business as usual, and not even the substantial deterioration of the domestic public opinion changed it. However, this is quite intuitive since by changing its rhetoric and strategy, the Administration would admit the many failures of its Freedom Agenda. Therefore, it was only after the election of President Obama when some changes were observable.

3.3.3. Democracy promotion practice under Obama

When President Obama took office in 2009, he inherited a seriously damaged legitimacy and credibility of American democracy promotion. As evident from the previous chapters, by a close association of democracy promotion with the war in Iraq, not only did the domestic public support for the US' engagement abroad decline substantially, but also the standing of the US as a benign exporter of democracy was questioned. Therefore, in this context of damaged American pro-democratic credibility, the Obama Administration perceived a clear need to recalibrate American democracy policy (Cox, Lynch, & Bouchet, 2013). The previous subchapter demonstrated that a significant change indeed occurred at the rhetorical level. The question is whether the changes in the policy practice matched the rhetoric shift.

Already as a presidential candidate, Obama made clear that democracy promotion would not be the centerpiece of his agenda. Instead, he placed it alongside economic and security interests, and subordinated it to those when required. This led some analysts to label the new Administration as realist (Thayer, 2010). And indeed, the first Obama's steps were rather pragmatic. After years of the "cold shoulder" or confrontational diplomacy towards autocratic governments that, as the Administration argued, had not produced any noticeable gains for democracy in these countries, Obama reinitiated talks with Russia and some other autocratic leaders such as the Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah, Venezuela's Hugo Chávez, Syria's Bashar al-Assad, Cuba's Fidel Castro and the Burmese military junta. The Administration hoped that a patient diplomatic engagement might bring some results. However, trying to get along with various non-democratic regimes was perceived as backing down on democracy (Carothers, 2013).

Some observers, especially the conservative ones, interpreted the first years of Obama's presidency as "dramatic abandonment of democracy" (Muravchik, 2009) and regretted that the President had "changed entirely the focus" of American foreign policy away from democracy concerns (The Wall Street Journal, 2010). However, Carothers (2013) argues that this harsh criticism of Obama's initial recalibration on democracy promotion stemmed from a mythical view of Bush where these authors compared his lofty promises with Obama's actual practice, not realizing the incomparability of these two. Similarly, the Administration officials perceived the change of tone and

messaging only as a prelude to putting into place a more considered and sustainable approach over time. The fact that, for instance, no large-scale cuts in US democracy aid and in engagement on human rights occurred only proves the point (Carothers, 2012).

Furthermore, initially, many believed that as a part of the democracy promotion recalibration, the Obama Administration would reduce, or even dismantle the flagships of Bush's Freedom Agenda, most notably the Millennium Challenge Corporation and the Middle East Partnership Initiative (MEPI). However, following the pragmatic line the Administration has discreetly enabled these institutions to develop, evolve and mature, allowing them to expand where possible, while moderating them when required (Alessandri, Hassan, & Reinert, 2015). Already in the first year, the MCC funding for the greater Middle East was increased by 70% (Patterson, 2012) and MEPI continued to be funded approximately at the same levels as during the Bush Administration (Alessandri, Hassan, & Reinert, 2015).

Yet, some authors argued that Obama's commitments to democracy support were inconsistent (Sedaca & Bouchet, 2014), lacked precision and that the policy itself was more reactive than proactive (Kurki, 2013). Another underlying feature was the tension between the will to support democracy on one hand, and the pragmatic engagement with non-democratic governments on the other. Both of these manifested themselves clearly after the problematic Iran's elections in June 2009. The large-scale protests it provoked and that became known as the Green Revolution were harshly repressed by the Iranian regime and the Obama Administration was confronted with the dilemma of which side to support. Only after the repressions intensified and more Western Governments criticized the Iranian regime did Obama tilt towards supporting the pro-democracy movements (Carothers, 2013).

However, soon after, President Obama was pulled into even more active democracy promotion despite his original intention, due to major international developments. Carothers (2013) points out that this was also the case of his predecessors – George H. W. Bush by the fall of the Berlin Wall and the collapse of the Soviet Union, Bill Clinton by Haiti and the Balkans and George W. Bush by the terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001.

Therefore, when the Arab Spring broke out in 2011, it presented the Obama Administration a complicated set of policy challenges but also opportunities. Here, once again, the reaction to the

unpredicted series of events was reluctant and selective. In countries such as Tunisia and Egypt, where the democratization process seemed promising, the Administration eventually provided diplomatic support (Sedaca & Bouchet, 2014). On the other hand, with other strategic partners, the Administration was silent despite protests taking place. This was particularly notable in the cases of Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, or Morocco, where the US settled with promises of some reforms. However, these were imposed top-down, they were very limited in scope and gradual at best (Alessandri, Hassan, & Reinert, 2015).

The only case during the Arab Spring where the Administration decided to join Britain and France in a military strike was in Libya against the regime of Muammar Qaddafi. However, the US was emphasizing from the very beginning that it was aiming only at avoiding a humanitarian disaster, not promoting political change (Carothers, 2013). This impression of the US' uncertainty about engagement in democracy support in the region has been reinforced by the confused and cautious reaction to the military coup in Egypt in 2013 (Sedaca & Bouchet, 2014). Due to all discussed above, many authors assess the US engagement in the Arab Spring as a missed chance to fully back what could have been a historic opportunity for democracy in the Arab world (Sedaca & Bouchet, 2014; Carothers, 2013; Alessandri, Hassan, & Reinert, 2015).

Regarding the content of democracy that was promoted under President Obama, a slight conceptual shift is observable. As discussed in the previous chapter, Obama argued for a reformed model of liberal democracy. He wanted to shift democracy policy and programming towards a broader rights-based, developmental and civil-society approach, beyond the focus on electoral assistance and institutional capacity-building that had been prominent in previous Administrations (Cox, Lynch, & Bouchet, 2013).

However, many authors argue that this shift was mainly rhetoric and was not fully reflected in the actual policy practice. Kurki (2013) argues that despite the change in the Obama Administration's discourse, there has been little evidence of any tangible transition to systematically reform the practices of the neoliberal model promoted by Bush in the US State Department and USAID discourses. Bridoux & Russell (2013) hold the same view. When analyzing democracy promotion in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) under Obama, they acknowledge that there has been less interventionism and less control over actors and processes compared to the democratization of

Iraq under Bush. There was also some evidence of broader engagement at the grass-root level. For instance, under the Obama Administration, MEPI funding for local NGOs was set at fifteen percent, while under the Bush Administration, it was in single digits (Alessandri, Hassan, & Reinert, 2015). However, despite all this, the main focus was again on promoting liberal democracy, emphasizing an open economy and free markets without sufficient flexibility to allow for a locally shaped social grass-root conceptualization of democracy to emerge (Bridoux & Russell, 2013).

During Obama's second term, the security situation in MENA deteriorated substantially with complex civil wars in Syria and Iraq and the rise of the so-called Islamic State, which have exploited the power vacuums left by crumbling regimes and the withdrawal of the US from Iraq. The reaction of the Administration was moving back towards the old approach of seeking stability and security while relying on non-democratic allies in the MENA region at the expense of political transformation (Alessandri, Hassan, & Reinert, 2015).

On September 10, 2014, President Obama announced that the US would form an international coalition that will "degrade and destroy" the so-called Islamic State. He asserted the necessity for airstrikes, the need to support opposition movements inside Syria and Iraq, humanitarian aid, and the use of broader preventative counter-terrorism instruments (Obama, 2014). However, as Alessandri, Hassan, & Reinert (2015) argue, this strategy is problematic because trying to deal with MENA's collapsing security structure without addressing the broader regional context, which favors restricted civil societies and well-established autocratic elites, means only dealing with the *symptoms* of the current regional crisis rather than addressing the underlying *cause*. Furthermore, forming a coalition with some of the region's most authoritarian states means turning a blind eye to their contribution to the crisis and their human rights violations carried out in the name of domestic "wars on terror" (Alessandri, Hassan, & Reinert, 2015).

From all discussed above, it is evident that Obama's two terms did not substantially change the continuous US democracy promotion's trajectory. While the rhetoric shift aimed at overcoming the negative legacy of the previous Administration was apparent at the beginning of Obama's first term, the unexpected turn of international events pushed the Administration to engage in democracy promotion more than initially proclaimed (similarly as the 9/11 terrorist attacks for

Bush). Eventually, the President followed the expansive pro-democracy rhetoric, which significantly exceeded the actual policy practice (again, in a similar manner as Bush did). Also, the semi-realist framework with its contradicting policies where some favor democracy support while others emphasize maintaining relationships with non-democratic allies for security or economic purposes is applicable for both Administrations. Moreover, the promised reform of the liberal democratic model promoted by Bush towards a broader developmental conception occurred only incrementally under Obama.

Therefore, the overall Obama's democracy promotion efforts can be characterized more as a continuity of a long-term line than as a substantial shift. The preservation of most of the institutions and programs is further proving this point.

Conclusion

For more than a decade, phrases such as the “decline of democracy,” “democratic rollback,” or “democratic backsliding” have been the buzzwords in the public debate. Even the newly elected US President Biden expressed concerns that the “democracy is in peril.” Many authors (i.e., Carothers, 2012; Sedaca & Bouchet, 2014; Plattner, 2015; Norris, 2017; Diamond, 2019) trace this trend back to the mid-2000s, which corresponds with the war in Iraq. Even though the global democracy decline can hardly be attributed to this one particular event, there is a broad consensus that the invasion of Iraq in 2003 and the subsequent war had far-reaching implications not only for the country and the whole MENA region but also for the United States' policy of democracy promotion.

The focus of this thesis was the implications in three specific areas. First, the changes in the public opinion on democracy promotion were analyzed. Not surprisingly, the fact that President Bush labeled the invasion as a democratizing mission and thus tightly associated democracy promotion with the bloody war and forced regime change caused irreversible damage to the policy's image and fundamentally questioned its legitimacy. As the polls have shown, the domestic support for democracy promotion experienced a significant drop in the years that followed the invasion. Not only were the Americans less eager to support foreign aid and assistance to promote democracy

abroad, but they were also largely against the idea that it was the role of the United States to help establish democracy in other countries. Moreover, as the war progressed and there were still no signs of an emerging democratic Iraq, the Americans also lost trust in the ability of their Government to help other countries become democratic effectively. It is no surprise that these declining numbers correlated with the overall support for the war.

The invasion and the war in Iraq not only changed the domestic public opinion but also the international perception of the United States as the leading democracy exporter. Quite intuitively, the United States' favorability largely declined, most notably in the Muslim world. The declining and later stagnating favorability of the United States reversed only after the election of President Barack Obama in 2009. However, with the indecisive response to the Arab Spring, the numbers started falling once again. Furthermore, as a result of the invasion, many Muslim countries (including a longstanding NATO – Turkey) started to perceive the US as a threat to Islam. And last, all of the interviewed countries (except the United States) believe that the removal of Saddam Hussein and the subsequent war in Iraq did not make the world a safer place (in some countries, more than 70% believed the opposite).

As evident from the data above, the invasion contributed significantly to the growing backlash against democracy promotion by the West, particularly by the United States. Many countries, not only in the Middle East but also elsewhere (for instance, Russia), started imposing heightened controls on local and foreign NGOs. Furthermore, due to the forceful way democracy was promoted, some autocrats even managed to win substantial public sympathy by arguing that opposition to Western democracy promotion is resistance not to democracy itself but American interventionism.

The second implication that was analyzed in this thesis was the rhetoric of the Bush and the Obama Administration. Overall, Bush's rhetoric on democracy promotion did not change dramatically after the invasion of Iraq. His strong (primarily rhetorical) commitment to spreading democracy and liberty started already after 9/11. However, during the years after the invasion, it was further reinforced, especially after the initial rationale of the invasion (the weapons of mass destruction) fell off. However, despite the bad news coming from Iraq and Afghanistan, President Bush

followed his optimistic rhetorical line until the end of his mandate because by reversing it, he would essentially acknowledge the shortcomings of his policy.

On the contrary, the rhetoric of the Obama Administration differed substantially at the beginning of his term. The President wanted to distance himself from the negative legacy of the previous Administration. Therefore, reflecting the domestic and international “backlash” against democracy promotion, he has decided to tone down the rhetoric. However, due to the criticism that he was abandoning democracy at all, and more importantly, due to the international developments, Obama has eventually engaged in expansive pro-democracy rhetoric in a similar manner as his predecessor. Nevertheless, there was a clear shift (at least rhetorical) about what democracy and its promotion stand for. Contrary to Bush, Obama argued for a reform liberal model based on developmental and civil-society approaches, beyond the focus on electoral assistance and institutional capacity-building.

The last of this thesis part was devoted to the implications of the invasion for the actual policy practice. First, a clear trend of a sharp increase in democracy promotion funding was proved by various figures showing budgets of institutions such as the USAID or NED. Following that, the actual policy practice of the two Administrations was examined.

Once again, the policy practice during the Bush Administration did not change fundamentally. It kept following the same semi-realist line that had been characteristic for the US democracy promotion since the end of the Cold war, however, with some (problematic) distinguishing features such as the centrality of military intervention, the focus on the Middle East, and the association with the war on terrorism. Nevertheless, apart from considerable increases in democracy promotion funding and establishing a few new institutions, such as MCC and MEPI, the “democracy bureaucracy” continued its business as usual, despite the substantial deterioration of domestic public opinion.

When Obama took office in 2009, he inherited largely damaged American pro-democratic credibility. Therefore, the Obama Administration perceived a clear need to recalibrate the policy. Thus, at the beginning of his first term, democracy promotion was far from being a centerpiece of

his agenda. On the contrary, the Administration reinitiated talks with many autocrats, arguing that the confrontational policy of Bush was not effective. However, due to the unexpected turn of events, most notably, the Arab Spring in 2011, the Administration ended up engaging in expansive pro-democracy rhetoric, which significantly exceeded the actual policy practice (in a similar way as Bush did). He also continued within the semi-realist framework with its contradicting policies where some favor democracy support while others emphasize maintaining relationships with non-democratic allies for security or economic purposes. Moreover, the promised reform of the liberal democratic model promoted by Bush towards a broader developmental conception occurred only incrementally under Obama. Therefore, the overall Obama's democracy promotion efforts can be characterized more as a continuity of a long-term line than as a substantial shift. The preservation of most of the institutions and programs is further proving this point.

Hence, from all mentioned above arises a question whether the Invasion of Iraq was really such a turning point for the US democracy promotion. I would argue that in part, it was. It changed the domestic and international public opinion substantially, and for a certain period also the rhetoric of the Obama Administration. However, the analysis of the actual policy practice shows rather a path-dependency trend. Like many other previous Administrations, even the one of Obama eventually engaged in democracy support despite its initial reluctance. Therefore, I would argue that since democracy and the sense of mission to promote it has been such an integral part of the American identity, democracy promotion (though in various forms) is and will remain intrinsic to US foreign policy.

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