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Electing To Fight

Why Emerging Democracies Go To War

by Edward D. Mansfield and Jack Snyder

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To our fathers, Edwin Mansfield and Robert Snyder

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Chapter 1

The Perilous Path to the Democratic Peace

No mature democracies have ever fought a war against each other. Consequently, conventional wisdom holds that promoting the spread of democracy will promote world peace and security. President Bill Clinton made this ambition a central theme of his foreign policy.¹ In the wake of the September 11, 2001, terrorist attack, President George W. Bush came to believe that U.S. security might require preventive wars to unseat dangerous despots so as to build the “infrastructure of democracy” abroad and create a “balance of power that favors freedom.”² Declaring that American security from terrorism depends on the success of democracy in Iraq and its neighbors, Bush argued that “sixty years of Western nations excusing and accommodating the lack of freedom in the Middle East did nothing to make us safe—because in the long run, stability cannot be purchased at the expense of liberty.”³

Such views strike a resonant chord across the entire spectrum of American opinion. Since the time of Woodrow Wilson, idealists in the United States have envisioned a global transformation in which peace and democracy are mutually reinforcing. The collapse of the Soviet

1. 1994 State of the Union address, “Transcript of Clinton’s Address,” *New York Times*, January 26, 1994, p. A17.

2. Executive Office of the President, *National Security Strategy of the United States* (September 2002), pp. 21, 29.

3. George W. Bush, “Remarks by the President at the 20th Anniversary of the National Endowment for Democracy,” Washington, D.C., November 6, 2003, reported in David Sanger, “Bush Asks Lands in Mideast to Try Democratic Ways,” *New York Times*, November 7, 2003, p. A1.

Union and the rising danger of global terrorism created conditions in which these longstanding ideals seemed, to some, both achievable and urgent.⁴ U.S.-based activist movements have increasingly pressed a transnational agenda in which “all good things go together”—global democratic accountability, global civil society, improved human rights, and peace.⁵ Indeed, over the long run, it is probably true that the further spread of democracy will promote global peace and stability.

In the short run, however, the beginning stages of transitions to democracy often give rise to war rather than peace. Since the end of the Cold War, this causal connection between democratization and war has been especially striking, but the fundamental pattern is as old as democracy itself, dating at least to the French Revolution. Not all democratic transitions are dangerous; as we explain in this book, the chance of war arises mainly in those transitional states that lack the strong political institutions needed to make democracy work (such as an effective state, the rule of law, organized parties that compete in fair elections, and professional news media). When these institutions are absent or weak, politicians have incentives to resort to violent nationalist appeals, tarring their opponents as enemies of the nation in order to prevail in electoral competition.

In democratizing states, nationalism is an ideology with tremendous appeal for elites whose privileges are threatened. It can be used to convince newly empowered constituencies that the cleavage between the privileged and the masses is unimportant compared to the cleavages that divide nations, ethnic groups, or races. Nationalism holds that the people as a whole have the right to self-rule, but it does not necessarily promise that the government should be strictly accountable to the average voter through democratic processes governed by the rule of law. Nationalist rhetoric demands government for the people, but not necessarily by the people.

States risk nationalist violence when they attempt to transition to democracy without institutions of public accountability. President Bush claimed that “it is the practice of democracy that makes a nation ready for democracy, and every nation can start on this path.”⁶ However, our review of the evidence shows that this argument (which most democracy

activists advocate) is incorrect and dangerously so. In fact, ill-prepared attempts to democratize weak states—such as the recent cases of Yugoslavia, Pakistan, Rwanda, and Burundi—may lead to costly warfare in the short run, and may delay or prevent real progress toward democracy over the long term.

Over thirty years ago, Dankwart Rustow issued a call for an approach to the study of democratization addressing questions of both process and sequence.⁷ He complained that existing approaches emphasized the prerequisites for democracy—such as wealth, literacy, and a large middle class—or its functional requirements, such as the rule of law and a free press. These approaches correspond to what Thomas Carothers disparages as the “check-list orientation” of U.S. democracy assistance programs, which holds that democracy will emerge when the full inventory of prerequisites has been installed, regardless of the order in which these factors are put into place.⁸

Rustow argued, in contrast, that the stability of democratic consolidation depends on the sequence in which the requisites appear on the historical stage. The “ingredients [of democracy] must be assembled,” he contended, “one at a time, in a manageable sequence of tasks.” In Rustow’s formulation, democratization typically goes awry when it precedes the emergence of a consensus on national identity. “The hardest struggles in a democracy are those against the birth defects of political community.”⁹ A number of leading scholars of democratization and political change made similar arguments around the same time: Robert Dahl, Eric Nordlinger, and Samuel Huntington all pointed out that democratic transitions are most successful when strong political institutions are developed before popular political participation increases.¹⁰ Such ideas

4. Francis Fukuyama, “The End of History,” *The National Interest*, No. 16 (Summer 1989), pp. 3–18; and Charles Krauthammer, “The Unipolar Moment,” *Foreign Affairs, America and the World*, 1990/91, Vol. 70, No. 1, pp. 23–33.

5. The term is from Robert Packenham, *Liberal America and the Third World* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1973).

6. George W. Bush, “Remarks by the President,” November 6, 2003.

7. Dankwart Rustow, “Transitions to Democracy: Toward a Dynamic Model,” *Comparative Politics*, Vol. 2, No. 2 (April 1970), pp. 337–363, reprinted in Lisa Anderson, ed., *Transitions to Democracy* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999), pp. 14–41.

8. Thomas Carothers, *Aiding Democracy Abroad* (Washington, D.C.: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 1999); see also Carothers, “The End of the Transition Paradigm,” *Journal of Democracy*, Vol. 13, No. 1 (2002), pp. 5–21.

9. Rustow, “Transitions to Democracy,” pp. 34–35. Juan Linz and Alfred Stepan, *Problems of Democratic Transition and Consolidation* (Baltimore, Md.: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), p. 5, discuss democratic consolidation as the moment when democracy becomes “the only game in town.”

10. Robert A. Dahl, *Polyarchy: Participation and Opposition* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1971); Eric Nordlinger, “Political Development, Time Sequences and Rates of Change,” in James L. Finkle and Robert Grable, *Political Development and Social Change*, 2d ed. (New York: Wiley, 1971), p. 458; and Samuel P. Huntington, *Political Order in Changing Societies* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1968).

about sequencing have not, however, played a central role in much subsequent scholarship or public policymaking on democratic transitions. We believe they should.

In this book, therefore, we examine the process and sequence of democratization to identify when and how it leads to peace or may instead increase the risk of war. We use statistical evidence to establish general patterns, and we use case studies to trace causal mechanisms. Our research shows that incomplete democratic transitions—those that get stalled before reaching the stage of full democracy—increase the chance of involvement in international war in countries where governmental institutions are weak at the outset of the transition. In such transitional states, as we show in Chapter 5, the risk of war goes up by a factor of four to fifteen. Seven percent of all wars since 1816 are associated with an incomplete democratic transition. Democratic transition is only one of many causes of war, but it is a potent one.

In the rest of this chapter, we discuss some of the many “wars of democratization” that have taken place, especially since the end of the Cold War, but also reaching back as far as the French Revolution. We distinguish the conditions under which wars are most likely: a transition toward democracy that is incomplete; where institutions are too weak to manage the upsurge in the political power of newly enfranchised masses; and where rising or declining elites, or both, play the nationalist card in an attempt to harness that power. We outline the causal mechanisms that we explain more fully in Chapters 2 and 3. We conclude this chapter by stressing why it is crucial to take these dangers into account in devising the foreign policy responses of the United States and the international community to the potential challenges posed by troubled democratizing states.

Wars of Democratization

The decade following the end of the Cold War witnessed some peaceful transitions to democracy, yet a number of turbulent experiments with democratic politics led instead to bloody wars. In 1991, Yugoslavia broke up into separate warring nations within six months of elections in which ethnic nationalism was a powerful factor.¹¹ In the wake of the Soviet collapse, popular sentiment expressed in the streets and at the ballot box fueled warfare between Armenia and Azerbaijan over the disputed enclave

11. Susan Woodward, *Balkan Tragedy* (Washington, D.C.: The Brookings Institution, 1995), p. 17.

of Nagorno-Karabakh.¹² As Peru and Ecuador democratized fitfully during the 1980s and 1990s, troubled elected governments gained popularity by provoking a series of armed clashes that culminated in a war in the upper Amazon in 1995.¹³ Several years after the collapse of Ethiopia’s Dergue dictatorship, the country’s elected government fought a bloody border war from 1998 to 2000 with Eritrea, which had just adopted, though not yet implemented, a democratic constitution.¹⁴

In an especially worrisome case, the nuclear-armed, elected regimes of India and Pakistan fought the Kargil War in 1999. After the 1988 death of Pakistani military dictator Zia ul-Haq, a series of revolving-door elected civilian governments had presided over a rise in militant Islamic efforts to liberate majority-Muslim Kashmir from Indian control. In Kashmir itself, the restoration of elections after Indira Gandhi’s period of “emergency” authoritarian rule (1975–77) had polarized politics and led to violent conflict between Muslims and the state. These turbulent processes culminated in the 1999 war, when Pakistani forces infiltrated across the mountainous frontier in northern Kashmir. The war broke out as Pakistan was taking steps toward greater democratization, including constitutional changes in 1997 that were intended to strengthen the powers of elected civilian rulers.¹⁵

Violence inside some unstable democratizing states also spilled across borders during the 1990s. Democratization played a catalytic role in the horrible slaughters that engulfed central Africa. The 1993 elections in Burundi—even though internationally mandated, free, and fair—intensified ethnic polarization between the Hutu and Tutsi ethnic groups, resulting in some 200,000 deaths. In neighboring Rwanda, an internationally orchestrated power-sharing accord, which was intended to usher in more pluralistic and open politics, instead created the conditions for the 1994 genocide that killed nearly a million Tutsi as well as some moderate

12. Stuart Kaufman, *Modern Hatreds: The Symbolic Politics of Ethnic War* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2001), chap. 3.

13. David R. Mares, *Violent Peace: Militarized Interstate Bargaining in Latin America* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001), chap. 7.

14. Tekeste Negash and Kjetil Tronvoll, *Brothers at War: Making Sense of the Eritrean-Ethiopian War* (Oxford: James Currey, 2000). We discuss these cases from the 1990s in Chapter 8.

15. On India, see Ian Talbot, *India and Pakistan* (London: Arnold, 2000), p. 275; on Pakistan, Hasan-Askari Rizvi, *Military, State and Society in Pakistan* (New York: St. Martin’s, 2000), chap. 10. Bruce Russett and John Oneal, *Triangulating Peace: Democracy, Interdependence, and International Organizations* (New York: Norton, 2001), p. 48, discuss whether the Kargil War should be counted as a war between democracies.

Hutu.¹⁶ The Tutsi exile army based in Uganda invaded to stop the genocide. Its military victory forced Hutu refugees, including many of the genocide's perpetrators, into neighboring Congo, where further fighting involving the troops of several states has led to millions of additional deaths since 1998.

Elsewhere, democratic transitions coincided with renewed or intensified secessionist wars. In East Timor, a favorable vote on independence from Indonesia in an internationally mandated 1999 referendum spurred Indonesian-backed Timorese militias to unleash large-scale backlash violence, creating an international refugee crisis. Newly democratizing Russia fought two wars against its breakaway province of Chechnya. Vladimir Putin won election in 2000 as Russia's president mainly on the popularity of his plan to invade Chechnya to clean out the supposed lair of terrorists and brigands. In all of these varied settings during the 1990s, the turbulent beginning phase of democratization in states with weak political institutions contributed to cross-border violence.

WARS OF DEMOCRATIZATION AS A CHRONIC DANGER IN HISTORY

War-prone transitions to democracy were not just an aberration of the 1990s. Since the origin of modern mass politics around the time of the French Revolution, virtually all of the great powers turned belligerent and fought popular wars during the early phases of their experiments with democracy. In eighteenth-century France, the popular patriotism unleashed by the revolution sustained a mass army that fought the revolution's perceived enemies all across Europe. This tragedy was, as Karl Marx put it, repeated as farce when Louis Napoleon, elected as the French president in 1849, touted his military victories to sustain his power in a constitutional, semi-electoral regime. Even in Britain's relatively painless transition to democracy, the urban middle classes enfranchised by the Reform Bill of 1832 provided the enthusiasm that fueled both Palmerston's policy of commercial imperialism and the Crimean War.¹⁷ Germany's more tortured path toward democracy created the impetus toward its five aggressive wars between 1864 and 1939. As monarchical Prussia transformed itself into the democratizing German Empire, Chancellor Otto von Bismarck forged a war-prone political alliance between the nationalist middle classes and the militarist elites, embodied in a political system that combined a legislature elected by broad suffrage

and governments appointed by the Kaiser.¹⁸ Japan's early phase of democratic politics was similarly marked by popular, militarized nationalism. When the Great Depression hit the democratizing Japan of the late 1920s, the democratic, free-trade coalition of workers and capital in export-oriented consumer industries was soon supplanted by an imperialist coalition that was led by the military and had strong electoral support.¹⁹ In the United States of the 1830s and 1840s, the Jacksonian reforms that installed mass democracy by reducing restrictions on suffrage and expanding the direct election of officials coincided with an upsurge of popular support in the slave states for a war to gain territory at Mexico's expense.²⁰

As we show in our statistical analyses (presented in Chapters 4, 5, and 6), this historical pattern holds true not only for great powers, but also for states in general. Although mature democracies have never fought a war against each other, incomplete transitions from autocracy toward democracy are fraught with the danger of violent conflict in states whose political institutions are weak.

In this book, we focus on democratization and international war, but other studies have suggested that when institutions in democratizing states are weak, the risks of internal ethnic conflict and civil war also rise.²¹ Comprehensive studies of civil wars have found that the regime type most likely to experience civil war is a mixed regime, one that is partly democratic and partly authoritarian, with poorly developed state institutions.²² The causal mechanisms specified in our theory may also help to account for this finding.

18. Hans-Ulrich Wehler, *The German Empire 1871–1918* (Leamington Spa/Dover, N.H.: Berg, 1985).

19. Louise Young, *Japan's Total Empire: Manchuria and the Culture of Wartime Imperialism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998).

20. John M. Owen, "Perceptions and the Limits of Liberal Peace: The Mexican-American and Spanish-American Wars," in Miriam Elman, ed., *Paths to Peace: Is Democracy the Answer?* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1997), p. 170; for his larger study, see Owen, *Liberal Peace, Liberal War* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1997), pp. 113–124.

21. Jack Snyder, *From Voting to Violence: Democratization and Nationalist Conflict* (New York: Norton, 2000), applies this theory to both civil wars and international wars. That book, however, presents only case study evidence, not statistical analyses.

22. Daniel Esty, Jack Goldstone, Ted Robert Gurr, Barbara Harff, Marc Levy, Geoffrey Dalbey, Pamela Surko, and Alan Unger, "State Failure Task Force Report: Phase II Findings," July 1998; see also James Fearon and David Laitin, "Ethnicity, Insurgency, and Civil War," *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 97, No. 1 (February 2003), pp. 75–90, especially pp. 84–85.

16. Gérard Prunier, *The Rwanda Crisis: History of a Genocide* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995), chaps. 3 and 5.

17. Kingsley Martin, *The Triumph of Lord Palmerston* (London: G. Allen & Unwin, 1924).

What Conditions Make the Democratization Process Less Dangerous?

Although the process of democratization tends to increase the risk of war, many countries go through the process peacefully. During the 1980s and 1990s, numerous states consolidated their democratic transitions fairly successfully with little if any external or internal violence. These fortunate cases included many in the southern cone of South America, in Northeastern Europe, and in East Asia. South Africa, too, despite some internal violence, experienced a reasonably smooth transition.

These countries had a number of important advantages. They tended to enjoy relatively high per-capita income and literacy; thus, their citizens had the resources and skills to build the institutions and civil society organizations that democracy needs. Before the transition began, many of these success cases had well-developed state institutions, particularly administrative bureaucracies that functioned in a reasonably efficient way to advance state objectives with minimal corruption. Some of these successful states enjoyed the benefit of past experience with independent legal and journalistic institutions that could be adapted for use by the democratizing state. In most of these states, powerful elites did not feel threatened by a successful transition to democracy, in part because trusted state institutions made credible guarantees that elites would have a soft landing, so they were less likely to put up resistance to change.

Where, under such conditions, strong democratic institutions emerged quickly, democracy was fairly easily consolidated, and the transition was largely peaceful, as in Brazil, Chile, Hungary, and Poland. Where institutional groundwork was in place, transitions were peaceful even in geopolitically challenging cases where unresolved national partitions raised the risk of war, as in South Korea and Taiwan. In contrast, where the institutions needed by democracy were weak and democratization remained incomplete, war was more likely, as in Ethiopia, Pakistan, and Peru.

This finding bears out arguments advanced by Dahl, the seminal scholar of democracy and democratization. He argued that the peacefulness of the transition to democracy depended on getting the sequence of the transition right. Where rules, habits, and institutions of competitive politics were well established before holding unfettered mass elections, as in Great Britain after the Second and Third Reform Bills of 1867 and 1884, the transition to democracy went relatively smoothly. In contrast, where mass electoral politics developed before the institutions to regulate political competition were in place, transitions were prone to conflict. In countries that tried to take shortcuts to democracy, Dahl argued,

elites tended to feel threatened by political change, and leaders often deployed nationalism as a justification for intolerance and repression.²³ We find exactly these causal mechanisms at work in many wars of democratization.

When and How Democratization Increases the Chance of War

It is possible to imagine several reasons why democratization might be associated with an increased likelihood of war, other than the argument that we advance. Some scholars speculate, for example, that all kinds of regime change, not just regime change toward democracy, lead to instability and war. Or one might guess that the new democracies are vulnerable and hence targets of attack, but are not aggressors themselves. We explore such alternative explanations in the next chapter and show that none of them is convincing. Instead, we find that war is most likely during incomplete democratization, when the state also suffers from serious institutional deficits. Weak institutions *per se* do not increase the chance of war; they do so only during the early phase of an incomplete democratic transition.

It is often a strategic mistake for an institutionally weak state that is handing over power to the mass public to initiate war, and yet such states often do exactly this. Why? Such states face a gap between rising demands for broad participation in politics and inadequate institutions to manage those popular demands.²⁴ Where the institutions of autocratic authority are crumbling, yet new institutions of democratic accountability have not yet been constructed to take their place, routine institutional authority is lacking and political leaders frequently turn instead to ideological or charismatic appeals to bolster their rule.

Rallying popular support by invoking threats from rival nations is a common expedient for hard-pressed leaders who seek to shore up their legitimacy. During the unraveling of the Yugoslav Communist regime, for example, Slobodan Milosevic employed demagogic rhetoric about the alleged danger of Albanian nationalism in Kosovo to gain a popular following in Serbia's first elections.²⁵ Institutional weaknesses during early democratization create both the motive to use this strategy of rule and the opportunity to dodge accountability for its high costs and biased rhetoric.

23. Dahl, *Polyarchy*, pp. 36–38, 44.

24. Huntington, *Political Order in Changing Societies*.

25. V. P. Gagnon, "Ethnic Nationalism and International Conflict: The Case of Serbia," *International Security*, Vol. 19, No. 3 (Winter 1994–95), pp. 130–166.

The contest over national self-determination takes place as the fortunes of both elites and mass groups are shifting. Elites left over from the old regime are desperately seeking strategies that will prevent their fall, while rising elites are trying to muscle in, and both are scrambling for allies among the newly aroused masses.

Elites often seek to solve these political dilemmas by invoking nationalism, the doctrine that a distinctive people deserve autonomy in a state that protects and advances their distinctive cultural or political interests.²⁶ Nationalism helps elites to rally the support of the masses on the basis of sentiment, rather than seeking their loyalty by providing responsive institutions that protect their interests. Nationalism also helps to define the people who are exercising self-determination. It thus clarifies the lines between “the people” and their external foes, who become scapegoats in a self-fulfilling strategy that rallies support for defense against external threats.

Nationalism is attractive to rising groups, who use it as a populist club that can be wielded against elites who are insufficiently zealous in promoting the interest of “the nation” (that is, “the people”). At the same time, nationalism can be co-opted as a counter-tactic by elites, old and new, who want to evade new democratic constraints on their rule. By claiming to act on behalf of “the people” but not submitting to direct accountability to them, these elites can tar their opponents as “enemies of the nation” who are in league with external foes, and thus justify curtailing their opponents’ political and civil rights. This nationalist club may be particularly attractive to military elites, economic protectionists, or ethnic entrepreneurs. The nearly universal emergence of nationalist ideology in the early stages of democratization suggests that its usefulness at this formative political juncture is generic and can be adapted for use by almost any would-be ruling group.²⁷

In the absence of strong state institutions to knit together the nation, leaders must struggle for legitimacy in an ill-defined, contested political arena. A common side effect of state weakness during early democratization is a poorly defined sense of “the nation.” Democracy requires national self-determination, but people in weak states who are just emerging into political consciousness often lack a clear, agreed answer to the question, “who are we; what is our nation?” Although nationalists often

26. For discussions of the definition of nationalism, see Snyder, *From Voting to Violence*, pp. 21–25; and Michael Hechter, *Containing Nationalism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), chap. 1.

27. Miroslav Hroch, *Social Preconditions of National Revival in Europe* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000).

believe that the identity of their own nation was fixed by immutable nature or culture, on the contrary, it is generally a people’s shared experience and shared fate in a strong state that solidifies and demarcates their sense of nationality. Even in a country with a long and venerable history such as France, it was only the shared experiences in the late nineteenth century—common military service, national railways, standardized education, and mass democracy—that completed the process of forging a culturally diverse peasantry into self-conscious Frenchmen.²⁸ Nationalist appeals in an emerging democracy rally popular support by proposing answers to these puzzles of self-determination.

War may sometimes result from this potent political brew, as a direct result of explicitly nationalist political objectives, such as the aim of regaining a lost piece of national territory. War may also result indirectly from the complex politics of transitional states. It may come as an unintended by-product of belligerent and untrustworthy diplomacy that provokes a neighbor’s fears. Nationalists’ mobilizing rhetoric may make war more likely by distorting the nation’s view of the chances of success in a fight, or of the feasibility of reaching a compromise with the enemy. Political leaders may become entrapped in their own swaggering rhetoric, their reputations mortgaged to the nationalist commitments they have made. Heterogeneous political coalitions may become stuck with their own reckless policies when uncompromising nationalism becomes the indispensable common denominator that binds them together. In short, it would be misleading to say that nationalistic publics in incompletely democratizing states simply “want war.” Instead, war is often an indirect by-product of the nationalist politics of the transitional regime. In Chapter 3, we discuss the effect of nationalism on the risk of war in more detail.

Future Challenges of Democratization and War

There is little reason to believe that the longstanding link between democratization and nationalist war is becoming obsolete. On the contrary, future transitions may be even more difficult and dangerous. The “third wave” of democratization in the 1980s and 1990s consolidated democratic regimes mainly in the richer countries of Eastern Europe, Latin America, Southern Africa, and East Asia.²⁹ A fourth wave would involve

28. Eugene Weber, *Peasants into Frenchmen* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1976).

29. Larry Diamond, “Is the Third Wave Over?” *Journal of Democracy*, Vol. 7, No. 3 (July 1996), pp. 20–37.

more challenging cases: countries that are poorer, more ethnically divided, ideologically more resistant to democracy, with more entrenched authoritarian elites, and with a much frailer base of governmental institutions and citizen-skills.³⁰ Botched democratizations in such settings could give rise to grave threats to international peace and security. Wars of democratization are therefore likely to remain a central problem of international relations in the coming years.

Since the end of the Cold War, many public intellectuals have speculated on the fundamental nature of the emerging new world order (or disorder). In 1989, Francis Fukuyama foresaw the “end of history,” with peaceful, liberal democracy triumphant in all of the most significant countries.³¹ History itself soon tarnished this vision with bloody nationalist conflicts in former communist states and in Central Africa. Huntington’s counter-prediction of a cultural “clash of civilizations” better captured the mounting anxiety.³² However, Huntington’s image of fixed civilizations locked in struggle did not adequately describe a rapidly changing world in which many of the worst conflicts were within, rather than between, civilizations. Thomas Friedman’s *The Lexus and the Olive Tree* did a better job of describing the dual trends of the 1990s—both global liberalization and parochial backlash—but his upbeat conclusions exaggerated the chances of economic success in the developing world and underestimated the degree to which political rivalries could overshadow potential gains from economic liberalization.³³

Among the contributions of public intellectuals writing recently on global issues, Fareed Zakaria’s work on “illiberal democracy” is closest to our own arguments.³⁴ Zakaria, too, recounts the adverse implications of flawed democracy for peace, minority rights, and social order. He shows how the increasingly ubiquitous notion of electoral legitimacy has sometimes been perverted to serve parochial agendas, including cultural nationalism. In that sense, the themes of Fukuyama and Huntington come together in ironic counterpoint in Zakaria’s analysis.

30. Adrian Karatnycky, ed., *Freedom in the World: The Annual Survey of Political Rights and Civil Liberties, 2001–2002* (New York: Freedom House, 2002), pp. 11–15, 20–34.

31. Fukuyama, “The End of History.”

32. Samuel P. Huntington, *Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1996).

33. Thomas L. Friedman, *The Lexus and the Olive Tree: Understanding Globalization* (New York: Farrar Straus Giroux, 1999).

34. Fareed Zakaria, *The Future of Freedom: Illiberal Democracy at Home and Abroad* (New York: Norton, 2003).

Zakaria, like us, implicitly borrows a seminal idea from Huntington. In Huntington’s most profound book, *Political Order in Changing Societies*, he showed how rising political participation leads to conflict and instability in states with weak political institutions.³⁵ Our research shows that this insight is important not only for understanding the stability of democracy within countries but also for understanding international conflict between them. In an era in which troubled, incomplete democratic transitions may engulf such geopolitically salient locations as the Middle East and China, this dynamic could be one of the fundamental determinants of the course of world politics.

Although democratization in the Islamic world might contribute to peace in the very long run, Islamic public opinion in the short run is, in most places, hostile to the United States, reluctant to condemn terrorism, and supportive of forceful measures to achieve favorable results in Palestine, Kashmir, and other disputed areas. Although much of the belligerence of the Islamic public is fueled by resentment of the U.S.-backed authoritarian regimes under which many of them live, simply renouncing these authoritarians and pressing for a quick democratic opening is unlikely to lead to peaceful democratic consolidations. On the contrary, unleashing Islamic mass opinion through a sudden democratization could only raise the likelihood of war.³⁶ All of the risk factors are there: the media and civil society groups are inflammatory, as old elites and rising oppositions try to claim the mantle of Islamic or nationalist militancy.³⁷ The rule of law is weak, and existing corrupt bureaucracies cannot serve a democratic administration properly. The boundaries of states are mismatched with those of nations, making any push for national self-determination fraught with peril.

In the Arab world, in particular, states commonly gain their popular legitimacy not through accountability to their own citizens, but by acting demagogically in the purported interests of the Arab nation as whole, which often means taking a belligerent stand on Palestinian issues.³⁸ As we show in Chapter 7, when Iraq attempted a partial democratic transi-

35. Huntington, *Political Order in Changing Societies*.

36. Zakaria, *The Future of Freedom*, chap. 4.

37. Sheri Berman, “Islamism, Revolution, and Civil Society,” *Perspectives on Politics*, Vol. 1, No. 2 (June 2003), pp. 257–272, draws parallels to belligerent civil society in the flawed democracy of Weimar Germany and stresses the “Huntingtonian gap” between high demand for political participation and ineffective state institutions; *ibid.*, p. 265.

38. Michael Barnett, *Dialogues in Arab Politics* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998).

tion in the late 1940s, the elected leaders of its weak state felt compelled to grant military basing rights to its former colonial ruler, Britain. They then took an inflammatory stance against Israel to try to recoup their diminished nationalist credibility in the eyes of their urban Arab nationalist constituents. This bellicose stance by Iraq's flawed democratic regime pushed the more moderate monarchies in the Arab front-line states to reject compromise over the creation of Israel, opening the door to the 1948 Arab-Israeli war and entrenching the Arab-Israeli rivalry.

We do not argue that Islam is culturally unsuited for democracy, but rather that the institutional preparations for democracy are weak in most Islamic states. Thus, sudden increases in mass political participation are likely to be dangerous. Evidence of this may be found in the theocratic pseudo-democracy established by the Iranian Revolution; it has pressed the offensive in a bloody war of attrition with Iraq and supported violent movements abroad. It took more than two decades for public opinion in revolutionary Iran to moderate. At this point, finally, political liberalization might make Iran more peaceful. But even if moderate democracy eventually takes hold in Iran, the costs of the transition will have been exorbitant.

This does not necessarily mean that all steps toward democracy in the Islamic world would lead to disaster. Etel Solingen argues, for example, that reforms leading toward "democratization from above," combined with economic liberalization, have been consistent with support for peaceful policies in such Arab states as Jordan, Tunisia, Morocco, and Qatar. "The more consolidated democratizing regimes become," she notes, "the less likely they are to experiment with populism and war."³⁹ Consistent with our argument, these modest success cases indicate that the most promising sequence for democratization in such settings begins with reforms of the state and the economy, together with limited forms of democratic participation, rather than a headlong jump into popular elections before the strengthening of the institutions—such as efficient and evenhanded public administration, the rule of law, professional journalism, and political parties—that are needed to make a democratic system work.

Islamic democratization is hardly the only such danger on the horizon. A future democratic opening in China, though much hoped for by advocates of human rights and democratization, could produce a sobering outcome.⁴⁰ China's communist rulers have presided over a commer-

cial expansion that has generated wealth and a potentially powerful constituency for broader political participation. However, given the huge socio-economic divide between the prosperous coastal areas and the vast impoverished hinterlands, it seems unlikely that economic development will lead as smoothly to democratic consolidation in China as it has in Taiwan. China's leadership showed its resistance to pressures for democratic liberalization in its 1989 crackdown on the student movement at Tiananmen Square, but party elites know that they need a stronger basis of popular legitimacy to survive the social and ideological changes that economic change has unleashed.

Nationalism is a key element in their strategy. China's demand to incorporate Taiwan into the People's Republic of China, its animosity toward Japan, and its public displays of resentment at U.S. slights are themes that resonate with the Chinese public and can easily be played upon to rally national solidarity behind the regime. At the same time, newly rising social forces see that China's leaders permit more latitude to expressions of nationalism than to liberalism. Thus, some of the same intellectuals who played a role in the Tiananmen pro-democracy protests turned up a few years later as authors of a nationalist text, *China Can Say No*.⁴¹

Like many other established elites who have made use of popular nationalist rhetoric, China's party leadership has walked a fine line, allowing only limited expressions of popular nationalist outrage after such provocations as the U.S. bombing of the Chinese embassy in Belgrade, anti-Chinese pogroms in Jakarta, or the U.S. spy plane incident of 2001. They realize that criticism of external enemies can quickly become transformed into popular criticism of the government for not being sufficiently diligent in defense of Chinese national interests.

The period of democratization by great powers has always been a moment of particular danger, in part because when states are militarily strong, they may seek to use their force in pursuit of nationalist goals. Vladimir Putin, for example, calculated carefully in using the Second Chechen War to win election as president in Russia in 2000. A similar strategy may appeal to politicians in a transitional China. How should the United States, the international community, or other powerful actors work to avert such dangers?

39. Etel Solingen, *Regional Orders at Century's Dawn: Global and Domestic Influences of Grand Strategy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998), p. 213.

40. For a balanced view that discusses many of the following points, see David Bachman, "China's Democratization: What Difference Would It Make for U.S.-China

Relations?" in Edward Friedman and Barrett McCormick, eds., *What If China Doesn't Democratize?* (Armonk, N.Y.: M.E. Sharpe, 2000), pp. 195–223.

41. Song Qiang, Zhang Zangzang, and Qiao Bian, *Zhongguo keyi shuo bu* (China can say no) (Beijing: Zhonghua gongshang lianhe chubanshe, 1996).

Promoting Democracy in the Face of Risk

Our findings about the dangers of war during the process of democratization suggest ways to design strategies for promoting democratization. Admittedly, most transitions to democracy result from a convergence of dynamic social forces, and nobody has full control over their timing and sequence. Nonetheless, a host of powerful actors—the U.S. government, the United Nations, the community of transnational non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and the indigenous pro-democracy movements in various countries—have set for themselves the explicit goal of speeding the transition to democracy and shaping its trajectory. Sometimes their efforts make little difference, but sometimes—as in Burundi in 1993 and in East Timor in 1999—their efforts can be decisive and for the worse. As two great powers, Russia and China, remain at the dangerous early stages of this transition, the international community now has strong incentives to make sure that its influence is part of the solution, not part of the problem.

Our prescriptions stress the importance of getting the sequence right in taking steps toward democracy. Of particular value are the insightful recommendations made in an earlier context by the political scientist Eric Nordlinger: “The probabilities of a political system developing in a non-violent, nonauthoritarian, and eventually democratically viable manner are maximized when a national identity emerges first, followed by the institutionalization of the central government, and then the emergence of mass parties and mass electorate.”⁴² We examine the extent to which this insight applies not only to the domestic violence that Nordlinger studied, but also to international wars.

Spreading democracy is a worthwhile long-term goal, both as a value in itself and as an eventual means to increasing global peace and stability. Although some democratic transitions are risky, there is no alternative: political change cannot be frozen. In the long run, democratization is an inexorable global trend associated with social and economic development. What democracy promoters must do—whether they are U.S. occupation forces, NGOs, or reform coalitions in transitional states—is try to create favorable institutional conditions in the sequence most likely to foster successful, peaceful democratic transitions. Urging a democratic

42. Nordlinger, “Political Development, Time Sequences and Rates of Change,” p. 458. We would qualify Nordlinger’s sequence by pointing out that the emergence of a national identity is advantageous only if that identity is congruent with the borders of the state.

transition when the necessary institutions are extremely weak risks not only a violent outcome, but also an increased likelihood of a long detour into a pseudo-democratic form of nationalism.

Approaches to promoting democracy, especially by the United States, are often naïve and insufficiently strategic. Carothers argues that activists typically arrive with a shopping list of the ingredients that a mature democracy comprises, such as free speech, the rule of law, a vocal opposition, and a vibrant civil society, and try to mount programs to develop all of these simultaneously, with no strategy for sequencing or integrating these elements in a way that takes into account the dynamics of transition.⁴³ Yet many of these elements may be counterproductive for democratic consolidation if they are promoted in an institutionally immature setting. Where media are unprofessionalized and dependent on self-serving elites, for example, free speech and vibrant civil society are often hijacked as vehicles for nationalist rhetoric and activism.⁴⁴ To avoid this, international democracy promoters and political leaders in transitional states must pay attention to the sequence and pace of democratic experiments.

Our most general rule is to start the process by building the institutions that democracy requires, and then encouraging mass political participation and unfettered electoral competition only after these institutions have begun to take root. Too often, as in Bosnia after the Dayton Accords, elections have come too soon and merely locked in the dominance of illiberal elites who won votes by playing the nationalist card.⁴⁵ This is a lesson that seems difficult for some promoters of democracy to learn. During the U.S. occupation of Iraq, for example, the French government called for a quick handover of sovereignty to an elected Iraqi government in 2003.⁴⁶

The first step toward democratic self-determination must be to define the boundaries of the nation in a way that has broad legitimacy. Where

43. Carothers, *Aiding Democracy Abroad*.

44. Sheri Berman, “Civil Society and the Collapse of the Weimar Republic,” *World Politics*, Vol. 49, No. 3 (April 1997), pp. 401–429; and Jack Snyder and Karen Ballentine, “Nationalism and the Marketplace of Ideas,” *International Security*, Vol. 21, No. 2 (Fall 1996), pp. 5–41.

45. For a good analysis of Bosnia’s post-Dayton electoral institutions, see Sumantra Bose, *Bosnia after Dayton: Nationalist Partition and International Intervention* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002).

46. Foreign Minister Dominique de Villepin, “Irak: Les Chemins de la Reconstruction,” *Le Monde*, September 13, 2003, p. 1.