

Democracy Promotion and Foreign Policy

Daniela Huber

Identity and Interests in US, EU and
Non-Western Democracies



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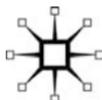
Democracy Promotion and Foreign Policy

Identity and Interests in US, EU and Non-Western Democracies

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macmillan



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Softcover reprint of the hardcover 1st edition 2015 978-1-137-41446-5

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First published 2015 by
PALGRAVE MACMILLAN

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Palgrave Macmillan in the US is a division of St Martin's Press LLC, 175 Fifth Avenue, New York, NY 10010.

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ISBN 978-1-349-68205-8 ISBN 978-1-137-41447-2 (eBook)
DOI 10.1007/978-1-137-41447-2

This book is printed on paper suitable for recycling and made from fully managed and sustained forest sources. Logging, pulping and manufacturing processes are expected to conform to the environmental regulations of the country of origin.

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library.

A catalog record for this book is available from the Library of Congress.

*To my mother Maria, my father Manfred, my sister Claudia,
and my brother Michael*

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Acknowledgments

This book would not have been possible without the generous intellectual, professional, and emotional support of Piki Ish-Shalom and Alfred Tovias at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. Also crucial for this book has been Nathalie Tocci from the Istituto Affari Internazionali; it is a privilege to work with her. Many ideas have also come from exchanges with Thomas Risse, Tanja Börzel, Arie Kacowicz, Galia Press Barnathan, Rony Silfen, Nava Löwenheim, and Daniela Persin. I acknowledge the financial support of several institutions, including the German Friedrich Ebert Foundation, the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD), and the Hebrew University of Jerusalem.

The support of my family has been essential. My parents gave me so much love and have always supported my academic path; I am eternally grateful to them and dedicate this work to them and my sister and brother. My two children Niccolò and Valerie were always patient with me during the writing process and I have to thank their grandparents – Daniele and Lucia, Maria and Jürgen, and Manfred and Marianne – for all their help. This also applies to their aunt Claudia and to Roberta and Seila. Most of all I want to thank Lorenzo Kamel, whom I met during my time at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem, for all the beautiful ideas he has given me, the new viewpoints and ideational doors he has opened up, and for all the inspiring discussions which contributed so much to this book.

Introduction

Democracy promotion is a puzzling and curious foreign policy phenomenon attached to democracies; indeed it is as old as democracy itself. Ancient Athens maybe has been the most systematic and aggressive democracy promoter of all time. For Athens, this was a strategic policy to overthrow hostile regimes and install friendly, democratic ones. However, not always is this policy strategically so straightforward. Today's main protagonists of democracy promotion – the United States (US) and the European Union (EU) – are rather fighting with the dilemma of having proclaimed democracy as a principled foreign policy goal, but not pursuing it coherently when it endangers other interests. This has exposed them to sharp international critiques such as being hypocritical or even an 'axis of double standards', making democracy promotion *the* key issue with which 'democracies and their critics' (to paraphrase Robert Dahl's seminal book) are struggling today, not least since this increasingly also applies to non-Western emerging democracies. Notably Turkey, but also Brazil, India, Japan and South Africa, are starting to engage in democracy promotion in their respective regions and have been confronted with their double standards in this respect as well.

Thus, democracy promotion is becoming an increasingly widespread foreign policy phenomenon among diverse democracies in the world, but at the same time seems to be such a dilemmatic foreign policy that no democracy applies it coherently. Why then is it that democracy promotion is incorporated into foreign policy in the first place? What drives and motivates democracies to promote it or not? What explains that democracy promotion is not always pursued coherently and why does the use of democracy promotion vary so decisively over time and space? What constrains democracies to follow through on democracy

promotion? In short: *What triggers democracy promotion and what hinders it or – more precisely – what encourages and pushes and what constrains democracies to promote democracy abroad?*

While research on democracy promotion is an exponentially growing field of study in International Relations (IR), no theoretically comprehensive volume that explains the origins of and impulses for democracy promotion and so embeds the phenomenon in IR theory has been forthcoming yet. This book hopes to contribute to a more rigorous academic discussion of democracy promotion through a comprehensive theoretical approach which situates democracy promotion in its normative, as well as strategic, contexts. Furthermore, it is placed in a more recent comparative turn of the literature. Much research has focused on one protagonist of democracy promotion only (usually either the United States or EU), and while some comparative research has emerged, it has typically compared US and European democracy promotion. This book seeks to tell a more comprehensive story of democracy promotion by focusing on its main protagonists – the United States and the EU – but also on a non-Western newcomer in the field: Turkey. It examines the use and non-use of democracy promotion by all three actors in their respective neighborhoods (Central and South America for the United States, the Mediterranean region for the EU and Turkey) in the decades in which democracy promotion first made inroads and turned into an established foreign policy, that is the late 1970s and 1980s for the United States, the 1990s and 2000s for the EU, and the 2000s for Turkey.

This book is in four parts. The first part includes the conceptual and theoretical chapters, while the following parts consist of the three case studies: US, EU, and Turkish democracy promotion. The first chapter opens with a historical tour of democracy promotion's protagonists. After a short overview on historical democracy promoters such as Ancient Athens and the French and British empires, three generations of contemporary democracy promoters are described: the United States, European democracies, and the EU, as well as non-Western emerging democratic powers. With the United States, the EU, and Turkey, a case study from each generation is chosen. The second chapter defines the explanandum of this study: the varying extent to which a democracy engages in democracy promotion. There are three types of action through which democracies can promote democracy: coercive, utilitarian, and identitive measures. Finally, the third chapter explores the research question – what encourages and pushes and what constrains democracies to promote democracy abroad? – in theoretical terms. It argues that threat perceptions constrain democracy promotion, while a

democratic role identity – rooted internally in a democratic-type identity and externally in international norms of democracy – enables and pushes for democracy promotion. A democratic role identity can limit the hindering effect of threat perceptions on democracy promotion if the relevant other is successful in mobilizing it.

The book then turns to the first case study: US democracy promotion in Central and South America in the last period of the Cold War. The fourth chapter shows how democracy promotion skyrocketed from nil to an important foreign policy component when President Jimmy Carter entered the White House, even though toward the end of his presidency this agenda had already declined. It was absent in the first year of President Ronald Reagan's term, but soon started to find its way back into his foreign policy, especially from the mid-1980s onwards. The fifth chapter shows how low threat perceptions during the period of détente enabled democracy promotion, even though threat perceptions then lost their independent effect on foreign policy. The sixth chapter explores how the internal democratic transformation in the United States spilled over into foreign policy, also supported by the growth of international human rights norms and of democracy to the standard form of governance during the Carter administration. While the Reagan administration at first rejected this reawakened democratic role identity in foreign policy, a grand foreign policy debate started in which the Reagan administration went from denying this role identity, to cheap rhetoric and its exposure through a transnationally acting human rights community, to the adoption of a democratic role identity in a conservative version, making democracy promotion a shared bipartisan foreign policy goal.

The third part of the book explores EU democracy promotion in the Mediterranean neighborhood since the end of the Cold War. The seventh chapter shows that democracy promotion started to enter the EU's foreign policy agenda in the Mediterranean in the early 1990s and received a push in the early 2000s. From the mid-2000s onwards, however, the EU showed clear signals of diverting from its democracy agenda, while a final turning point came with the Arab Spring which seems to have revived this agenda again. Chapter 8 shows that EU democracy promotion started in the early 1990s in a new security environment; low threat perceptions enabled EU democracy promotion in the beginning, while – as in the US case – they lost their independent effect afterwards. The ninth chapter argues that the formation of the EU's democratic role identity was not only useful for the EU to create attachment to the Union, but in the 1990s it also formed in a euphoric international environment where democracy became a zeitgeist. This role identity skyrocketed in

the early 2000s in face of the highly successful enlargement process whose logic was transported to the Mediterranean neighborhood despite increasing threat perceptions. However, when this role identity was not activated by the other, threat perceptions restrained EU foreign policy again and democracy promotion entered into a shaky period that might have ended with the Arab Spring.

The final, fourth part of the book turns to Turkey's democracy promotion in the Middle East and North Africa since the early 2000s. Chapter 10 explores variance in Turkey's democracy promotion in the Middle East and North Africa and finds that democracy promotion emerged in the early 2000s mainly through a cooperative approach that relied on communicative-identitive means, but this approach lost steam in the 2007–2011 period. With the Arab uprisings, democracy promotion revived again, but this time through an activist, principled, and often confrontational approach. Chapter 11 shows that the de-securitization of Turkey's relations with the Arab world in the early 2000s enabled democracy promotion. As in the US and EU cases, low threat perceptions enabled democracy promotion in the first place and lost their independent effect on foreign policy afterwards. Chapter 12 argues that the Justice and Development Party (AKP) developed a democratic role identity in foreign policy to prove its democratic credentials to a broader electorate in Turkey, as well as to the EU and the United States who – representing an important other for Turkey's identity – actively contributed to the development and activation of this role identity. When the EU and the United States increasingly turned away from democracy promotion from 2006/2007 onwards, Turkey also de-emphasized the theme. Turkey's democratic role identity was once more activated from 2011 onwards, this time by the second important other in Turkey's identity, the Arab world. This was also supported by internal politics, as the AKP government was facing domestic protest and foreign policy became a domain where the outlook of Turkey's democracy was contested.

The conclusions discuss what we have learned in comparative perspective, how this contributes to IR theory more generally and to the research field of democracy promotion specifically, and what we can expect for the future of democracy promotion. It argues that democracy promotion is mainly driven by identity dynamics. The book contributes to constructivist literature on norms by highlighting that international norms also influence norm-compliers and on identity by suggesting that this literature should not only focus on role identity, but also consider the crucial role that an internal identity and the other can play in fostering or activating a role identity.

Part I

Democracy Promotion – *Who* Does *What* and *Why*?

1

Who Promotes Democracy? The Protagonists

While democracy promotion is often perceived as a new foreign policy phenomenon, it has actually ebbed and flowed throughout history alongside democracy itself. This chapter briefly follows democracy promotion's history with a short overview on historical democracy promoters such as Ancient Athens, as well as the French and British empires, before it moves to contemporary democracy promoters, concretely three generations of them: the United States, Europe, and non-Western emerging democratic powers.

Historical democracy promoters

Democracy promotion has appeared together with democracy itself; indeed it was arguably through democracy promotion that Ancient Athens became aware of the concept of diverse forms of governance, the uniqueness of its own form, and the possibility to change or choose among them (Bleicken 1979).¹ First instances of democracy promotion emerged already in times of transition to democracy. With the Thetes – the lowest Athenian class and backbone of Athenian sea power which had demanded equal rights in their city – democratic ideas were sailing ‘in persona’ throughout the Aegean (Bleicken 1979, 168). This diffusion of democratic ideas was highly explosive. The transformation of Athens into a radical democracy where political power was transferred to the poorer classes (de Ste. Croix 1954) and the growing awareness that this form of governance could also be transported to other city states represented a massive challenge to the traditional orders in Hellas, spearheaded by Sparta. The Peloponnesian wars were then not only caused by the growth of Athenian power (Thucydides 1972, I.23), but – to paraphrase Thucydides – by the growth of Athenian democracy

which brought fear to the Lacedaemonians and forced them to war. It was precisely during the Peloponnesian wars that a debate on the best constitutional form appeared in the Hellenic world.²

It was also during the Peloponnesian wars that Athenian democracy promotion grew and became systematic. Typically, Athens would arrive with a fleet to a city in which then either the local democrats would seize power alone or the Athenians would directly intervene. In case of intervention, the Athenian assembly defined which kind of democracy to install and Athenian officials supervised the implementation.³ Athens also systematically imposed massive social changes on the cities where it promoted democracy (Schuller 1981, 286). Wealthy oligarchs were not only disempowered politically, but also economically. Their possessions were confiscated, they were exiled, and, in the worst case, executed. Nonetheless, democrats that were put in power by Athens were often weak and thus dependent on Athenian protection in the form of military garrisons installed in allied city states (Schuller 1979, 83). Democracy promotion therefore was an instrument to ensure loyalty to the Athenian empire. Furthermore, allied democratic cities were more transparent and thus easier to monitor. Athens posted *episkopoi* and other officials in allied democratic cities who followed assembly discussions and so were always aware of the political directions allies were heading to.

During the course of the Second Peloponnesian War, however, Athenian democracy promotion became increasingly violent. While in the Erythrae decree (about 453 BCE) confiscation of oligarchic property was still regulated and subsumed to jurisdiction, during the Second Peloponnesian War this was increasingly replaced by executions without judicial process. An extreme example of this is the Athenian toleration of the mass slaughter of oligarchs by democrats in Kerkyrain (today Corfu) in 425 BCE, as well as the Athenian execution of 1,000 oligarchs in Mytilene in 427 BCE. Such atrocities led to irreconcilability between oligarchic and democratic factions and festered endless civil war (*stasis*) in city states. Whereas up to the Second Peloponnesian War democracy had gained in legitimacy through Athenian achievements in arts, sciences, and wealth, and was hence spreading throughout Greece, during the course of the Second Peloponnesian War democracy became increasingly associated with the violent rule of the mob due to Athens's aggressive behavior. It did not only instill *stasis* in city states through democracy promotion, but was also involved in mass atrocities, most famously perhaps in Melos, and engaged in disastrous military campaigns as in Sicily – leading ultimately to the disqualification of democracy by history.