

CHAPTER ONE

The United States and the Global Struggle for Democracy

Whether the tremendous war so heroically fought and so victoriously ended shall pass into history a miserable failure, barren of permanent results—a scandalous and shocking waste of blood and treasure . . . of no value to liberty or civilization . . . must be determined one way or the other. . . . Slavery, like all other great systems of wrong, founded in the depth of human selfishness and existing for ages, has not neglected its own conservation. . . . Custom, manners, morals, religion are all on its side everywhere in the South; and when you add the ignorance and servility of the ex-slave to the intelligence and accustomed authority of the master, you have the conditions, not out of which slavery will again grow, but under which it is impossible for the Federal government wholly to destroy it . . . [unless we] give to every loyal citizen the elective franchise—a right and power which will be ever present, and will form a wall of fire for his protection.

—Frederick Douglass, December 1866

THIS BOOK explores the origins and the consequences of the central ambition of American foreign policy during the twentieth century: in Woodrow Wilson's words, "to make the world safe for democracy." The book analyzes the origins of the effort to promote democracy abroad in terms of Washington's definition of the American national security; it investigates the consequences of the policies pursued with respect to individual countries the United States has sought to reform as well as with respect to the changing character of the international system America has sought to reorder. The book thus tells a triple story, at once about the identity of America's self-assigned role in the world, the influence of America's democratizing mission on a selected group of countries, and the effect of America's ambitions on the international system as a whole. The major countries analyzed are the Philippines, the Dominican Republic, Germany, Japan, and Iran (although American influence in Chile, Guatemala, Mexico, Nicaragua, Poland, Czechoslovakia, Greece, South Africa, and Russia is also considered). The chief presidential administrations reviewed in terms of their frameworks for world order are those of Woodrow Wilson, Franklin

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Roosevelt, Harry Truman, and Ronald Reagan. The book's primary focus is historical, but its account should help contemporary policymakers as they debate what more they might or should do to fulfill Wilson's famous injunction.

Until the 1990s, American scholarship neglected to investigate with any comparative framework or historical depth the consequences abroad of surely the greatest ambition of United States foreign policy over the past century: to promote democracy abroad as a way of enhancing the national security. Why has this subject not been investigated? The question leads to an exploration of intellectual currents in the American academic establishment, which is included in my appendix, "Notes on the Study of International Origins of Democracy." The aim of the book is to remedy the oversight, first by providing a historical account and a comparative framework for evaluating American successes and failures, then by assessing this undertaking's impact on world politics in the twentieth century.

Academic silence on the international origins of democracy abroad does not reflect a failure of American policy. The greatest success has been in Europe after 1945, where the democratization of Germany, the organization of the European Community, and the success of democracy in places like Poland and the Baltic and Czech republics depended in significant measure on American resolve. So, too, British policy has mattered. In Asia today, democracy exists most securely in areas once under British or American domination—India and Japan especially, but also the Philippines and Malaysia. In the Caribbean and Central America, the countries where democracy is most established are those that were once British colonies (with the notable exception of Costa Rica). In Africa, where the future of democracy today remains bleak, the most hopeful signs continue to come from areas formerly under British rule (except, perhaps, for the former French colony of Senegal)—especially in Botswana, Mauritius, the Gambia, and South Africa, and perhaps in due course from Nigeria and Kenya. Even in the many cases where American and British attempts to establish democratic government overseas failed, or where democracy is still fragile—most notably in the Hispanic Caribbean and Central America and in Africa—their respective efforts were nonetheless considerable and there is much to be learned from their inability to succeed.

Of course, the United States and Britain have not been the only actors attempting to promote democracy abroad. While French, Dutch, and Belgian colonialism failed completely in such undertakings (to the extent that it even tried), the consolidation of democracy in Greece, Portugal, and Spain beginning in the mid-1970s was due in substantial measure to the active role played by the European Community. Similarly, in recent years, nongovernmental agencies from Amnesty International to the Roman

Catholic Church have played critical roles in the rise of democratic movements in parts of Latin America, the Philippines, and Eastern Europe. Nevertheless, the principal disseminators historically of democratic institutions at the international level have unquestionably been the United States and Great Britain.

America launched itself upon a mission to promote democracy abroad somewhat accidentally. The Spanish-American War was fought for a variety of reasons, only one of which was to promote what today would be called human rights for Cubans suffering at the hands of the Spanish. Nor did concern for human rights mean Americans expected to see democracy flourish in Cuba once the Spanish left. When the American Congress declared in April 1898 that Cuba had a right to freedom and independence, it did not assume that this would readily translate into democracy for that island, much less for the Philippines.

Nevertheless, after the war, some kind of order had to be established by the American occupiers. Annexation to the United States was at least a possibility; Hawaii had been annexed in July 1898, and the United States had by then long experience in granting statehood to peoples who organized themselves in ways compatible with established national practices. But for Cuba and the Philippines, Washington concluded instead that, for such numerous peoples so different from North Americans, eventual self-government was preferable. In these circumstances, trying to establish democratic government locally and then departing was all the Americans knew how to do, even if their way of providing it proved deficient in many respects.

The evident difficulties of fostering democracy in Cuba and the Philippines after 1898 did not dampen the American enthusiasm for such undertakings. When President Woodrow Wilson ordered the occupation of Veracruz, Mexico, in 1914, the intervention in Haiti in 1915, and the takeover of the Dominican Republic in 1916, he justified his actions as part of an effort to bring constitutional democracy to Latin America. In 1917, when the United States declared war on Germany, Wilson declared that America intended "to make the world safe for democracy" and subsequently issued his Fourteen Points dedicated to that end. His ambition at the Paris Peace Conference of 1919 to create a European order of democratically constituted, nationally self-determining states associated in the League of Nations, was the direct fulfillment of his pledge.

Again, when in the heat of World War II, President Franklin Delano Roosevelt asserted American support for "Four Freedoms" and signed the Atlantic Charter with British Prime Minister Winston Churchill, he reaffirmed American dedication to the goal of promoting a world order consisting of democratically constituted states. It was thus in keeping with

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American policy that the United States interpreted Stalin as having aggressive designs on Europe when, in March 1945, he abrogated the "Declaration on Liberated Europe" he had signed a month earlier with Roosevelt and Churchill, promising free elections in Poland. And it was clearly in line with this tradition when, somewhat later in 1945, the administration of President Harry Truman instructed the American occupying authorities of Germany and Japan that their primary duty was to convert these two defeated, militaristic countries into stable democracies.

While the American occupations of Germany and Japan were the most concerted efforts mounted by the United States to promote democracy abroad, American ambitions did not cease with the end of these interventions in the early 1950s. Already the Marshall Plan of 1947 had repeated the American concern to support democracy throughout Europe, a theme heard again with the formation of the Organization of American States in 1948, reiterated toward Western Europe with the creation of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) in 1949, and announced again by the administration of President Dwight Eisenhower after 1953 with respect to "the captive nations" of East Central Europe. In 1961, President John Kennedy expressed this determination anew with regard to Latin America in the Alliance for Progress. Even Southeast Asia was to be defended not simply to contain communism, but in the hope that these people too would become democratic.

By the mid-1960s, following the setbacks in Indochina and the evident failure of the Alliance for Progress, the voices calling for the promotion of democracy abroad were momentarily stilled. But by 1973, congressional opposition to what many termed the "amorality" of the foreign policy crafted by President Richard Nixon and his national security adviser, Henry Kissinger, led to demands that democratization be fostered in a variety of areas, most notably in southern Africa. Subsequently, there were additional initiatives to support democracy abroad: in President Jimmy Carter's human rights campaign, in the "democratic revolution" repeatedly called for by President Ronald Reagan, and in a variety of measures undertaken by President George Bush toward Eastern Europe, the former Soviet Union, the Philippines, and Central America beginning in 1989. President Bill Clinton's pledge to pursue this same goal demonstrates how firmly bipartisan it now has become to see American national security promoted by the expansion of democracy around the globe.

In the mid-1990s, Americans might well ask themselves how much the worldwide demand for democracy is the result of their century-old determination to promote this cause. Certainly the new global enthusiasm for democracy is the closest the United States had ever come to seeing its own traditional foreign policy agenda reflected on an international scale. The

American idea of a world order opposed to imperialism and composed of independent, self-determining, preferably democratic states bound together through international organizations dedicated to the peaceful handling of conflicts, free trade, and mutual defense (a package of proposals that may be called “liberal democratic internationalism”) has been with us in mature form since the early 1940s.

Although the ingredients of this worldview had been put in place during the presidency of Woodrow Wilson (1913–1921)—so that “Wilsonianism” is a term synonymous with liberal democratic internationalism—its origins in American history lie even further back. Thus, Thomas Jefferson had been the first to insist that a peaceful world order in which America could fully participate needed to be one constituted by democratic states. Or again, support for the national self-determination of other peoples had its roots in the Monroe Doctrine of 1823, affirming an American commitment to an independent Latin America. For its part, the twentieth century call for free trade grew out of a preference for a nondiscriminatory international economic system as old as the Revolution of 1776, with its efforts to break out of British mercantilist control. And anti-militarism was evident in the Founding Fathers’ fear that a standing army might threaten civilian government.¹

The world of the mid-1990s therefore seemed to be asking for much the kind of global order that the United States has been proposing for three-quarters of a century (if not virtually since its Revolution). Throughout Eastern Europe, within much of the former Soviet Union, in most parts of Latin America, and along the Pacific rim of Asia, democracy is on the march, and with it calls for a liberal international economic order and increased cooperation through a multitude of international organizations, whose most important goal is the search not for competitive balance-of-power solutions to keep the peace, but instead inclusive, consensus building mechanisms of collective security. Indeed, the so-called new thinking of former Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev with respect to world order after 1986 seemed little more than a recognition of verities Wilson had set out seventy years earlier. Whatever his illusions as to the ease with which “right-minded men” might come to agreement, Wilson was the first world leader to respect the power of nationalism and to try to channel its great strength in the direction of democracy and international cooperation, beginning in Central and Eastern Europe but incorporating the rest of the world thereafter.

But this is not a book simply about American foreign policy told from the perspective of American actors. A principal reason that American liberal democratic internationalism had such an effect on world politics takes us from a study of the history of this country’s foreign policy to the study

of the evolution of political affairs worldwide. Since the late eighteenth century—beginning with the industrial, American, and French revolutions—a growing demand for popular sovereignty linked to the growth of nationalism has spread around the world. By its very nature, the demand challenged the traditional basis of authoritarian government, necessitating the development of new structures of mass participation through political parties and new modes of organizing power within the government that had never been seen. Correspondingly, the growth of nationalism took on international significance as states beheld the expanding capacities for action of early modernizers and sought to duplicate them, or as political movements within various countries began to recognize a common identity with the values and interests of parties and ideologies abroad.

By the early nineteenth century, this modern political consciousness had moved from Western Europe and North America to Latin America. Well before the end of that century, it had spread to Eastern Europe (including Russia), Turkey, Japan, and China. As it moved, the spirit of nationalism with its demands for popular sovereignty profoundly troubled international as well as domestic political stability.

Seen from this perspective, World War I was not only about how to handle the growth of German power in Europe; it was also about the proper organization of the state in an era of nationalism and the basis for a stable international order in the aftermath of the demise of so many authoritarian monarchies. Traditions of party government were weak to nonexistent in the regions left stateless by the collapse of the Ottoman, Austro-Hungarian, and Russian empires, and a shift in the relative power of states was accompanied during the interwar years by an ideological crisis unprecedented since the Reformation as communists, fascists, and democrats struggled with one another and against authoritarian holdouts to determine the fate of Europe.

Viewed from the vantage point of the international history of the twentieth century, American foreign policy was in keeping with the forces of the times as it sought to promote U.S. national security by encouraging like-minded democratic states to come into existence throughout the world. Nevertheless, much the same dilemma continued after World War II, despite fascism's defeat, as had occurred after World War I, despite the fall of three empires: class, ethnic, and interstate violence substantially intensified in those parts of the world where a stable modern state had not yet appeared. Now, however, the rising tide of nationalist demands were most evident outside Europe, in Africa, Asia, and Latin America, where debates over the proper organization of the state took on a new sharpness. In these circumstances, the cold war was not simply a bipolar conflict between Moscow and Washington to be studied strictly in terms of bilateral relations or of the systemic characteristics of such a world order; it was also a

contest among nationalists within various countries, rivals holding different conceptions of the proper organization of the state who looked to the superpowers for example and support.

Whatever our collective relief at the end of the cold war, it is abundantly clear that the essential challenge of the century has not also ended. Nationalism and the call for an effective state resting on popular sovereignty remain demands that in many parts of the world are not fulfilled. Indeed, in many cases in Eastern Europe, Asia, and Africa, the end of the cold war has exacerbated nationalist conflicts as the political apparatuses that held states in place, largely by military power and secret police nourished by Washington or Moscow, have weakened or disappeared.

The American agenda calling for a world order of democratic states thus needs to be understood not only as an expression of the American national interest conducted with respect to individual countries, but also in the context of nationalist debates about state building in the twentieth century and American efforts to create a comprehensive framework for world order. Since Wilson's time, the most consistent tradition in American foreign policy with respect to this global change has been the belief that the nation's security is best protected by the expansion of democracy worldwide. His doctrine of liberal democratic internationalism has not always been predominant. It was notably absent in the Johnson, Nixon, and Ford years, for example, and it has never been without its internal debates. Nevertheless, as in 1918 and 1945, so in the 1990s after the cold war, Americans are asking what to do with their current preeminence in world politics, and many are finding that the traditional answer continues to ring true. Their assurance is sustained by the sight of so many movements and countries struggling to become democracies, and by the conviction that just as it has mattered to the United States that Germany and Japan became democratic, so it is of importance that Russia and Mexico today successfully democratize—with perhaps the democratization of other important lands such as Turkey and China to follow thereafter.²

AMERICAN TRIUMPHANT

If the United States had never existed, what would be the status in world affairs of democracy today? Would its forces based in France, Britain, the Low Countries, and Scandinavia have survived the assaults of fascism and communism, or would one of these rival forms of mass political mobilization have instead emerged triumphant at the end of the twentieth century?

The answer is self-evident: we can have no confidence that, without the United States, democracy would have survived. To be sure, London prepared the way for Washington in charting the course of liberal internationalism; and the United States was slow to leave isolationism after 1939,

while the Red Army deserves primary praise for the defeat of Nazi Germany. Yet it is difficult to escape the conclusion that since World War I, the fortunes of democracy worldwide have largely depended on American power.

The decisive period of the century, so far as the eventual fate of democracy was concerned, came with the defeat of fascism in 1945 and the American-sponsored conversion of Germany and Japan to democracy and a much greater degree of economic liberalism. Here were the glory days of American liberal democratic internationalism (and not the 1980s, however remarkable that decade, as some believe). American leadership of the international economy—thanks to the institutions created at Bretton Woods in 1944, its strong backing for European integration with the Marshall Plan in 1947 and support for the Schuman Plan thereafter, the formation of NATO in 1949, the stability of Japanese political institutions after 1947 and that country's economic dynamism after 1950 (both dependent in good measure on American power)—created the economic, cultural, military, and political momentum that enabled liberal democracy to triumph over Soviet communism. Except perhaps for NATO, all of these developments were the product of the tenets of thinking first brought together in modern form by Woodrow Wilson, before being adapted to the world of the 1940s by the Roosevelt and Truman administrations.

In the moment of triumph, it should not be forgotten that for most of this century, the faith in the future expansion of democracy that had marked progressive thinking in Europe and America at the turn of the century seemed exceedingly naive. By the 1930s, democracy appeared to many to be unable to provide the unity and direction of its totalitarian rivals. Indeed, again in the 1970s, there was a resurgence of literature predicting democracy's imminent demise: its materialism, its individualism, its proceduralism (that is, the elaborate set of rules and institutions needed to make it function), its tolerance, not to say its permissiveness—the list could be extended indefinitely—seemed to deprive it of the toughness and confidence necessary to survive in a harsh world of belligerent, ideologically driven fascist and communist states.

Fascism was essentially undone by its militarism and its racism; Soviet communism by its overcentralized economic planning and its failure to provide a political apparatus capable of dealing with the tensions of nationalism not only within the Soviet empire but inside the Soviet Union itself. By contrast, however varied the forms of government may be that rightly call themselves democratic, they have demonstrated a relative ability to accommodate class, gender, and ethnic diversity domestically through complicated institutional forms centering on competitive party systems and representative governments. As importantly, the democracies have

shown an ability to cooperate internationally with one another through a variety of regimes managing the complex issues of their interdependence, despite the centrifugal force of rival state interests and nationalism. Hence, at the end of the twentieth century, democracy is unparalleled for its political flexibility, stability, legitimacy, and ability to cooperate internationally.

Nevertheless, for three reasons it would be a mistake for American triumphalism to be excessively self-congratulatory. First, democratic values are no monopoly of the United States; second, it is not yet clear that democracy will necessarily dominate the future; and third, democracy has left quite a number of victims in its wake. The first point recalls that while democracy may not have survived without the United States, this country was not the sole repository of these values. Not only did the Scandinavians, Dutch, Belgians, and French share these values with Anglo-Americans, but so too did many in Germany, Italy, and Eastern Europe. More, these values are not simply Western but commend themselves in their own terms to other peoples establishing modern governments with party systems capable of mobilizing the mass of the population in durable political institutions.

Although it would be a substantial exaggeration to say that all societies must ultimately converge as democracies, it is nonetheless true that the flexible, decentralized accountability characteristic of democratic institutions, the virtues of a market economy, and the freedom of information and association characteristic of its practices appeal to many who study the reasons for democracy's success. If democracy was once "a leap in the dark," as Lord Derby told Prime Minister Benjamin Disraeli in the 1860s, it most certainly is no more. Democracy has demonstrated its ability (at least relative to rival forms of organization) to embody the nationalist demand for a state based on mass participation by incorporating the marginalized into political life and addressing the tensions of class and ethnic cleavage while preserving distinctions of social identity. Just as importantly, it has shown that its various peoples, despite their nationalist vanities and suspicions, can cooperate internationally in a variety of military, economic, and humanitarian endeavors in a way unparalleled in history. These capacities reflect the values, practices, and institutions on which the United States alone has no monopoly.

A second, and more important reason to question American triumphalism is that it is by no means clear that democracy will dominate the future. A decade ago no one foresaw the speedy collapse of communism, while four decades back there were no end of discussions as to how peoples of Confucian culture were doomed to perpetual backwardness. Yet totalitarianism was defeated, and we now see the evidence that late-modernizers can outstrip early leaders by finding within their traditional systems ways

to imitate the advances of others while avoiding the pitfalls of early success. The story of Germany relative to Britain at the turn of the century or the record of Japan after 1945 offer telling examples of the speed with which the international balance of power may shift.

In all, it must be recognized that liberal democracy appeals especially to Western peoples. If two great non-Western cultures have adopted liberal democratic ways—India and Japan—it was under the duress of direct British and American occupation. Without a feudal past, a strong and independent bourgeoisie, or the heritage of the Reformation, the Enlightenment, and the American and French revolutions, what reason is there to think others must necessarily follow in the Western mode? Perhaps in time, Confucian or Islamic societies will engender modern political orders more effective than those proposed by the West.³

Indeed, the possibility of an alternative development to liberal democracy growing from within currently democratic countries themselves should not be excluded. The tension between majority and minority rights; the danger of individualism to the common good; the threat of economic or environmental disaster combined with growing class and ethnic tensions over the next generation—all of these portend crises whose resolution might well not be in keeping with liberal democratic traditions and could eventually lead to the deterioration of these values and practices. The United States is certainly not immune to such seduction; virtually every presidential election turns up a messiah who earns some measure of popular appeal from an antidemocratic agenda. We would do well to keep in mind the foolish boasting of British and American imperialists of the nineteenth century who saw all the world progressively being raised up thanks to the blessings bestowed automatically by association with superior Anglo-Saxon ways. Pride cometh before the fall.⁴

The third reason to qualify our enthusiasm over liberal democracy's current victory is the many victims it has left in its wake. During the interwar period, the democracies had been pusillanimous in the face of fascist aggression; many could have been saved had the West had the courage of its convictions. The opposite problem occurred during the cold war. The most obvious victims were in Vietnam, where the trials of French colonialism were followed by the horrors of war with the United States. Vietnam was not an isolated incident; the general overmilitarization of the cold war involving the shoring-up of authoritarian governments from Guatemala to Iran, from South Korea to Zaire, should not be forgotten either.

These qualifications made, this book will maintain that liberal democratic internationalism, or Wilsonianism, has been the most important and distinctive contribution of the United States to the international history of the twentieth century, for this package of proposals has given political

shape and direction to a variety of global forces in this period, which together have produced the current strength and prestige of democratic government worldwide.

DEFINING THE TERM *LIBERAL DEMOCRACY*

To this point, I have been using the term *democracy*, and more importantly *liberal democracy*, without defining either of these complicated and weighty words or explaining the significance of their association. To capture a fuller picture of Washington's operational code so far as its liberal democratic internationalism is concerned, we must probe more deeply the nature of American liberal democracy itself by seeing the way these values and practices have evolved historically in American life.

Fortunately, academics across the political spectrum have come to something of a consensus as to what they mean by the word *democracy*: free elections contested by freely organized parties under universal suffrage for control of the effective centers of governmental power. Of course there are differences on the best institutional form of democratic government—whether a presidential or parliamentary system is preferable, whether to establish a federal structure of rule, or how to organize an effective electoral competition. But on the most essential matter there is agreement: a democracy is a political system institutionalized under the rule of law, wherein an autonomous civil society, whose individuals join together voluntarily into groups with self-designated purposes, collaborate with each other through the mechanisms of political parties and establish through freely contested elections a system of representative government.⁵ When most government officials speak of democracy in the pages to follow, it is something close to this notion of government that they have in mind.

The disputes begin when academics and government officials ask what *democratization* means, that is, what mix of cultural, economic, and social factors tend to initiate, consolidate, and perpetuate democracy. Is it enough to arrange for honest elections and then expect democratic ways to take root of themselves? (This was the American formula for Nicaragua in the 1920s, and it proved inadequate.) Or need one go further still, supervising the character of the constitution so that individuals selected will govern through an effective division of powers in government, while promoting civil liberties that include effective protection for freedom of speech and assembly? (This was the American agenda for the Philippines, where it has provided for a fragile democracy at best.) Or is it necessary to reform more deeply yet, to insist on labor's right to organize and on the right of the agrarian poor to gain land and credit? (This was the American approach to

the democratization of Germany and Japan, the most critical and successful of such efforts.)

The best way to make sense of the various ways Americans have operationalized their concept of democracy is to turn to the term *liberal*—a word that has never been defined with the relative precision of *democracy*. Giovanni Sartori offers a helpful definition:

[Liberalism is] the theory and practice of the juridical defense, through the constitutional state, of individual political freedom, of individual liberty. Two things will be immediately noted: a) I have not given prominence to “individualism,” and b) I say “constitutional state” and not, as is at times suggested, “minimal state.”⁶

Historically understood, liberalism has made a series of claims about the moral character of the individual and the state. Perhaps the most important contribution of liberalism to our day is its notion of constitutionalism or the rule of law: that duly established procedures—and not cliques or persons—should control the behavior of the state if authority is to be legitimate.

By the nineteenth century, liberalism’s most distinctive influence on emerging democratic government had to do with its insistence on a limited state—a government constrained by the rule of law (subject to internal institutionalized checks and balances in the American case) and so weak relative to society that popular forces are capable of replacing it (in America, the presumption that the freedoms of speech, association, and election are so powerfully entrenched that no combination of governmental forces could subvert them before itself being ousted).

American liberalism is part of a tradition stretching back to England in the seventeenth century—especially to the Glorious Revolution of 1688–9, by which an aristocratic parliament established its authority relative to the monarchy, and to the writings of John Locke (1632–1704). In the eighteenth century, the arguments of the Enlightenment and the debates of the American and French revolutions nourished the liberal tradition, which was made relevant to the nineteenth century by such British thinkers as Adam Smith, Jeremy Bentham, Richard Cobden, and John Stuart Mill, as well as by William Gladstone, the great social and political reformer who was four times prime minister (for a total of fourteen years between 1868 and 1894) and who greatly impressed Woodrow Wilson.

The essential features of liberalism from the late seventeenth to the late nineteenth centuries were a defense of individual liberties and property rights, an appeal to reason over custom, and a demand for government limited under law and based on the consent of the governed. Liberals tended to be cosmopolitan in that they felt the principles they espoused to be universal; to insist on a secular state divorced from religious ties; to oppose militarism as the instrument of a despotic state; and (beginning in

the late eighteenth century under the influence of Adam Smith especially) to favor free trade for the sake of limited government, prosperity, and peace.

For its time, and still for ours in many parts of the world, liberalism was a revolutionary doctrine. It combated religious intolerance, making society possible between groups holding to different ethical codes; it denied the blind dictates of custom, making government subject itself to law; and it insisted on reason and consent as the basis for an individual's submission to the dictates of authority. While its fortunes were tied to those of a rising bourgeoisie, liberalism's appeal depended as well on Western religious heterogeneity, the practices of certain Protestant sects, the character of some aristocratic groups, the relative role of the military in politics, and the rise of scientific thinking.

Revolutionary as this perspective was, most European liberals before the mid-nineteenth century were nonetheless not democrats; their claims were for liberty not for equality. Their opposition to democracy was based on fear of the mob—an aroused, uneducated public that knew not how to govern and so would deliver the state into the hands of a tyrant promising equality by dispossessing the holders of property. Their example: the Terror of the French Revolution (1793–4), in which a narrow clique of demagogic dictators unleashed the furies of mob violence on the land. Fearful of a repetition of these horrors, French liberals (and to a lesser extent their British counterparts) shied away from democracy before the 1880s. Even those who were democrats, however, usually did not call for a radical redistribution of property to favor society's disadvantaged. As a result, in Europe most democrats until the late nineteenth century tended to be socialists and considered the liberal insistence on the inviolability of property rights as a hindrance to democracy.

To be sure, liberalism had an affinity with democracy, which came from its belief that authority was legitimate only when it had the consent of the governed. Moreover, by calling for a weak state relative to society, and especially by opposing a strong military, liberals put themselves in the dangerous position of having the political order overwhelmed by mass discontent if somehow the working classes failed to see the government as legitimate. Finally, as nationalism appeared in the nineteenth century—whether in Greece, Italy, or Poland—liberals tended to support it, at first in opposition to absolutism but also in the name of self-determination and hence of popular democracy.

It was only in the 1860s in Britain, and the 1880s in France, that the marriage between liberalism and democracy began to be celebrated, to be consummated by World War I. Only then in Europe did liberal democracy appear in its modern form, wherein each tradition grafted to itself elements of the other. Democratic thinking adopted from liberalism a belief in

human fallibility, the need for reasoned discussion, the possibility for tolerance and thus for social diversity, and most importantly, a commitment to the moral preeminence of the individual and of the group over the state (reflected in institutionalized restraints on the power of government best summed up as the rule of law). The difference between democratic socialism and communism lies in the latter's rejection of liberalism's restraints on government in the name of its own democratic utopianism.

At the same time, liberal thinking (as in the writing of T. H. Green) adopted from democratic arguments the need for universal suffrage (including the vote for women), labor's right to organize, and the notion that the state might perform certain welfare functions and play a hand in regulating the economy in circumstances where the natural workings of society appeared unable to provide order. *Liberal democracy* is, then, a particular form of democracy and a particular kind of liberalism, a matching of terms (like *Marxism-Leninism*) in which each concept carries its own meaning apart from the other, yet in which the fusion of the two creates a form of government that is far richer and more complex than either term alone suggests.⁷

While closely related to British liberalism ideologically and aware of the excesses of the French Revolution, American liberal democracy has nonetheless had its own distinctive history. Lacking a feudal past and an aristocratic conservative tradition (though at times Alexander Hamilton and the Federalists or thinkers in the South like John C. Calhoun might appear to play the role), America has never had a powerful socialist tradition either.⁸ Consequently, liberalism has always been the dominant political creed in the United States, even if it has been strikingly unself-conscious in the positions it has taken. Americans might differ strongly among themselves, but seen from the perspective of Western political thought in general, these were family squabbles (the Civil War excepted, given slavery's incompatibility with liberal principles).

The most important statement on the uniqueness of American liberalism remains Alexis de Toqueville's *Democracy in America* published in 1835 (a second volume appeared in 1840). Commenting that the United States was "born free," that "the social state of the Americans is eminently democratic . . . even the seeds of aristocracy were never planted," Toqueville continues:

There society acts by and for itself. There are no authorities except within itself; one can hardly meet anybody who would dare to conceive, much less to suggest, seeking power elsewhere. The people take part in the making of the laws by choosing the lawgivers, and they share in their application by electing the agents of the executive power; one might say that they govern themselves, so feeble and restricted is the part left to the administration, so vividly is that administration

aware of its popular origin, and obedient to the fount of power. The people reign over the American political world as God rules over the universe. It is the cause and the end of all things; everything rises out of it and is absorbed back into it.⁹

Toqueville was correct to see how democratic the United States was by contrast with other countries in the 1830s, for with Andrew Jackson's election in 1828 it could rightfully call itself the first modern democracy. Yet it should be recalled that at the time of American independence there were property qualifications for the vote and that certain religious denominations, as well as women and slaves, were disfranchised. Had Toqueville arrived a decade earlier, his account might not have been so perspicacious.

As it was, Toqueville exaggerated the threat that as an unbounded democracy the United States might become a "tyranny of the majority" exercised through a despotic government against the independence of individuals and social groups. What he failed to see was that the call for a powerful state depended more on the existence of a conservative, aristocratic right or on a militant socialist left than on a liberal center of property such as predominated in the United States. The United States lacked the heritage of a centralized state that the tradition of a monarchy might have given it. And the early embrace of democracy (along with the expanding frontier and the competition among successive waves of immigrants) weakened the appeal of socialism, the other political creed to call for a strong state relative to society.

Thus, in theory as well as in fact, the distinguishing mark of American liberal democracy (even by comparison with other liberal democracies) has been a state limited by strongly organized social forces acting through freely organized political parties. Some of these social groups are religious, others ethnic, but the most serious debates have turned around property rights—whether private property rights are essential for the preservation of democracy, or whether they are an impediment to democracy's full realization. Accordingly, a fundamental divide in American political life is between liberals who borrow from socialist thinking the call for socioeconomic change that directly benefits the politically marginalized (although clearly there may be serious disputes over the nature of these reforms, and these debates have always been timid by socialist standards) and those who feel that reforms in political organization are enough in themselves (either because the state should not be given too much power or because market forces more effectively assure prosperity than state interventions in the economy). In sum, virtually all Americans are liberal democrats, but not all liberal democrats are the same.

It is inevitable that the meaning of liberal democracy in domestic American life should deeply mark the conduct of its foreign policy. When their policy intends to promote democracy abroad, Americans rather naturally

tend to think in terms of a weak state relative to society. The result for others is a paradoxical form of “conservative radicalism”: radical in that for many countries, democracy has meant an abrupt and basic political change away from the narrow-based authoritarian governments with which these people are familiar; conservative in that in fundamental ways, the Americans have not meant to disturb the traditional social power relations based on property ownership.

Here was the genius, and also the tragedy, of the American sponsorship of democracy abroad: it was genuinely innovative politically, but it was not profoundly upsetting socioeconomically. The genius of the approach was that it could be attractive to established elites abroad (provided that they had the wit to try to adapt), for whatever the hazards of introducing democracy, it promised to modernize and stabilize those regimes that could reform enough to be called democratic. The tragedy, especially in lands that were predominantly agrarian, was that these political changes (where they were accepted) were often not enough to create the cultural, economic, and social circumstances that could reinforce a democratic political order. As a result, American efforts either failed completely (as in Central America and the Caribbean during Wilson’s presidency) or created narrowly based and highly corrupt elitist forms of democracy (as in the Philippines or more recently in the Dominican Republic).

It was different when the United States occupied Japan and Germany to promote democracy in 1945. But the men and women who undertook this mission were not liberal democrats of the traditional American sort. Instead, many of them were New Dealers, for whom the prerequisites of democracy included strong labor unions, land reform, welfare legislation, notions of racial equality, and government intervention in the economy. Moreover, they had the good fortune to be working with societies that already had centralized political institutions, diversified industrial economies, and (at least in Germany) many convinced democrats awaiting deliverance from fascism and communism alike. The Americans who conceived of the Alliance for Progress in Latin America were for the most part cut of the same cloth as the New Dealers. But their power in Latin America was not nearly so great as their predecessors’ had been in Germany and Japan, and the socioeconomic structures of South and Central America lacked the inherent advantages for democratizers that the former fascist powers possessed. Hence the Alliance’s failure.

This New Deal outlook was not typical of the Americans who took the Philippines in 1898 or who were in power under what was deservedly called the “progressive” presidency of Woodrow Wilson. These Franklin Roosevelt Democrats were also different from liberal reformers like Jimmy Carter, who favored a strictly human-rights approach to democratization. The most interesting contrast comes with Ronald Reagan, however, whose

insistence on the contribution free markets could make to democratic government shared with the New Dealers the notion that political life depends in good measure on the structure of power socioeconomically (even if the two approaches differed on the need for governmental regulation and social redistribution).

As these cases suggest, American liberal democratic internationalism varied in its agenda over time. The continuity was such, however, that we can speak of a tradition in American foreign policy, one with an agenda for action abroad tied to a firm notion of the national interest that was to have momentous consequences for world affairs in the twentieth century.

A HISTORICAL EXAMPLE: POST-CIVIL WAR RECONSTRUCTION

If there are liberal democrats and liberal democrats in the United States, one can best sort out the distinctions among them not by further refining definitions but by providing an example that illustrates the spectrum of their thinking. No better study is at hand than that of the North's effort to "reconstruct" the South after the Civil War: to change the defeated Confederacy so that a democratic Union could be preserved. Here is the mirror of history in which Americans beheld themselves and self-consciously acted in the late nineteenth century, as they had during the late eighteenth, to establish their political identity. Here, too, one sees the repertoire of concepts that might be used later when American power in world affairs led it to contemplate democratizing other countries.

Of course, one must be careful not to push the comparison too far. Reconstruction was unique both in time (a quarter of a century before the taking of the Philippines) and in the issues it confronted: deep-set racism compounded by class differences, making reform especially bitter (a situation present in the Dominican Republic and Guatemala but not in the most important cases included in this book). The Northern obligation ultimately to reincorporate the South into the United States on the basis of constitutional equality also made the task especially delicate. More, the South could claim that it already was a liberal democracy; its government functioned democratically so far as white citizens were concerned—indeed with more civil liberties than in the North, its partisans could assert, since Lincoln suspended the writ of habeas corpus for disloyal activities. Finally, many aspects of what can be called liberal democratic internationalism in the twentieth century either go back to other events in the nineteenth century, or even to the Revolution of 1776 (which was far more radical politically than it was socioeconomically), or were invented in the twentieth century, such as a greater confidence in the government's ability to handle social issues, as Democratic administrations following FDR tended to believe. In short, analysis of Northern policy during Reconstruction serves

more as an analogy than as a template for an understanding of the character of American liberal democratic internationalism in the twentieth century.

Nonetheless, the basic problem with the Confederacy (so the North felt) was that its very character had made a particularly deadly war unavoidable. How should the North act after its victory in order to create a more perfect union in a situation where differences that had for so long seemed so extreme had been further compounded by the deaths of 620,000 soldiers (including one-quarter of the South's white men of military age) and the destruction of two-thirds of the South's wealth? The challenge of remaking the South so that its reincorporation into the Union could create a stronger nation was the only occasion prior to the twentieth century when the United States would attempt to rebuild an entire society in such a way that its character was compatible with dominant American cultural, economic, social, and political values and institution.

Northern liberalism confronted three essential issues in dealing with the South both before the war and in rebuilding it thereafter, issues that would recur later in American thinking about foreign policy: the nature of interstate relations, as embodied in the question of whether a liberal democratic North could or should try to coexist in North America alongside a slave-owning South that gave no sign of being in decline; the nature of democracy, as embodied in black citizenship rights; the nature of property, as embodied in the rights of the defeated Confederate plantation owners to preserve their estates.¹⁰

With the surrender of the Confederacy, Washington had achieved the regional security it sought by reuniting the nation. But how was Washington to establish its legitimacy in terms of the people it reincorporated under its authority when it was pledged to rule by the consent of those it governed? The answer came as Northern military governors barred Confederate leaders from holding political office; called state constitutional conventions that ultimately included black voters, thereby profoundly changing the cast of Southern politics; and abolished slavery and destroyed plantation agriculture, a development that amounted to a social revolution. Yet despite these enormous changes, the South remained the South: it stayed agrarian economically, and hierarchical socially. So far as the third or more of its black citizens were concerned, it stayed undemocratic politically once the Jim Crow laws of the late nineteenth century ended their political participation. One might wonder sixty or seventy years after the war just what this terrible struggle had been about.

In fact, the war had been about many things worth fighting for. It had been about insuring the unity of the nation, so strengthening immeasurably the forces of liberal democracy worldwide. It had been about the definition of property, so that even if labor organization in the aftermath of the war proved exceedingly difficult to legitimate, property rights would never be

defined as narrowly as they had been when slavery was defended by law. It had been about the character of democracy, so that even if the provisions of the Fourteenth and Fifteenth amendments designed to make African-Americans first-class citizens had been flagrantly denied in practice, the principle had been established for a later generation to build on. Thus, an examination of the stakes of this war are indeed relevant for our purposes, both as a way of studying the spectrum of American liberal democratic thought and as a case study of what happened to this thinking in practice.

While all Northerners in favor of the war were necessarily concerned to preserve the Union, deep differences existed on what further ends the struggle should serve. Not all agreed that victory should involve the emancipation of the slave from the tyranny of a monstrous definition of property rights; still more doubted that freedom meant the freedmen must be enfranchised and so incorporated into the greater American political community; and just a minority held that freedom could finally be brought about if the freedmen were socially empowered through economic reforms centering on the distribution of Southern plantations.

In practice, even when the need to preserve the Union was combined with a determination to end slavery, one or the other of these causes typically was emphasized. Abraham Lincoln stressed the former, for example, while the Abolitionist leader William Lloyd Garrison emphasized the latter. Moreover, many who would save the Union and free the slave did not call for extending political rights to blacks. Lincoln and Garrison were both reluctant to talk about political rights for the freedmen, unlike the majority of the Republican party. Still another great divide separated those who called for giving the vote to the freedman from those (like Frederick Douglass, Wendell Phillips, Thaddeus Stevens, and Charles Sumner) who stood for economic reforms as well, claiming that without them political freedom could not be maintained.

Ultimately, after an epic struggle, the Republican majority in Congress in 1866 passed the Fourteenth Amendment enfranchising the freedmen, and in 1867 made acceptance of this amendment a condition for Southern states to rejoin the Union. It was declared ratified in 1868. In effect, then, three war aims were gained: the preservation of the Union, the abolition of slavery, and the enfranchisement of the freedmen. The minority of American liberal democrats who supported economic rights for the freedmen saw their proposals soundly defeated by the Congress. A closer examination of the character of these various war aims may establish more clearly the principles and practices involved.

For some democrats, as for Abraham Lincoln, the cause of liberalism was inherent in the preservation of the Union. The president may not have been explicit in his reasoning, but the *Federalist Papers* (1787–88) had insisted seventy years before Lincoln that without an indissoluble union

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among the states, fragmentation would lead to a competitive climate like that in Europe and there would be war. With war would come internal oppression exercised by a strong state wielding an army. If the United States were to escape the pattern of European politics, it must be free of a military establishment and the inducements to war: hence, it must be united.¹¹ Accordingly, if a region were to secede and embolden others to follow its example, the result would be to endanger the liberties the Revolution of 1776 had fought to establish. In sum, the future of liberal democracy was linked to the future of the Union. As Lincoln implied in his Gettysburg Address of November 1863, the aim of this struggle was a war to end war in North America and in the process to make the region, if not the world, safe for democracy. It was to preserve the chances for the existence of a Union he called in 1862 “the last, best hope of earth.”¹²

For a second group of democrats, the issue was not only the preservation of the Union, but the character of the South as a slave-holding region. Free labor, free soil, and democracy were incompatible with the South’s “peculiar institution.” The North therefore had a double obligation to fight: to end slavery as well as to save the Union and so create a firmer basis for freedom in America.

While it might be argued that slavery was sure to decline eventually due to the nature of economic development, slavery’s energy in the 1850s seemed self-evident. Hence many Northerners had objected to the annexation of Texas in 1845 because it was a slave state; worried in the mid-1850s over Kansas and whether it would be free; opposed Southern calls to take Cuba and so extend slavery; and noted with alarm the enthusiasm with which the South welcomed the Supreme Court’s Dred Scott decision of 1857, affirming that slaves were not citizens but property that could be taken into territories not yet granted statehood. It seemed, then, that not time but an act of will was required to settle the matter. In Lincoln’s words of June 16, 1858:

I believe this government cannot endure permanently half slave and half free. I do not expect the Union to be dissolved—I do not expect the house to fall—but I do expect it will cease to be divided. It will become all one thing or all the other. Either the opponents of slavery will arrest the further spread of it and place it where the public mind shall rest in the belief that it is in the course of ultimate extinction; or its advocates will push it forward, till it shall become alike lawful in all the states, old as well as new—North as well as South.¹³

It is worth repeating that while opposition to slavery was compatible with a determination to preserve the Union, these two liberal causes were not necessarily one and the same. Lincoln’s reluctance to push too hard on the matter of slavery was in part tactical. He had not won a majority of the vote in 1860, but was made president by the electoral college. Once the war

began, his problems remained tactical: how to keep the four slave states that stayed in the Union behind him, how not to awaken racist sentiment in the North against the war, and how to keep slave interests in the South as divided as possible. Despite his moral objection to slavery—"he who would be no slave must consent to have no slave" (1859)—he stressed his concern to preserve the Union, not his opposition to slavery. In 1862 he wrote:

I would save the Union. I would have it the shortest way under the Constitution. . . . My paramount object in this struggle is to save the Union and is not either to save or to destroy slavery. If I could save the Union without freeing any slave I would do it, and if I could save it by freeing all the slaves I would do it; and if I could save it by freeing some and leaving others alone I would also do that.

But Lincoln's stance on slavery was not purely tactical. As he said in 1858:

I am not, nor ever have been, in favor of bringing about in any way the social and political equality of the white and black races. . . . there is a physical difference between the black and white races which I believe will forever forbid the two races living together on terms of social and political equality. And inasmuch as the two cannot so live, while they do remain together there must be a position of superior and inferior, and I as much as any other man am in favor of having the superior position assigned to the white race.¹⁴

On January 1, 1863, Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation, freeing the slaves in states at war with the North. But his Proclamation of Amnesty and Reconstruction announced in December 1863 for restoring the defeated Southern states to the Union was consistent with his concern to rally white opinion in the South to the Republican party. According to its terms, a Confederate state could rejoin the Union once 10 percent of its eligible voters (which did not include blacks) swore an oath of loyalty to the republic and agreed to the emancipation of the slaves, although Confederate military and civil officers might be liable to punishment.¹⁵ In Louisiana and Arkansas, governments were created in line with these conditions, but the Congress refused to seat their delegates, claiming Lincoln's reforms were too superficial.

Like FDR at the end of World War II or Kennedy just before the war escalated in Vietnam, Lincoln died at a critical moment, leaving scholars to speculate over how his thinking would have evolved after the war. There is good reason to think that he was coming to realize the depth of white racism in the South and the need for the Republican party to enfranchise the freedmen if it had hopes of winning elections there. In his last public address, the president endorsed extending the vote to those blacks who were

“very intelligent and [to] those who served our cause as soldiers.”¹⁶ Yet even if it is plausible that Lincoln would eventually have supported the Fourteenth Amendment (or its equivalent), it is understandable that Wendell Phillips might denounce Lincoln’s program of amnesty for the South as one of “freeing the slaves and ignoring the Negro.”¹⁷

Given the short distance Lincoln had traveled toward endowing the freedmen with political rights, his successor Andrew Johnson could say he was carrying out Lincoln’s program when he issued a general proclamation of amnesty and pardon for most of the former Confederacy at the end of May 1865. Some Confederate properties were seized and its leading officials temporarily barred from office, but Johnson granted amnesties easily.¹⁸

Republican reaction was swift. In 1866 congressional Republicans tried to strengthen the conditions for Union by passing the Fourteenth Amendment to the Constitution, insuring the freedman the vote, and making its adoption by defeated states a condition of readmission. President Johnson campaigned against the amendment, which was defeated in every Southern state except Tennessee (which was thereupon readmitted to the Congress).

In the congressional elections of 1866, the Republicans emerged with large majorities in both Houses, and in 1867 they passed the First Reconstruction Act, designed to formulate an alternative to the president’s conditions for a return to the Union. Congress divided the South into five zones, each with a military governor. Conditions for admission to the Union now included enfranchising blacks (that is, ratifying the Fourteenth Amendment), disqualifying from office past Confederate leaders, and certifying that 50 percent of those registered to vote had sworn an oath of past as well as future loyalty to the Union. Between July 1868 and July 1870, all the Southern states were readmitted to the Union in line with these provisions.

However, on another score, radical reformers in Congress were defeated: efforts to secure economic independence for the freedmen were repulsed. In March 1865 the Congress had established the Freedmen’s Bureau designed to ease the transition from slavery to freedom by addressing the economic challenges confronting a community with few skills and no capital.¹⁹ The bureau promoted education and public health, but the most important proposals were those heard in the Congress to distribute “forty acres and a mule” to families of freedmen from land taken from the wealthiest of Confederate plantation owners. Already some lands had been seized by freedmen (such as Jefferson Davis’s holdings) or were given to them by Union military leaders (such as the forty thousand holdings given to freedmen on four hundred thousand acres along the Georgia and South Carolina coast by General William Tecumseh Sherman early in 1865).²⁰ W. E. B. Du Bois was exaggerating only somewhat when he wrote in 1935:

In the Freedmen's Bureau, the United States started upon a dictatorship by which the landowner and the capitalist were to be openly and deliberately curbed and which directed its efforts in the interest of a black and white labor class. . . . The Freedmen's Bureau was the most extraordinary and far-reaching institution of social uplift that America has ever attempted. It had to do, not simply with emancipated slaves and poor whites, but also with the property of Southern planters. It was a government guardianship for the relief and guidance of white and black labor from a feudal agrarianism to modern farming and industry . . . the greatest plan of reasoned emancipation yet proposed.²¹

By the amnesties he began to grant in May 1865, President Johnson nullified these transfers of property, and later in the year the Congress refused to consider proposals to expropriate Confederate plantations for the benefit of the freedmen. The general reasoning seemed to be that the slaves had acceded to the condition of free labor, and that now it was up to their own labor and the laws of the market to secure their livelihood. Such expropriation as occurred had already dealt a terrible blow to the political status of plantation owners; more social experimentation was uncalled for. Constitutional conservatism, also typical of liberal thinking, had its influence as well: where would the government stop if it took such a burden upon itself? As a result, most plantation land sold at depressed prices at public auction went to whites, often from the North, and virtually all estates were subdivided into sharecropping units on which the freedmen were now employed. In Georgia in 1874, where blacks constituted nearly half the agrarian population, they owned only 1 percent of the land.²²

How fatal to the hopes for black freedom was the failure to secure for them a degree of economic independence after 1865 adequate to preserve them from the dictates of the white community? Certainly economic conditions explain a part of their predicament: agriculture entered into a depression after 1870, and hoped-for Northern investment did not arrive to industrialize the region for generations to come. Blacks remained trapped and squeezed by the general economic backwardness of the region. Yet if there is no guarantee that land redistribution would have been enough to insure the cause of black emancipation, surely it turned out to be a fundamental aspect of any such endeavor. Left without adequate community resources to defend themselves against the dominant white politicians, black liberty was at the sufferance of others.

It was not wholly unrealistic for Northern liberal democrats to believe in 1865 that political reforms alone might give freedom to the blacks; they could not foresee the future economic evolution of the South, and even their commitment to political reform came at a high price. The passage of the Fifteenth Amendment, adopted in 1870 as a reaffirmation of the blacks'

constitutional right to the vote, followed Georgia's effort in the fall of 1868 to expel blacks from its legislature. But the more compelling argument, confirmed by subsequent events, was that basic economic change was needed sufficient to give the African-American community a measure of social as well as political independence from dominant white agricultural interests.

By 1890 the growing economic depression that began around 1873 was beginning to undermine such political freedoms as blacks were granted under the terms of the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments. For roughly a decade (the timing varied from state to state), Northern troops had been in the South and Confederate leaders remained ineligible for public office, so that blacks came to enjoy many of the benefits of political citizenship. By 1877, these troops were gone, and for more than another decade, conservative white officials counted on black votes. The worsening economic downturn after 1890 and corruption in high office led to the toppling of these state governments and their replacement by Populist officials determined to disfranchise the black.

Populist objectives were achieved before the turn of the century, under the terms of what were known as Jim Crow laws. In Louisiana, for example, there were only 1,342 black voters registered in 1904, less than 1 percent the number that had been a few years earlier, in a state where blacks made up over 47 percent of the population of nearly 1.4 million.²³ Matters were not to change until the 1960s, under Presidents Kennedy and Johnson.

Despite these setbacks, 1865 was a victory for liberal democracy. The South lost the War. Mistaken are those who imply that the continued subordination of blacks to whites meant that liberalism secured no gains. Emancipation was better than slavery. African-Americans had the vote, although it took a century to begin to exercise it effectively. Despite a host of advantages held by capital in the definition of property rights, these rights were at least defined so that slavery did not figure among them; and the annihilation of plantation owners as a class deprived capitalist interests in the North of an ally that they might have had otherwise. But the greatest gain was to the future of liberal democracy as a world force: slavery as an agrarian system was destroyed and the threat that it might expand to the West (or even the Northwest) or to Cuba (and beyond) was ended. One can only speculate on the affinities in the twentieth century between the Confederacy, had it survived, and Germany in both World Wars. The Union was preserved, making the United States a potentially powerful nation internationally, a fact of enormous consequence for the fortunes of liberal democracy in the twentieth century. In Barrington Moore's words:

German experience suggests that, if the conflict between North and South had been compromised, the compromise would have been at the expense of subse-

quent democratic development in the United States. . . . That the federal government was out of the business of enforcing slavery was no small matter. It is easy to imagine the difficulties that organized labor would have faced, for example, in its effort to achieve legal and political acceptance in later years, had not this barrier been swept away. . . . Striking down slavery was a decisive step, an act at least as important as the striking down of absolute monarchy in the English Civil War and the French Revolution, an essential preliminary for further advances.²⁴

The victory of the Civil War by the North was indeed a victory. But it was just as assuredly not an unalloyed victory for democracy until more than three generations later for African-Americans.

CONCLUSION

For a study of American efforts to promote democracy abroad in the twentieth century, Reconstruction and its aftermath illustrate both the divisions among liberal democrats in the United States and the likely consequence of certain policies. In effect, the FDR, Truman, and Kennedy years bore some similarity to the thinking of those Radical Republicans whose ideas of emancipation involved socioeconomic reform directed at the disadvantaged sectors of society as a complement to political change. Correspondingly, the occupations of Japan and Germany and the plans (never realized) for the Alliance for Progress were relatively radical attempts by the United States to promote democracy abroad. By contrast, Wilson and Carter appear more closely related to the thinking of Northern liberals rather cautious in what they would force on the South and hence easily satisfied by an essentially political understanding of democracy. Wilson is the only one of the presidents to comment on Reconstruction, and his words published in 1893 reveal a great deal:

[In 1876] normal conditions of government and of economic and intellectual life were at length restored. The period of reconstruction was past; Congress had ceased to exercise extra-constitutional powers; natural legal conditions once more prevailed. Negro rule under unscrupulous adventurers had been finally put to an end in the South, and the natural, inevitable ascendancy of the whites, the responsible class, established. . . . At last the country was homogeneous and had subordinated every other sentiment to that of hope.²⁵

Reagan falls in an anomalous position relative to other presidents, for while he stressed the importance of socioeconomic change, his antistatism in economic affairs was not of the sort that would have helped the blacks in the period under review. In debates today, the political impact of economic reform also remains of paramount concern, whether in speculation over what "shock therapy" has done or might do in Russia, or in arguing how the

opening of markets and the ratification of the North American Free Trade Agreement may affect the prospects for democracy in Mexico.

As was already noted, Reconstruction offers no exact parallel to later American thinking about foreign affairs. As it came to be formulated by Wilson and his successors, liberal democratic internationalism had many aspects to it that were alien to debates over the former Confederacy after 1865—for example, free trade, collective security, and the value of international law and organizations. Nevertheless, insofar as the rooting of democracy is concerned, it is clear that even in the 1860s, there were liberal democrats in high office in the United States who believed that the task of promoting democracy for others involved more than political change alone. Other liberal democrats disagreed, seeing their job as strictly political. They secured passage of the Fourteenth and Fifteenth amendments, and it is conceivable that had the economic destiny of the South been more robust these reforms alone would indeed have been sufficient to achieve greater emancipation for African-Americans.

The root problem of the freedmen in the South once they had been given the vote was similar to that in agrarian countries around the world. Much as the North ultimately courted the whites in the South at the expense of the blacks, so in countries as different as the Philippines in 1898 or the Dominican Republic in 1916, or with the American policy toward Latin America under Presidents Carter and Reagan, the socioeconomic base of the dominant elite was not threatened. Indeed, in some cases it was reinforced as a means to secure American political interests.

In Germany and Japan after the war, the United States acted only somewhat differently. Fascists (like Confederates) were purged and socioeconomic reforms introduced. Yet even here the Americans did not push too far, especially when the struggle with the Soviet Union intensified in 1947. Many former elites survived with their positions eventually restored. The picture of Alfred Krupp von Bohlen und Holbach being released from jail in 1951, with his family properties (which had been the center of Hitler's armament industry) returned to him, mirrors in its way Confederate Vice President Alexander Stephens's release from prison and subsequent resurrection as United States congressman and governor of Georgia. As in the South, so in countries as different as the Philippines, the Dominican Republic, or Japan: local socioeconomic power structures, values, and political traditions proved strong enough to resist wholesale Americanization. Indeed, on balance, it is the strength of local ways relative to outside efforts to change them that deserves emphasis, as the fate of African-Americans in the South so vividly illustrates.

In different countries, American influence has counted in different ways. For example, Czechs and Slovaks today often gratefully acknowledge the American contribution to the establishment of their democracy in 1918–9

and consider Woodrow Wilson to be virtually a founding father of their republic. Nevertheless, Czechoslovak democracy during the interwar period was almost entirely the doing of its own people. So too, Germany might well have become a democracy even without the American occupation after 1945, though the character of its political order without Allied supervision might have made it less liberal than it is today, and the pace of European economic integration might have been altogether slower, with dramatic consequences for political stability on the continent. By contrast, Japanese democracy bears a more indelible American mark due to General Douglas MacArthur's assertive role in the establishment of its postwar order.

When we turn to the pre-industrial world, the impact of American policy changes dramatically. Thus, the Philippines is a fragile democracy, the American-inspired political institutions not having resolved fundamental issues of class power in this predominately agrarian country. So too in Latin America, the American contribution to democracy has been problematic, as in the case of Chile, or decidedly negative, as in Guatemala or in the Dominican Republic (before 1978, when for the first time a positive intervention occurred). Indeed, whatever its intentions, American policy on balance may have done substantially more to shore up dictatorships in the region than to advance the cause of democracy: the emergence of the Somoza and Trujillo tyrannies as the fruits of American interventions beginning with Wilson illustrates this clearly.

However, country studies alone do not tell us enough. After both the First and Second world wars, and again today in the aftermath of the cold war, America has formulated frameworks for world order in which the promotion of democracy played a conspicuous role. The emphasis on global security, the world market, and international law and organizations figure prominently alongside the call for national, democratic self-determination. The administrations of Wilson, Roosevelt, Truman, and Reagan emerge as particularly important in this context, where the focus is on the ability of democratic countries to cooperate internationally.

Historical watersheds, such as we are now passing through, are moments when the study of the past is especially invigorating. The past is now securely the past: the actors and the consequences of their policies have less claim on the present and so can be studied with some dispassion. Simultaneously, the present is in search of its future and must take stock of how it arrived at its current position. The aim of this book is better to understand the past for its own sake and in order to serve the future.

As Americans ponder the challenges of world affairs at the end of the cold war, they may think back to other times when Washington's decisions were critical: not only to the end of the world wars in 1918 and 1945, but to the end of the Spanish-American War in 1898 and the Civil War in 1865

as well. What they will find is that in the aftermath of victory, Washington determined to win the peace by promoting a concept of national security calling ultimately for democratic government among those with whom the United States would work most closely.

Just how to achieve this end was never a clear matter, to be sure. As the North debated what to do with its victory over the South in 1865, so in 1898 American leaders were somewhat unsure what to do with their new role in the Far East and the Caribbean. The national debate in 1918–9 over Wilson's vision of a "peace without victory" so as "to make the world safe for democracy" was likewise raucous and uncertain. Only in the 1940s, in its planning for the postwar order, did Washington appear relatively clear in its thinking (and here too there were debates, contradictions, improvisations, and accidents aplenty as policy was made). Thus, when President Clinton, like Presidents Bush and Reagan before him, speaks of his conviction that no feature of U.S. foreign policy is more critical at the end of the cold war than helping the democratic forces in Russia, he may often be at a loss on how best to proceed. But he is articulating his concerns for peace in a recognizable way that stretches back across the generations, to American leaders in other times who have speculated on what to do in the aftermath of victory and who rightly concluded that the answer consisted in promoting the fortunes of democracy for others for the sake of American national security.

While this book was written for a general public concerned about the character of American foreign policy, it also seeks to establish a series of theoretical propositions for students of international relations, comparative politics, and American foreign policy, as well as for those interested in policymaking. While these points will be made at more length at various places in the text (especially in the appendix, but also in the concluding sections of most chapters), a summary statement here is in order.

For the student of international relations, this book's major finding is that the neglect of an appreciation of the United States' internally generated definition of national security, and of the importance of the intersection of this national security doctrine with major historical forces peculiar to the twentieth century, has created an overly abstract, ahistorical, rigid, and narrow field of analysis. Unable to understand liberal democratic internationalism as a historically constructed approach to American security interests defined by domestic political processes, and uninterested in seeing the specific challenges of international politics in the twentieth century in terms of the contending forces of nationalist ideologies, realism—the dominant school of international relations theory—has dealt mainly with strategic and diplomatic issues, treating the international system as a formal configuration of power whose properties can be studied ahistorically. However

important realism's insights surely are, its contention that these are the only issues of importance needs serious reexamination.

The chief virtue of international relations theory is that it understands that political considerations are preeminent in the formulation of a state's foreign policy. That is, realism recognizes that power—most nakedly expressed in the threat of war—is the ultimate currency in world affairs; hence the state will by its very nature be fundamentally preoccupied by the question of how power is organized in the international system in terms of its own survival. The concept of national security as the organizing principle of a state's foreign policy is well articulated in realist theory.

Yet how a state views the organization of power in the international system may be far more complex than a simple rendering of formal models of bipolar, multipolar, or hegemonic configurations can provide. Security definitions arise out of particular domestically engendered perceptions of foreign affairs and are operationalized in an environment inhabited by the domestically engendered security pursuits of other countries. But realism has absolved itself of the need to investigate the historically constructed definition of national security, growing out of a country's cultural, economic, social, and political interests as formed into policy by its leaders and operationalized through the instruments of the state.

As economic theory posits a rational economic actor, so realism is satisfied by the notion of a rational actor in terms of power calculated in external terms alone. Yet by failing to see that the twentieth century has been an era of global political instability occasioned in good measure by the rise of nationalism and the search for mass-based states (and not typified simply by anonymous changes in the distribution of power in the international system), realism has discounted the critical ideological contest of this period, and so often overlooked the major stakes involved in world affairs in favor of what it simplistically sees as the eternal struggle of states for power. For example, it is as if the problem of German power relative to its neighbors is independent of the domestic constitution of the German state, as if any rational actor would operationalize German power (or react to it) in world affairs in the same way. Thus, whether Germany is governed by Wilhelmine authoritarianism, Weimar democracy, or Hitler's Nazism becomes for the realist a secondary matter in explaining its behavior and that of its neighbors—a position that is absurd. These considerations are developed at more length in chapters four, five, eleven, and the appendix.

For students of comparative politics, this book insists on the importance of seeing the way in which international forces impinge on the evolution of the internal organization of states. Just as Confucian or Islamic systems of government have diffused over vast areas encompassing discrete peoples in the past (and may again in the future), so in this century communism,

fascism, and democracy proposed blueprints for government capable of being adopted worldwide. Seeing how these global forces intersected with local interests in a way that sought to modernize governments by demonstrating how to create political parties and to attain nationalist governmental legitimacy in line with these highly charged proposals for state development should be a key concern of comparativists. Every chapter of the book illustrates this point, which is explicitly dealt with in terms of the academic literature in the appendix.

For students of American foreign policy, the need is to achieve a unified field of study based, as with international relations theory, on a history of this country's national security debate. Such a move should free the study of American foreign affairs from being overly descriptive and atheoretical (except for Marxist writing, which is not subject to these strictures), giving it a center of gravity in accord with which the multiple elements going into the national security debate—cultural, economic, political, and strategic—can find their respective places, not by crowding each other out, but by being understood in terms of one another.

At the same time, the study of American foreign policy must be accompanied by more careful attention to the logic of world history, especially to the structure of political development in foreign countries and in the international system. It is with these forces that American policy necessarily interacts, and a sense of the reciprocal character of the exchanges (for America, too, is a product of global developments) provides a necessary perspective from which to see the pattern in events. Chapters four, five, and the appendix elaborate on these points.

Finally, for policymakers, this book attempts to lay out the concrete national interests served by liberal democratic internationalism. It endorses the Wilsonian view that the promotion of democracy worldwide advances the national security of the United States, but it does so by arguing that such policy makes for better relations with other peoples and hence satisfies realist demands that the country think of its interests defined in terms of the international organization of power. While recognizing the important differences that have existed between realist and Wilsonian agendas for foreign policy, the following pages will insist that the two approaches are compatible. Liberal democratic internationalists should understand that democracy cannot be foisted upon a world that is unready for it, just as realists should grasp that the Wilsonian effort to provide stable, modern, democratic government to foreign peoples may well serve American security. The book endorses realism by offering repeated examples of unwise efforts by American presidents to force democratic government onto peoples unwilling or unready to accept it, with negative outcomes for American policy and with disastrous consequences for the peoples subjected to its influence. But more importantly (since such a case has not yet persua-

sively been made in the academic literature), it also endorses liberal democratic internationalism by insisting on the tremendous benefits that accrued to the United States from the restructuring of Germany and Japan after 1945 into democratic states, while insisting that the national interest is also served by the expansion of democracy today in Eastern Europe (including Russia), Latin America (especially Mexico), and parts of the Far East.