Chapter-V

CONCLUSION

The idea of accumulating and expanding power to be the hegemon may be the viewpoint of realism; but for the Americans this awareness became evident from the concept of Manifest Destiny. This notion finds its prominence by the journalist of an American newspaper Democratic Review, John L. O’Sullivan, who expressed in 1845, “And that claim is by the right of our manifest destiny to overspread and to possess the whole of the continent which providence has given us for the development of the great experiment of liberty and federated self-government entrusted to us” (O’Sullivan 1845). This appealing phrase Manifest Destiny captured the imagination of the American nation and perpetuated in their psyche. The American policy makers have been justifying it in the name of nationalism by advocating that they are the anointed people, guided by the special providence, who have the right to propagate their liberal democratic principle throughout the world. This is their moral commitment to the universal political value. The present day justification of the so called “Preventive War” by the United States is originally derived from this concept. Ameicans also appear to have been inspired by the poem of Rudyard Kipling, “The White Man’s Burden.” So they came up with two Schools of thought i.e. Exemplarism and Vindicationism which is discussed in the Chapter-I.

But according to Naom Chomsky, “It would be a good idea to spread the values of liberal democracy. But that’s not what the US and Britain are trying to do, it’s not what they’ve done in the past… They don’t spread liberal democracy. What they spread is dependence and subordination” (Chomsky 2004). War can never be objectively justifiable due to the essential importance of all human life. The decision
to do so by simply presuming certain sovereign country as a threat is ethically unacceptable and morally irresponsible.

At the most fundamental level, US support for democracy is a matter of principle. It has been and remains at the very heart of Americans as, ‘what we are as a nation and who we are as a people’. The United States desires to assist other nations to achieve the rights to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness, not because these values are the core to the United States and it should be propagated, but because they are universal, self-evident, and inalienable in nature. There are also practical reasons for the United States to promote democracy abroad, demonstrating that realism and idealism are complementary. Americans think that they can prosper more as a people and as a nation in a world of democracies than in a world of authoritarians or in those sense chaotic regimes.

Arguably, the lack of a clear definition of democracy and a comprehensive understanding of its basic elements may have hampered the formulation of democracy promotion policy. It also hindered the effective prioritizing of democracy promotion activities over the years. Also, the lack of definition may have complicated coordination of democracy programs and the assessment of US government activities and funding. Further, without a consensus on democracy definition and goals, it is difficult to set criteria, which will determine if ever a country has attained an acceptable level of democratic reform and no longer needs American assistance.

According to Richard Haass, former US State Department official and current President of the Council on Foreign Relations, democracy is more than elections; it is a diffusion of power where no group within a society is excluded from full participation in political life. Democracy requires checks and balances within the government, among various levels of government (national, state and
local), and between government and society. Elements such as independent media, unions, political parties, schools, and democratic rights for women provide checks on government power over society. Individual rights such as freedom of speech and worship need to be protected. Furthermore, a democratic government must face the check of elected opposition and leaders must hand over power peacefully (Haass 2002).

Laurence Whitehead, has rightly pointed out that the definition of democracy has varied over time, and among cultures and that the “outer boundaries” of the concept of democracy are “to a significant ... extent malleable and negotiable....” (Whitehead 2002).

Whenever US administrations have encouraged democratic reforms in other countries, they have claimed its benefits for the concerned country, its neighbors, the United States, and the world will result. It has been argued that extending democracy can reduce terrorism while encouraging global political stability and economic prosperity. The 2006 US National Strategy for Combating Terrorism cites democracy promotion as a long-term solution for winning the War on Terror (Bush 2006). In contrast, there are counter-claims that promoting democracy can be a destabilizing factor in a country, as well as its region. There are documented cases of backlash to democracy promotion, including restrictions on freedom in some countries where democracy promotion has taken place (NED 2006). The benefits and costs of democracy promotion may vary, depending on the circumstances in which the programs are carried out. For example, costs could be starkly different if democracy is militarily imposed on a country as opposed to the country itself taking the initiative.

On the other hand, some scholars believe that democracy promotion can succeed even in seemingly inhospitable environments. While Laurence Whitehead
points out the difficulties of achieving democracy, he also notes the widespread aspirations for democracy. He states, “Comparative evidence is clear that in a surprisingly wide range of countries and regions... both elite and popular opinion can be energized by the democracy promotion programs of the established powers of the post-war international system. The desire to participate can generate democratizing aspirations that extend beyond the boundaries of any single nation, and that may drive cumulative long-term change even in the face of intervening disappointments and distortions” (NED 2006: 26). He concludes, “Durable democracies can be regarded as regimes that have slowly evolved under pressure from their citizens, and that have therefore been adapted both to the structural realities and to the social expectations of the societies in which they have become established” (NED 2006: 268).

A common Kantian justification offered by exponents of democracy promotion, including former Secretaries of State Madeleine Albright and Condoleezza Rice, is that democracies do not go to war with one another. This is intermittently referred to as the democratic peace theory. Foreign policy experts have been giving present-day examples of European countries, the United States, Canada, and Mexico to justify their claim. According to President Clinton’s *National Security Strategy of Engagement and Enlargement*: “Democracies create free markets that offer economic opportunity, make for more reliable trading partners, and are far less likely to wage war on one another” (Clinton 1996).

Some have enhanced this democratic peace theory by differentiating between established democracies and transitioning democracies. They suggest that established democracies do not fight wars with each other, but that countries transitioning toward democracy are more prone to being attacked or being aggressive toward others. States that made transitions from an autocracy toward
early stages of democracy were involved in hostilities soon after democratic transition. Examples are: France in the mid-1800s under Napoleon III, Prussia/Germany under Bismarck (1870-1890), Chile shortly before the War of the Pacific in 1879, Serbia’s multiparty constitutional monarchy before the Balkan Wars of the late 20th Century, and Pakistan’s military-guided pseudo-democracy before its wars with India in 1965 and 1971 (Mansfield & Snyder 2005: 70).

The Bush Administration emphasized that democracy promotion was an enduring solution to terrorism. The Administration’s *Strategy for Winning the War on Terror* opined that “scarcity in political participation, disparities in accessing national resource, absence of freedom of speech, and inadequate education all breed instability. It also stated that promoting essential human rights, freedoms of speech, religion, assembly, association and press, and by preserving order within their borders and delivering an impartial justice system, effective democracies can defeat terrorism in the long run” (Bush 2006).

It is also widely believed that democracies promote economic prosperity. From this perspective, as the rule of law leads to a more stable society and as equal economic opportunity for all helps to stimulate economic growth, per capita income, is likely to rise. Democratic countries under this situation may be perceived by businessmen as good trading partners and by investors as a more stable environment for investment. Moreover, countries that have developed as stable democracies are viewed as being more likely to honor treaties (Mathur 2007).

According to some critics, aggressively pursuing democracy promotion as a primary objective of US national security and foreign policy has reduced its support, and generated skepticism around the world. Democracy promotion policy faces widespread criticism when democracy is imposed from outside rather than initiated by local citizens (Clinton 1996). The expenses of democracy promotion
compete with domestic spending priorities too. Numerous instruments to promote democracy abroad e.g. foreign aid, military intervention, diplomacy, and public diplomacy, are very expensive; and provide little assurance for tangible durable gains. Democracy promotion thus involves a high probability of sustaining expensive long-term nation-building programs. Many Americans view the military expense and opportunity cost of funding democracy promotion activities abroad as less important than spending those funds on domestic programs.

Another major concern about democracy promotion is that it can have a destabilizing effect on an entire region. At times, the region can become unstable if the transitioning country initiates a cross-border attack, or becomes a victim of such attack, particularly if it has weak democratic institutions or a weak military (Mansfield & Snyder 2007). While many democracy promotion proponents affirm that democracies “don’t war with each other,” critics, such as Joanne Gowa contend that democratic peace theory has more to do with the alignment of interests and balance of power in the world than democracy/peace characteristics. Gowa argues that democratic peace is a Cold War phenomenon and that available data show that democratic peace is limited to the years between 1946 and 1980. She additionally points out that there are non-democracies that do not war with each other and may be able to constrain their leaders from embarking on military action abroad about as effectively as democracies (Gowa 1999).

Some view democracy programs as inappropriately interfering in the domestic politics of foreign countries. In recent years, the United States has invested effort and money in democracy promotion in Russia, Eastern Europe, and the Middle East. The recent backlash against democratic reform in Russia, the elections of anti-American governments in the Palestinian Territories, and the rise to elected office of Hezbollah in Lebanon have caused some to question the value of
US democracy promotion investments.

However, the assessment by US government is different. According to a recent USAID-commissioned study, democracy and governance assistance of the United States does have a positive effect on the growth of democracy worldwide, and the improvements in establishing democracy were hopefully better (USAID 2006).

In the wake of the September 11 incident, President George W. Bush pledged to make the promotion of democracy abroad a primary objective of US foreign policy, emphasizing the moral and strategic imperatives for advancing freedom around the world and fighting terrorism as well. Ironically, the United States became, less admired and more hated in Islamic societies around the world for its action. Problem of anti-Americanism in recent year is largely the result of President Bush’s confrontational foreign policy initiatives, which were unpopular in the Islamic world. In its history, the United States has probably never before suffered such a low international standing.

For example, Bush’s “Preventive War” doctrine was controversial even in the US. By criticizing the authenticity of the American justification of the Preventive War, Noam Chomsky wrote, “The doctrine, you recall, was that the United States would rule the world by force, and that if there is any challenge perceived to its domination, a challenge perceived in the distance, invented, imagined, whatever, then the US will have the right to destroy that challenge before it becomes a threat” (Chomsky 2007).

But President Bush defended his decision to go for war in Iraq even while rejecting the concept of Samuel P. Huntington’s “Clash of Civilizations” in the process of promoting democracy. He stressed in his address at the West Point, “When it comes to the common rights and needs of men and women, there is no
clash of civilizations. The requirements of freedom apply fully to Africa and Latin America and the entire Islamic world. The peoples of the Islamic nations want and deserve the same freedoms and opportunities as people in every nation. And their governments should listen to their hopes” (Bush 2002). His policy of democracy promotion was based on the assumption that democracies rarely go to war with each other and that an increase in the number of democratic states would therefore imply, and indeed encourage a more secure and peaceful world.

George W. Bush raised the long-standing American interest in the spread of democracy worldwide apparently with an imperative national security objective of combating terrorism. President Bush, Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice and other senior US officials frequently spoke with conviction about democracy promotion as a critical tool to rooting out one of the major sources of anti-American terrorism. They sought to rid the world of dictators who either supported terrorism or provoked it by their repression. Indeed, with his Second Inaugural Address, Bush effectively altered the meaning of the bureaucratic shorthand “GWOT” from a Global War on Terrorism to a more encompassing Global War on Tyranny.

Nonetheless, the rhetoric of democracy promotion by the Bush Administration in Iraq weakened the meaning of democracy, and diminished its support at home and abroad. Contrary to popular perception, and some revisionism by Administration officials, the US has never launched a foreign military action in order to ‘impose democracy at the point of a bayonet.’ The invasion of Iraq and Afghanistan was undertaken for altogether different purposes, although the removal of a dictatorial regime subsequently opened the possibility of the establishment of a democratic system. Moreover, considerable resources and effort were exhausted toward that end in Iraq since the ouster of Saddam Hussein. But post facto rationalization of the Iraq action as democracy promotion, after failure
to locate claimed weapons of mass destruction in Iraq made it a failed enterprise.

This is not to suggest that President Bush and his team were not genuinely interested to build democracy after the invasion of Iraq. It indisputably became a central theme of US foreign policy, even while officials tried to integrate this objective into the hierarchy of American interests. However, there was no specific center of command and control for the democracy promotion efforts. There was no single place where overarching strategy was developed or coordinated, even within the Bush Administration.

The focus of President Bush was invasion of Iraq. Presidents Ronald Reagan, George H.W. Bush, and Bill Clinton also had invaded countries in the name of democracy i.e. Grenada, Panama, and Haiti, respectively. But the Iraq intervention was a different phenomenon as Iraq is a large, strategically important country, and not some small backwater country of Central American or Caribbean.

But the Bush White House intimately linked his democracy project with the war on terrorism. Previous administrations also integrated democracy promotion into their geostrategic frameworks, such as the Reagan administration’s Cold War strategy vis-à-vis the Soviet Union. But Bush’s geostrategic framework was unusually unpopular. This was especially true in the Islamic world where the war on terrorism was widely and wrongly viewed as a war on Islam.

Moreover, President Bush’s focus on the Middle East was formidable given the region’s extremely high sensitivities about Western and especially America’s political culture. Populated by entrenched autocratic governments, Middle East was not in a democratizing mode. Afghanistan actually posed a bigger challenge than Iraq. The Bush Administration’s efforts to build democracy in Afghanistan were actually viewed as a tool to end tyranny, but a bigger tool to protect US interest. It became an instrument to fight terrorism and promote stability in
troubled regions, and used as mechanism to safeguard US interests in a critical areas.

**Model of Democracy:**

Democracy is a positive good and it is highly desirable worldwide. To dream to make Iraq as the model of democracy was a wonderful idea, but the execution of that dream was equally questionable. Iraqis are one of the most diversified and plural societies. Shi’as constitute the majority, Kurds are a prominent community. And the Sunni minority for long enjoyed the political power until recently. Iraq never experienced democracy before the US-guided election. Though they were relieved by the Saddam Hussein’s departure from power, Iraqis were equally not supportive of the prolonged American occupation. According to Fareed Zakaria, “Iraq will still be a country that is substantially better off than it was under Saddam Hussein. There is real pluralism and openness in the society, more so than in most of the Middle East. But Iraqi democracy is now at the mercy of that majority, who we must hope will listen to their better angels. That is not a sign of success” (Zakaria 2005).

Americans hope that Iraq would be a model of democracy in the Arab world could not be realized. Senior associate in the Democracy and Rule of Law Project at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, Marina Ottaway said, “Other Arab countries do not see political change in Iraq as a model, as they view with fear the possibility of US intervention in their country. It is hard to imagine a scenario that would lead to greater democracy. It would send the wrong message to all the Arab countries if the United States were to play too visible a role in Iraq’s democratic development” (Latham 2005). Some Americans took along-term view, however, of US experiment in building democracy in Iraq. Former US senator and 9/11-commission member Bob Kerrey, for example, stated, “Twenty years from
now, we’ll be hard-pressed to find anyone who says it wasn’t worth the effort. This is not just another democracy. This Iraq is a democracy in the Arab world” (Bay 2007).

The Bush Administration’s stated aim to make Iraq a model of democracy in the Middle East did not succeed for two reasons. First, building democracy was not a vital political goal of the US government. It was a mere instrument to initiate political change in the region. Second, democracy was imposed from the outside by force. The US government’s unconditional support toward authoritarian regimes in the region like Saudi Arabia, Egypt etc. and its critical approval towards the democratically elected Palestinian Government raised questions in the people’s mind about the US intention in pushing the so-called democracy agenda in Iraq.

Concluding Observation:

The democracy-promotion toolbox has been filled for more than two decades with various standard assistance programs, including technical support for reforming government agencies; training for lawyers, journalists, political party leaders, and trade unionists; direct financial aid for civil society organizations; and exchanges and scholarships for students. The US government, particularly the US Agency for International Development (USAID) and an army of nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) often funded by USAID, the National Endowment of Democracy, or the Asia and Eurasia Foundations, continue to use such nonmilitary methods to promote democracy in dozens of countries around the world.

In rare cases, democracy promotion has been the by-product of military intervention. The American public supports the decision to go to war only when persuaded that a direct threat to US national security exists. Yet, once the opposing dictatorship has fallen, Washington is confronted with a moral obligation to replace it with a democratic government, as it did in Germany and Japan after World War
II, attempted to do after interventions in the Dominican Republic and South Vietnam in the 1960s, and is presently trying to accomplish in Afghanistan and Iraq.

Yet, a third method for promoting democratic regime change receives little attention, if any, from the media or from scholars: diplomacy. Although NGOs and foundations are usually the primary actors engaged in democracy promotion in countries that have recently experienced the collapse of an autocratic regime, US diplomats have a special role to play in countries still ruled by dictatorships. Democratization involves not only building up the democratic opposition - a key ingredient for successful democratic breakthrough - but also weakening or dividing the autocrats in power (Ackerman 2005). NGOs, whose focus in these cases is usually and rightly to strengthen the opposition, lack the ability to confront the regime directly. In contrast, the US government has the power and resources to challenge autocratic regimes, through what Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice has called “transformational diplomacy” (Rice 2005). Admittedly, there are valid reasons why the role of the diplomat does not figure prominently in the current analysis of US democracy promotion efforts. The vast majority of diplomats from the secretary of state to a consular officer working abroad spend little if any of their time promoting democracy. Indeed, throughout most of US history, diplomats have not defined democratization as part of their job description. In the rare moments when they do engage in promoting democracy, diplomats often do so quietly behind the scenes, making it difficult for outside observers to study or analyze them. Yet, understanding the conditions under which diplomacy can be effective represents a critical step toward improving all US efforts to promote democracy abroad. At key moments, US diplomatic leverage has played a positive role in pushing a regime change in a democratic direction.
Learning the lessons of how and why diplomats were able to make a difference in earlier, successful transitions to democracy can help guide today’s foreign policy makers seeking to influence the course of political liberalization in autocratic regimes.
Democracy promotion through diplomacy demands a very delicate sort of engagement. In this context, it does not mean establishing cordial relations in the hope that perhaps someday friendship and prosperity will eventually result in democratization. The historical record contains only a few examples of this strategy’s success (Halperin et al. 2004). Engagement instead refers to using close ties with a regime to exert effective pressure for political liberalization. Once in motion, liberalization can develop an unstoppable momentum. If used strategically, the power of the US government is especially great in countries ruled by dictators who are friendly toward Washington. These regimes often rely on the United States for legitimacy, arms transfers, economic assistance, and even security guarantees. US Diplomats often underestimate their leverage vis-à-vis these regimes because their preference for stability blinds them to the regime’s vulnerabilities.

Both pundits and policymakers often assume that total cooperation with friendly dictatorships is the only way to achieve immediate security objectives. Thus, they fail even to ask whether there is a way to reconcile the tactical impulse to cooperate with the strategic goal of promoting democracy, which is integral to the long-term security. During the Cold War, the United States faced a strikingly similar dilemma when engaging with friendly dictators in its battle against communism. By studying some of the successful examples of active diplomacy of Reagan Administration during the Cold War, it becomes possible to set of practical guidelines for dealing with the friendly dictatorships.

The United States once again faces the challenge of demonstrating its commitment to principle by holding both its allies and its adversaries to a single democratic standard. It has become essential to learn from the Cold War’s forgotten democratic breakthroughs. Revisiting the success stories is not meant to imply that
the previous administration somehow avoided the dilemmas of hypocrisy that the Bush Administration faces (Coll 2004). Even achieving partial success, the central driver of democratic change was the growing strength of local democratic movements, not US diplomacy. Without organized opposition to autocracy, democratization would not have taken hold in any of these countries of the Middle East. At the same time, by constraining the unacceptable behavior of incumbent autocrats, encouraging emerging democratic forces, and recognizing the positive relationship between democracy promotion and national security, US government officials helped to push the process of democratization forward. Although these countries’ democratic consolidations have not ameliorated all of their social and economic problems, their transitions did not bring Marxist radicals to power, make them more bellicose toward their neighbors, or produce any disruptions in their relations with the United States (Mansfield & Snyder 2005).

First and foremost, democracy promotion was not just a moral objective but also resulted in clear, tangible gains for US national security. The remarkable success story of the pro-democracy movements in the Philippines, South Korea, and Chile showed that enduring alliances rest on the consent of the people rather than on the complicity of unpopular governments. By demonstrating its support for legitimate, popular governments, the United States won a lasting measure of respect from local populations; helped manage a difficult transition away from autocracies that did not result in chaos, war, or radical rule; and cemented important alliances in a way not possible to achieve through the support of anti-communist dictatorships.

Second, words mattered, especially when they were the President’s and even more so when they enjoy bipartisan support. A consistent message coming out of the White House and echoed throughout the offices of the executive branch
as well as on Capitol Hill is the best way to convince friendly dictators that the United States is serious about democracy promotion. Even while acknowledging a general US commitment to democracy, dictators still bend over backward to find evidence that the United States is willing to tolerate their regime. Well aware of the US government’s penchant for alliances with friendly dictatorships, political leaders look for any indication that either the US president or some of his most influential advisers are not serious about reform. To be credible and effective, the message must be communicated by all US government officials and sustained over a period of years. The worst scenario is when one cabinet official gives a speech categorizing democracy promotion as a US priority while another downplays the significance of this mission. Such mixed messages encouraged autocrats that they were too vital to US security interests to be challenged to change. All too frequently, when dealing directly with their counterparts from other countries, diplomats working in-country or closely with a specific country over time tend to soften the message of democracy sent by higher ranks in the government. These lower level officials believe that they need good contacts in foreign governments to get more important business done. Their winks and nods about democracy promotion lead to the unintended consequence of undermining their President’s credibility.

By sending a consistent message, the United States could avoid the crisis scenario that everyone fears, one in which the only choice is between radicals opposed to the United States and a reactionary dictatorship. Presidential statements in support of democracy promotion empower lower level officials also committed to democracy promotion and undermine their opponents within the bureaucracy. An autocrat’s words should also matter. In contrast to the situation in the world just a few decades ago, very few autocrats today trumpet alternative
regime types as a legitimate way to govern. Democracy as a goal or an ideal type of
government faces few serious competitors (McFaul 2004). Instead, dictators either
call their own autocratic regimes democracies or claim that their country is on the
slow road to becoming a democracy. When they do commit to such a goal, no
matter how insincere the original pledge, US officials can work with democratic
opposition movements to hold autocrats accountable to their words.

Third, to encourage peaceful, non-revolutionary transitions, it was
imperative to signal support for democratic reform long before the terminal crisis
of an older regime. Early intervention prevented the sort of political polarization
that had presented previous administrations with an ugly choice. The choice
between standing by an unstable dictatorship and allowing a radical and often
violent anti US regime to take power. Early intervention also helped limit the
agenda of change to political institutions and kept off the table the more expansive
agenda of radical economic transformation advocated by some Socialist and
Communist opposition movements; encouraged and protected the moderates
capable of ensuring a successful transition to democracy; and guided the transition
to a peaceful outcome. In all three cases, US diplomats signaled their lack of
support for autocrats in power well before the regimes began to falter.

Moreover, if change is initiated early enough, US diplomats were able to
encourage interim settlements between the incumbent autocrats and the
democratic challengers to help guide the transition (O’Donnell & Schmitter 1986).
In particular, pacts have often been crafted to limit the agenda of change to political
institutions and prevent infringement on the property rights of existing economic
actors tied to the previous regime. Successful pacts often include highly
undemocratic features, which serve to bridge the gap from one type of regime to
the next. As a condition for democratic transition, for example, in Chile, Pinochet
was allowed to stay on as the commander of the military. Pacts also can be used to ensure the safety of leaders of the previous regime. Helping to manufacture pact transitions, however, requires diplomacy that is not just highly energetic but also extraordinarily consistent in its pro-democratic tenor. In crafting these delicate and unjust pacts, external actors can play pivotal roles as advocates for change and as guarantors that the terms of the pacts are followed. US Officials could offer ousted autocrats a safe exit out of their country and a safe haven in which to enjoy their retirement from politics. However unjust, their removal in this manner can be a necessary condition for peaceful regime change.

Fourth, the United States could afford to be patient as long as incremental reforms were taking place. In the 1980s, Washington supported gradual reforms that established the viability of the nonviolent, democratic opposition without prematurely threatening the dictatorship’s grasp on the reins of power or allowing the crisis to progress so far that fundamental changes to economic and social institutions came into play. Pre-emptive action allowed US diplomats to help steer these transitions away from revolutionary outcomes and toward evolutionary, peaceful conclusions. Dictators did not suddenly step aside. Yet, in response to concerted, consistent pressure from the United States and domestic opposition, they often granted enough concessions to allow a viable democracy movement to begin building momentum (Smith 1994).

Fifth, when a democratic breakthrough appears imminent, the opposition forces appear to be mobilized and become strong enough to remove a dictator from power. When an autocrat simply goes too far in abusing human rights or rolling back previous democratic practices, a signal from the United States may provide the necessary tipping point for democratic change. In these crucial moments, US diplomats could warn of their intent to withdraw support from
autocratic incumbents. Furthermore, US diplomats, as well as their counterparts from other democratic states, can serve as intermediaries or channels of communication between the previous regime and the democratic opposition, especially during moments of transition. States would no longer support its former.

Sixth, diplomats could also provide economic and security assistance to reward the government that makes progress toward democracy. After democratic transitions, the Philippines, South Korea, and Chile all enjoyed close bilateral relations with the United States, which included varying packages of economic and security assistance. Offering these kinds of positive inducements can help leaders make the difficult decision to liberalize their political systems. These potential rewards can also constrain incoming democratic regimes from pursuing radical policies.

Seventh, in countries ruled by autocratic regimes, US diplomats could provide legitimacy to democratic challengers by meeting with them, appearing in public with them, inviting them to Washington, and generally affirming their importance. Engagement with societal leaders can help protect them from harassment and imprisonment. They can also help to get democratic leaders released from prison in authoritarian regimes that have friendly relations with the West.

Finally, even when a transition brought unexpected forces into the arena of legitimate politics, change need not have been feared or prevented. In the previous cases, US government officials genuinely feared the consequences of radical takeovers. As democracy takes root, the threat continued to fade. Although it cannot be known with certainty if a similar process would unfold after political liberalization in the Middle East, defenders of the status quo fail to recognize that the popularity of Islamic fundamentalists depends on their ability to portray the
United States as the enemy of freedom. Many experts still fear that forcing reform
on Arab dictatorships will accomplish nothing more than opening the floodgates of
radical fundamentalism. Several years ago they were those who insisted that the
reform of anti-Communist dictatorships would simply allow Communists to seize
power. Ironically, this fear of a backlash, whether Communist or radical
fundamentalist, increases the odds that just such a backlash will occur (Shultz
1993).

The lessons of the Cold War suggest that avoiding change forever, even for
US allies, is simply not an option. Throughout the latter half of the twentieth
century, the United States sought to protect its interests in the Middle East by
aligning with the region’s authoritarian regimes as a strategy to maintain its status
quo balance of power. The negative consequences of this strategy included the
Iranian revolution and the taking of US hostages in Tehran; a protracted war
between Iraq and Iran in which Saddam Hussein, a former US ally who murdered
tens of thousands of his own citizens, used weapons of mass destruction; the
slaughter of French and US soldiers in Beirut; the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait; and the
gradual, almost imperceptible growth of Al Qaeda. Today, the question for regimes
in Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Morocco, and Algeria is not whether they will change but
how they will change. Leaders in these countries have been important allies of the
United States in the past but are unlikely to remain strategic partners of the West if
they resist political liberalization and thereby increase the likelihood of radical
regime change (Przeworski et al. 2000). Will those now in power initiate gradual
political reforms and begin an evolutionary transition from autocracy to
democracy, or will they continue to delay reforms and thereby increase the
likelihood of revolutionary change leading to unpredictable outcomes? The
experience of democratization in anti-Communist autocracies during the Cold War