



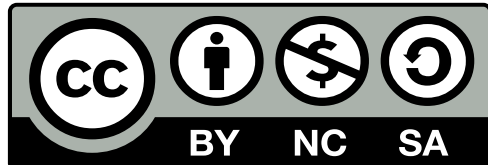
Interactivity Foundation

# Democratic Nation Building

An Interactivity Foundation Citizen Staff Work Report  
Presenting Policy Possibilities for Public Discussion

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# CONCEPTUAL POLICY POSSIBILITIES

## FOR PUBLIC DISCUSSION

### A. Lead By Example

*This possibility would redirect the money, time, and efforts that we spend on building democratic nations abroad toward revitalizing our own democracy at home. It would, in this way, try to set an inspirational example of democracy in action for other countries.*

### B. Support Democracy Whenever and Wherever Possible

*This possibility would make democratic nation building the focal point of our foreign policy. It would support democratic institutions and movements, and pursue democratic nation-building activities, whenever and wherever possible. And it would defend democracy whenever and wherever necessary, and by whatever means are necessary—even, in extreme cases, to the point of taking direct unilateral military action.*

### C. Think Local

*This possibility would try to ensure that the actions that we take to build democracy in a country are appropriate for its culture and for its economic and political conditions.*

### D. Never Go It Alone

*This possibility would require that we undertake democratic nation-building activities abroad only in concert with other democratic countries, NGOs, and international organizations such as the UN or NATO.*

### E. Build the Infrastructure For Democracy

*This possibility would use public and private sector resources to improve an underdeveloped country's material infrastructure—including its education, health care, transportation, and communication systems—in an effort to provide the economic and educational prerequisites for democracy itself.*

### F. Promote Democratic Values

*This possibility would focus our democratic nation-building activities upon promoting democratic values and ideals in an attempt to lay the foundations for a democratic government. It would, in this way, try to instill the mental habits and social practices that embody a democratic culture.*

### G. By Invitation Only

*This possibility would focus our foreign policy toward democratic nation building upon sustaining fledgling and struggling democracies instead of building new ones. But it would offer support only to countries whose governments make a formal request for our assistance or give their formal approval for such activities.*

### H. Just Say No

*This possibility would forgo all efforts to build democratic nations abroad.*

# THE IF DISCUSSION PROCESS

**Public policy discussions** too often focus upon the specific actions that governments might take to address a problem instead of the broader conceptual possibilities that might inspire them. This is unfortunate, since the wise choice of a public policy requires an exploration of a wide range of conceptual possibilities, along with the different concerns, questions, beliefs, values, goals, and interests that might motivate them. The Interactivity Foundation (IF) believes that governments too often act without considering a wide range of conceptual possibilities for public policy, and that citizen discussions of contrasting possibilities can help to improve both our public policy choices and our own ability to make them. IF thus supports discussion projects that are designed to explore, develop, articulate, and test contrasting conceptual possibilities for public policy in selected areas of concern. We believe that our discussion projects and the conceptual possibilities that we develop in them can help citizens to explore an area of concern with their neighbors and to make choices as individuals about which policy possibilities might be worthwhile to pursue.

**The aim of IF is *not* to recommend** or advocate specific conceptual policy possibilities or specific actions. It is to improve public policy by encouraging citizens to participate in thoughtful democratic discussions about their public policy concerns and the conceptual policy possibilities for addressing them. The conceptual possibilities that we present in our reports are thus developed by citizens in confidential “sanctuary” discussions, for use by their fellow citizens. We hope that they will provide a conceptual springboard for citizens who wish to explore the different policy possibilities that might exist in an area of concern, and the different concerns, questions, beliefs, values, goals, and interests that might motivate them.

**With the support of IF**, two discussion panels met in Washington D.C. on a monthly basis from July 2009 through July 2010 to explore and develop contrasting conceptual possibilities for public policy pertaining to democratic nation building.

**One panel** consisted of interested citizens. The other panel consisted of citizens who work with issues pertaining to democratic nation building in their professional lives. The panelists met for over 100 hours of sanctuary discussions in which they explored and developed many contrasting conceptual possibilities as individual citizens rather than as representatives of groups, institutions, or special interests.

*IF does not advocate specific public policy possibilities. It tries, instead, to improve our discussion of public policy by encouraging citizens to thoughtfully consider a wide range of contrasting policy possibilities.*

**This report** describes eight of the contrasting conceptual possibilities for public policy pertaining to democratic nation building that our panelists explored, developed, articulated, and tested during the course of their sanctuary discussions. It also describes some of the governance concerns that our panelists said people might have about building democratic nations abroad; their thoughts about the actions that might be taken to implement each of the conceptual possibilities that they developed; and their thoughts about the practical consequences that those actions might have for individuals, groups, institutions, and society at large. It does not, however, promote or advocate any of these possibilities – or any of the specific actions that might be taken to implement them – for anything other than public discussion. There are possibilities in this report that few if any of our panelists would endorse, but which they nonetheless thought should be part of the public policy discussion about democratic nation building. We do not believe that these are the only possibilities that might be useful for public policy pertaining to democratic nation building. But we do hope that they will be provocative, and worthy of your attention and discussion. We thus invite you to review and discuss the policy possibilities in this report with your friends, neighbors, and colleagues. We hope that you will compare each of them with each of the others before deciding which of them, if any, you would like to pursue.

# DEMOCRATIC NATION BUILDING

## AS AN AREA OF CONCERN

**Many Americans believe** that our democratic values are universal and self-evident truths, and that we have a national mission to spread democracy abroad. But the international climate that once welcomed our efforts to promote democracy has changed—if it ever really existed in the first place—as people who had been told that democracy would bring improved standards of living and equality under the law too often found that it brought corruption, abuse of power, violence, organized crime, economic insecurity, and poverty instead. There are, no doubt, still many people in many countries who say that they want more democracy. But it is far from clear what “more democracy” means to them—or even what it means to us. Some people seem to want more self-governance, which may mean more free and fair elections, more direct democracy, more universal suffrage, and more majority rule. Other people seem to want more rule of law and a more transparent and effective judicial system, which may mean more access to and equal treatment by the courts. Others seem to want more “social justice,” or equality in the “distribution” of wealth. Still others seem to want more tolerance and respect, and greater protection of their civil and human rights. And still others seem to want more prosperity and economic growth—and greater protection of the free markets that are so often associated with democracy.

**These are all different dimensions** of democracy. They involve different ideas about what it means for a nation to be democratic. Different people may place different emphases upon these dimensions. This might lead to very different policies for promoting democracy abroad. And these policies may have very different consequences, both for the specific actions that we take to build democratic nations abroad and for the kinds of states that might emerge as a result. The upshot is that the time has come to rethink a number of governance questions pertaining to our possible objectives in, and concerns about, pursuing a policy of trying to build democratic nations abroad.

*What is a democracy? What are the values that motivate it? What are the different dimensions of democratic nation building? What might we be trying to achieve when we try to spread democracy abroad? How might these dimensions, values, and goals conflict with each other? How might these conflicts affect our ability to achieve our goals? What concerns might Americans have about trying to build democratic nations abroad? And what policy possibilities might we develop to address their concerns?*

**These questions** reflect broad concerns that are fundamental to the way we think about building democratic nations abroad. Different people may answer them in different ways. And it may be useful to explore their different answers—partly because they lie at the heart of many of our foreign policy decisions, and partly because our national discussion about democratic nation building revolves around different perceptions about whether and to what extent we have been able to live up to or even approximate our democratic values and goals at home and abroad. Indeed, the recent backlash against our efforts to build democratic nations abroad, coupled with the economic success of authoritarian states, has only made these questions more pressing—and it may be useful, in this context, to think about why some people may be receptive to our efforts to promote democracy in their countries while others may oppose them.

**Our panels** used these questions, and questions like them, as springboards for discussion. They developed long lists of concerns that policy discussions about democratic nation building should address—and long lists of policy possibilities for addressing them. They purposefully did *not* try to *define* the terms “democracy” and “democratic nation building,” let alone once and for all, and they did not strive for consistency in using them. They instead said many different and contradictory things about democracy and democratic nation building. And this enabled them to develop a rich set of *contrasting* conceptual possibilities for public policy pertaining to democratic nation building.



## INTRODUCTION

**Some panelists** said that democracy consists of governmental institutions, such as free and fair elections, an independent legislature, and the impartial rule of law—and that the way to build democratic nations abroad is to introduce and support these institutions in those countries. Others said that democracy is more about self-governance and popular sovereignty; that the governmental institutions that we associate with it are secondary and valid only to the extent to which they are generated by and accountable to the will of the people; that they will not function well unless a society has the cultural, educational, and material prerequisites to govern itself; and that building a democracy is more a matter of inculcating habits of mind and behavior that free people develop in exercising their freedom. Others said that democracy is really about protecting the inalienable rights of individuals, especially the right to speak and the right to own property, and that a large part of building democratic nations abroad is about building a government that is able and willing to protect them. Still others said that democracy is all about political equality, equality under the law, and equality of political access and participation in the process—and that it is difficult to go very far vis-à-vis democracy in a society that does not recognize and value the political equality of its members. And still others said that it is all about recognizing, tolerating, checking, and balancing several different centers of power within a society—and that the challenge in building democratic nations abroad lies in teaching societies that have long histories and traditions of being governed by autocratic strongmen how to tolerate and share power with others.

*The purpose of our discussions was to expand the parameters of our public policy discussion about democratic nation building, and not to say which policy is the best. Our panelists thus explored a wide range of contrasting policy possibilities pertaining to both democracy and democratic nation building. They did not try to define their terms. Nor did they strive for consistency in using them. They instead said many different and contradictory things about democracy and democratic nation building. This helped them to develop a rich set of governance concerns about them, and a rich set of policy possibilities for addressing them.*

**The panelists drew a distinction** between nation building and *democratic* nation building. They recognized that people often lump them together as if they are one and the same thing. But they worked from the assumption that we can and do engage in nation-building activities, such as building roads and hospitals and schools and water facilities in underdeveloped countries, that may have nothing at all to do with promoting democracy abroad. But they also conceived of democratic nation-building activities in very broad terms that ranged from simply setting a good example of democracy in action to launching full-scale “wars of choice” to coerce “regime change,” and that included radio and television broadcasts to promote democracy, cultural exchange programs to familiarize students and young professionals from other countries with our democratic government and culture, a variety of specific government and private programs for giving financial aid and practical advice to countries that want to make democratic reforms, and taking covert military action to install a democratic government.

**The panelists also distinguished** between the money that we allocate in our budget for democracy promotion and democratic nation-building programs, and the money that we might actually spend upon building democratic nations abroad. They recognized that the money that we allocate for democracy promotion programs is only a miniscule part of our budget and that some people might thus dismiss the idea that democratic nation building is an expensive endeavor that might exhaust valuable financial resources that could be spent at home as misinformed. But they also recognized that the money that we actually spend on building democratic nations abroad may all too easily outstrip the money that we budget for it—especially when our efforts to “democratize” a country involve military action or the use of our armed forces. Indeed, the panelists said that it might be very difficult and perhaps even impossible to calculate exactly how much we might have to pay to build a democratic nation abroad. But they were crystal clear that we would in many cases ultimately have to measure the cost in blood and lives as well as dollars and cents.

**Finally, our panelists cited** many different reasons for trying to spread democracy abroad. Some said that it is morally the right thing to do since democracy is the only legitimate form of government and since it promotes human rights and human dignity, protects the weak and marginalized, and resolves the conflicts and violence that plague so many non-democratic countries. Some said that democracy is good for commerce, that it is closely linked to economic freedom, that it can create foreign markets for our products, that it stimulates innovation, and that it leads to prosperity and socio-economic development. Some said that democracy also helps to keep the peace—since democratic countries rarely go to war with each other—and that it helps countries to avoid instability, violence, and war. Some said that it is part of our national ethos, the story that we tell ourselves about who we are, and the basis for our belief that we have a special place in the world and a special role to play in it. And some said that it is in our national interest since it ensures predictability and stability in our dealings with other countries.

**But some panelists said** that trying to build democratic nations abroad is *not* in our national interest—and that it ultimately might not work. Some said that our efforts might have unintended and undesirable consequences, including the election of autocratic leaders and the rise of illiberal democracies, that might conspire to undermine our national interests. Some said that democratic nation building is a long-term project that is both very expensive and fraught with risks, and worried that we simply might not have the political will or resources to “stay the course” until the job is done. Some said that spreading democracy around the globe is just one among many foreign policy interests, that it may conflict with some of our other foreign policy interests, and that it could all too easily use up valuable resources that might be better spent at home. Some worried that the countries we want to “democratize” might not have the cultural, educational, and material prerequisites for it. And some worried that our efforts might undermine our image in the world, since there is something undemocratic about trying to build democratic nations abroad.

**Here, our panelists** said that there seems to be a contradiction in the very concept of democratic nation building—since democracy is supposed to be all about self-governance, and since democratic nation building is all about telling people how they should govern themselves—and that this contradiction can all too easily make our actions appear illegitimate and even hypocritical. They said that we have no clear mandate to spread democracy abroad, that doing so may be at odds with what our own citizens and the citizens of the countries we would “democratize” want, and that it might all too easily be perceived as a new form of colonialism in which we try to gain control over another country’s resources by first gaining control over its form of government.

***There were several basic concerns that the panelists returned to during their course of the discussions. They repeatedly said that:***

- ***Our efforts to build democratic nations abroad may have unintended consequences—including the election of autocratic leaders and the rise of illiberal democracies—that might undermine both human rights and our interests in the world***
- ***There may be something illegitimate and even hypocritical about our efforts to build democratic nations abroad, since democracy is all about self-governance while democratic nation building is all about governance from the outside, and since we do not always live up to our democratic ideals ourselves***
- ***Democratic nation building is a long-term project that is both expensive and fraught with risks and uncertainties—and we may not have the political will or the resources to “stay the course” until the job is done***
- ***Our efforts to spread democracy abroad may use up valuable resources that might be better spent at home***
- ***Some of the countries that we would like to “democratize” may lack the cultural, educational, and material prerequisites for it***
- ***Our democratic nation-building efforts may not be in our own national interests—and may ultimately fail***
- ***Abandoning our efforts to build democratic nations abroad may weaken our national security and ultimately undermine our place in the world***

# THIS REPORT

**The following pages** describe eight conceptual possibilities that our panelists developed to address the concerns that we describe above. They also describe some of the panelists' ideas about what we could do to implement each possibility, and the possible effects that those actions might have for individuals, groups, institutions, and society at large. These conceptual possibilities present eight different ways of thinking about democratic nation building, and eight different ways of addressing it as a public policy concern. This means that they arise from different beliefs, goals, values, and interests. It also means they are not necessarily consistent with each other—let alone mutually reinforcing planks in a unified policy platform. And it may even mean that they arise from different concepts of democracy and democratic nation building.

**We want to emphasize** that this report is intended primarily for citizen discussion, and not for politicians and policy makers. It thus does not recommend or advocate the adoption of any one of these possibilities—or, indeed, any particular policy toward democratic nation building at all. It instead describes policy possibilities that our panelists thought might be useful for people who are concerned with democracy and democratic nation building to discuss, along with their possible practical consequences and the concerns, values, interests, concepts, and beliefs that might inspire them. Our reasons for presenting this material may thus be different from what you might expect.

**Most public policy reports** recommend actions that governments should take to solve problems in current policy. They are usually written to overcome opposition and to secure political support for those actions. Our report, by contrast, assumes that democratic nation building is an area of concern; but it does not presume that our current policies are broken and need to be fixed. It does not, indeed, focus upon current policy at all. The adoption of some of the possibilities that it presents might be a departure from our current policies. But the adoption of others might well be consistent with them.

**So we do not present these possibilities** in an attempt to forge a consensus for action amongst the people who might discuss them. Nor do we present them to begin a debate about which is the best or most suitable for us to adopt. We present them, instead, with the hope that each individual citizen who discusses them will come to better understand his or her own mind, and that this, in turn, will help him or her to make more thoughtful policy choices. We have thus offered several reasons why you might *not* like each of the possibilities that we describe—and we have tried to direct your attention toward other possibilities that you might prefer if you don't. It would be pointless, and perhaps even counterproductive, to try to compare or evaluate these possibilities in terms of any one concept of democracy or governance concern about democratic nation building. Some of the possibilities may be consistent with each other. Others are clearly not. But they each present a possible approach toward democratic nation building that should be explored in its own right. And taken together, they represent a wide range of different concepts, concerns, beliefs, goals, values, and interests that might motivate public policy toward democratic nation building. We believe that each of these possibilities deserves your attention and thoughtful consideration, and that they should all be included in public policy discussions pertaining to democracy and building democratic nations abroad.

**We also want to emphasize** that we do not intend the “possible implementations” and “possible effects of these actions” that we list after each possibility to be necessary, certain, complete, or even consistent with each other. We can usually implement a possibility in several different ways, and the actual effects of adopting it will always depend upon how we actually implement it. Our panelists often disagreed about how a possibility might be implemented and about the effects that those actions might have—and you will probably think of different ways to implement each possibility, and different consequences that it might have for individuals, groups, institutions, and society at large as well. We have nonetheless included some of our panelists' thoughts about them in this report:



- partly to illustrate how a discussion about conceptual possibilities might lead to a discussion about possible actions and their possible consequences in the real world
- partly to give you a better idea of what the panelists were thinking about, and
- partly with the hope of stimulating further discussion about the conceptual possibilities themselves.

**Finally**, we have prepared this report with the hope that it will facilitate further discussion about democracy and democratic nation building among our citizens. We expect that different people will have very different ideas about these issues. But we hope that this report will stimulate you to discuss the possibilities in it with your friends and neighbors, to contribute your own ideas about democracy and democratic nation building to the discussion, and to explore and develop them further than you might have without it.

*As you consider these issues yourself and discuss them with others, you may wish to ask yourself some of the following questions:*

- *What are the values that motivate this particular possibility?*
- *Why might someone hold those values?*
- *Why might someone be opposed to them?*
- *What goals is this possibility trying to achieve?*
- *Why might someone have those goals?*
- *Why might someone be opposed to them?*
- *What actions might we take to implement this possibility were we to adopt it?*
- *What effects might those actions have upon individuals, groups, institutions, and society at large?*
- *How might they affect you personally?*
- *What are the strengths of this possibility?*
- *What are its weaknesses?*
- *Who would be likely to benefit from the adoption of this possibility?*
- *Who would be likely not to benefit from the adoption of this possibility?*
- *What other approaches are available for pursuing the values and goals that inspired this possibility?*
- *Who might be more likely to benefit from choosing those other approaches?*
- *Who might be less likely to benefit from choosing those other approaches?*
- *What actions would we be likely to take to implement this possibility, given our current political realities, were we to adopt it?*
- *What effects would those actions be likely to have upon individuals, groups, institutions, and society at large?*
- *How effective would this possibility be in achieving its desired ends if we were to adopt it?*
- *What would you do to strengthen this possibility?*
- *How would you compare this possibility to each of the other possibilities in this report?*

## LEAD BY EXAMPLE

*This possibility would redirect the money, time, and efforts that we spend on building democratic nations abroad toward revitalizing our own democracy at home. It would, in this way, try to set an inspirational example of democracy in action for other countries.*

**Do you feel** that there is something ineffective, if not hypocritical, about trying to build democratic nations abroad if we do not live up to our own democratic ideals at home? Do you worry that we do not practice democracy well enough ourselves to teach other countries how to do it—and that other countries do not respect the way we practice it enough to make them want it? And do you think that we might not have to try to build democratic nations abroad if we offered non-democratic countries an inspirational example of democracy in action that they admired and wanted to emulate?

**This possibility** maintains that democratic nation building begins at home and that the very best thing that we can do to persuade other countries to adopt democracy is to set an example of democracy that they would admire and respect. It flows from the belief that there is a contradiction in the very idea of democratic nation building—since democracy is supposed to be about self-governance, and since democratic nation building is about telling other people how to govern themselves. But it also flows from the belief that we too often fail to live up to our own democratic ideals—and from a concern that our efforts to build democracies abroad may thus be perceived as illegitimate and hypocritical, and ultimately fail as a result. This possibility maintains that we can best inspire other nations to build democracies of their own by living up to our democratic ideals, by improving our own democratic practices, and by respecting their right to self-governance. It would thus recommit our nation to our democratic ideals. It would redirect the material resources that we currently devote to building democratic nations abroad to improving our own democratic institutions and processes at home. And it would, in this way, try to offer other countries an inspirational example of democracy that might make them want to be democratic too.

**Leading by example** would not prevent us from giving aid to other countries, or even from engaging in nation-building projects abroad. It would, however, prevent us from engaging in *democratic* nation-building projects abroad and from linking the aid we give to foreign countries to their adoption of democracy. But far from abandoning our goal of spreading democracy around the world, this possibility maintains that we have a better chance of avoiding charges of hypocrisy—and hence a better chance of success—if we try to spread democracy passively, and if we strengthen our own democratic values, institutions, and processes instead of trying to impose them upon others.

*This possibility maintains that democratic nation building begins at home and that the very best thing that we can do to persuade other people to adopt democracy is to recommit ourselves to our own democratic ideals—and to live up to them.*

**Other Perspectives.** But even if you agree that democratic nation building should begin at home, you may think that setting a good example is not enough in the dangerous world in which we live—even if we succeed at revitalizing and reforming our own democratic processes. You may think that it is precisely the example that we set as a free and open democratic society, and not our failure to live up to our own ideals, that has bolstered authoritarian regimes in some societies. And you may think that the time has come to recognize that our democratic way of life is under attack, and to try to find more effective ways of opening closed societies. If you are inclined to think this way, then you may also think that we cannot afford to promote democracy in a passive way, and that we should resolve instead to actively support democratic institutions and movements, and to pursue democratic nation-building activities, wherever and whenever possible for us to do so.

Possible Implementations	Possible Effects of These Actions
<p><i>We could—</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Eliminate all funding for promoting democracy abroad; recall our troops and non-military personal who are engaged in democratic nation-building activities abroad</li> <li>• Facilitate voter registration and voting in general, standardize voting procedures, and ensure that our vote counting is equal, fair, and regular</li> <li>• Open our democracy to external evaluation by foreign governments, international election monitors, free press and human rights monitors, and neutral external ombudsmen</li> <li>• Improve access to justice</li> <li>• Democratize access to our press and other media and apply anti-trust laws to our media corporations</li> <li>• Reform our campaign finance laws and impose stricter disclosure laws</li> <li>• Redirect funding to strategic communications</li> <li>• Weed out procedures that appear non-democratic to the rest of the world</li> <li>• Support more government, professional, cultural, and student exchange programs</li> </ul>	<p><i>These actions could—</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lead to a rise in non-democratic regimes; result in democracy activists being killed or exiled; cede democratic nation building to other countries; empower our strategic rivals</li> <li>• Increase voter participation; set a more attractive example of democracy for other countries; rebuild confidence in our electoral process and in the results of our elections</li> <li>• Expose the shortcomings of our democracy to the world; lead some countries to want more democracy; lead others to decide that they do not want it after they see how it works here</li> <li>• Rebuild confidence in our judicial system</li> <li>• Revitalize our policy discussions by enabling more people to express a greater variety of ideas about what should be done</li> <li>• Ensure greater transparency regarding the activities of lobbyists</li> <li>• Help showcase our democracy to the world</li> <li>• Present a more attractive picture of American democracy to the rest of the world</li> <li>• Enable more foreigners to see how democracy works here</li> </ul>

**For Further Discussion . . .**

- Do you agree that there is a contradiction at the very heart of democratic nation building, since democracy is supposed to be all about self-governance and democratic nation building is all about telling other people how they should govern themselves? If so, why so? If not, why not?
- Do you believe that there is something ineffective, illegitimate, and perhaps even hypocritical about trying to build democratic nations abroad? If so, why so? If not, why not?
- Do you worry that we do not really practice democracy well enough ourselves to tell others how to do it? If so, why so? If not, why not?
- Do you feel that we have lost touch with our democratic ideals and are currently setting a bad example to other countries of what democracy is all about? If so, why so? If not, why not?
- If you feel that we have lost touch with our democratic ideals, what do you think are the most pressing priorities for reestablishing contact with them?
- What would you do to set an inspirational example of democracy that other countries might want to adopt? And why?

## SUPPORT DEMOCRACY WHENEVER AND WHEREVER POSSIBLE

*This possibility would make democratic nation building the focal point of our foreign policy. It would support democratic institutions and movements and pursue democratic nation-building activities whenever and wherever possible. And it would defend democracy whenever and wherever necessary, and by whatever means are necessary—even, in extreme cases, to the point of taking direct unilateral military action.*

**Do you believe** that democracy is morally superior to other forms of government because it gives each citizen a voice in how his or her country should govern itself? Do you think that democracy is good both for us and for other countries because it promotes economic prosperity and because democratic countries do not go to war against each other? And do you feel that we have an ethos, as a nation, to spread democracy around the world and to defend it whenever and wherever it is threatened?

**This possibility** flows from a belief that democracy is good in and of itself, the high road to global peace and harmony, good for the economy, vital to our own national interests, and the only form of government that is morally justified. It also flows from a concern that there are many forces in the world that pose a threat to democracy and would make the world a much more dangerous place to live if they had their way. This possibility thus maintains that building democratic nations abroad is both the morally right thing to do and vital to our very existence. It also maintains that building new democratic nations should be one of our primary foreign policy objectives—if not our first and foremost policy goal in conducting relationships with other countries. It would thus make democratic nation building the focal point of our foreign policy and a primary consideration in forming and conducting relationships with other countries. It would support and strengthen existing democracies and democratic values whenever and wherever necessary. It would offer non-democratic countries incentives to adopt a democratic form of government. And it would build new democratic nations—and support democratic values, institutions, and movements—whenever and wherever possible.

**Far from betraying** our democratic values with authoritarian governments for short-term gains, this possibility would urge us to regard authoritarianism as a threat to our very survival. It would thus not only recommit our nation to building democratic governments around the globe, it would also defend democracy whenever and wherever it is threatened—even, in extreme cases, to the point of taking direct unilateral military action.

***This possibility conceives of democracy as the only form of government that is morally justifiable—since it is the only form of government that respects the freedom and autonomy of its citizens, and the equality of all citizens before the law—and the only form of government that is both in our own national interest and in the interest of the rest of the world.***

**Other Perspectives.** But even if you feel that this possibility articulates a high and noble ideal, you may think that it is ultimately impractical. You may think that democracy works best when it emerges from within a society, and that it may not work at all if it is imposed from the outside. You may think that many countries lack the cultural, educational, and economic prerequisites for its success. Or you may think that there will always be competing interests and political constraints that will prevent us from defending democracy in specific cases, and that we might not want to intervene in the internal affairs of an authoritarian state if doing so is inconsistent with our security and trade interests—let alone if it could lead to a third world war. If you are inclined to think this way, then you might also think that it would be better to decide whether and when to support democracy on a case-by-case basis.

**Possible Implementations***We could—*

- Make democracy promotion and democratic nation building a major and consistent theme in our foreign policy
- Offer incentives to non-democratic countries to build democratic institutions and to engage in citizenship development and the war of ideas
- Give preferential economic and political treatment to democratic states
- Impose economic and political sanctions against non-democratic states, especially against states that violate human rights
- Expand UN-type organizations and other international alliances with democracies
- Support democratic governments in exile
- Offer financial, technical, and media support for democratic movements and alternative institutions whose existence fosters democratic openings
- Use covert actions, including assassination if necessary, to undermine autocracies
- Take military action, including unilateral military action, in certain cases to help democratic movements

**Possible Effects of These Actions***These actions could—*

- Put an end to wars—or at least test the theory that democracies do not go to war against each other—if it works
- Result in more funding for democracy promotion; improve our image in some quarters; undermine our image in other quarters
- Reinforce our good relationships with democratic states
- Sacrifice trade and other interests to support democracy; alienate non-democracies; lead to more conflicts and wars over human rights
- Make it difficult for us to accomplish other goals we might want to achieve
- Isolate us from the international community
- Lead to democratic reforms in some countries; alienate countries that agree with our ends but not with our means; diminish our resources for other priorities
- Frighten some autocracies and diminish their influence; undermine our moral standing
- Win the global war for democracy; reduce terrorist attacks if we no longer support authoritarian regimes

**For Further Discussion . . .**

- Do you feel that we have a national ethos to spread democracy around the globe and to defend it whenever and wherever it is threatened? If so, why so? If not, why not?
- Do you worry that we too often find ourselves sacrificing our democratic values and ideals for short-term goals that are not really in our long-term interests? If so, why so? If not, why not?
- Do you believe that we should literally pay any price to build democratic nations around the world? If so, why so? If not, why not?
- Do you believe that building democratic nations abroad is both in our own national interest and the morally right thing to do? If so, why so? If not, why not?
- Do you agree that democracy promotion should always be one of our primary foreign policy concerns—if not, indeed, our first and foremost foreign policy concern—in pursuing relationships with other countries? If so, why so? If not, why not?
- Are you willing to sanction direct unilateral military action, if necessary, to defend democracy? If so, why so? If not, why not?



## THINK LOCAL

*This possibility would try to ensure that the actions that we take to build democracy in a country are appropriate for its culture and for its economic and political conditions.*

**Do you worry** that we too often seem ignorant of the cultural, political, and economic dynamics in the countries that we want to transform into democracies? Do you think that we sometimes insist upon measures that seem ill suited and inappropriate for the societies for which they are designed, and thus unlikely to work in them? And do you feel that this is why our attempts to build democratic nations abroad sometimes fail, and why some people regard us as imperious, overbearing, and arrogant?

**This possibility** flows from a belief that there are many different forms of government, and that democracy—and especially American-style democracy—may not work very well in countries whose cultural, political, and economic conditions are different from our own. But it also flows from a concern that we too often seem to be unaware of, or insensitive to, the cultural, political, and economic conditions within the societies that we want to help. In some cases, our democratic ideals may prevent us from doing things that may seem undemocratic in the short run, but might have a much better chance of preparing the ground for democracy in the long run—such as installing monarchs or dictators until the people are ready to govern themselves. In other cases, our insensitivity to the cultural, political, and economic dynamics within a society may lead us to act in ways that are counterproductive to bringing about the ends we want to achieve. And in still other cases, our ignorance of a society’s culture and its economic and political conditions may lead us to treat its members as inferior beings who have no worthy beliefs, values, aims, and traditions of their own. This possibility maintains that the ‘one-size-fits-all’ approach will not work when it comes to building democratic nations abroad, and that understanding the culture and the economic and political conditions within a society—and the beliefs, values, goals, and traditions that motivate it—is, or ought to be, a prerequisite for any attempt to change its political structure.

**Far from limiting** our efforts to spread democracy abroad, this possibility would simply insist that we adopt an approach to democratic nation building that is more aware of and sensitive to the specific cultural, economic, and political conditions within the societies that we want to transform into democracies—and that would, accordingly, emphasize the critical importance of understanding the cultural, economic, and political conditions within a society before we try to change it.

*This possibility maintains that the “one-size-fits-all” approach will not work when it comes to building democratic nations abroad, and that understanding the culture and the economic and political conditions within a society—and especially the beliefs, values, goals, customs, and traditions that motivate it—is, or ought to be, a prerequisite for any attempt to change its political structure.*

**Other Perspectives.** But even if you agree that it is important to understand the culture of a society before we try to change its political structure, you may feel that it is not simply the political structure of the society but its very culture that we are trying to change. You may think that trying to tailor our efforts to each country’s culture and economic and political conditions might unwittingly lead us to accept authoritarian strongmen as appropriate democratic leaders for certain countries, and institutionalized bribery and corruption as appropriate democratic processes. And you may think that this, in the end, could both play us for fools and transform “democracy,” “democratic values,” and “democratic process” into meaningless terms that can be applied to any form of government in any society once we “understand” it properly. If you are inclined to think this way, then you may also think that we need to work with other countries and organizations that understand these cultures and societies better than we do ourselves if our efforts are ever really going to work.

**Possible Implementations**

*We could—*

- Require cultural competency training for democratic nation builders and require them to study the cultures and politics of their target countries before taking any actions in them
- Work with knowledgeable local leaders, tribal chiefs, religious leaders, etc., who know the conditions on the ground
- Involve influential people in the target country to help with the transmission and learning of new technologies
- Invest in modern languages
- Invest heavily in anthropology programs regarding our target countries
- Have cultural experts assess the likelihood of progress before going into a country
- Scratch all the templates and insist that each democratic nation-building project be custom tailored to its target country’s cultural, political, and economic conditions
- Lower our expectations of success and accept slow and partial progress
- Decide not to engage in democratic nation-building activities in countries that do not have the right cultural, political, and economic conditions for democracy

**Possible Effects of These Actions**

*These actions could—*

- Lead to greater success, more new democracies, and better democracies; lead us to decide that democratic nation building is simply not feasible in certain cases
- Make our efforts more effective given the conditions on the ground; force us to support regimes that are openly undemocratic
- Provide more opportunities and advantages for those seeking to create or maintain authoritarian regimes
- Improve the understanding of different cultures
- Produce a new generation of culturally aware democratic nation builders
- Lead us to decide not to go into countries that are not prepared for democracy
- Improve our chances of success; undermine support for democratic nation building if we accept political customs and traditions in the target country that we would not accept here
- Help us stay the course when conditions on the ground don’t look favorable
- Lead to greater mutual respect and understanding between democracies and non-democracies; save us money, lives, and our international reputation

**For Further Discussion . . .**

- Do you think that we often seem ignorant of the cultural and political dynamics in countries that we want to transform into democracies? If so, why so? If not, why not?
- Do you agree that it is important to understand the culture of a society before we try to change its political structure? If so, why so? If not, why not?
- Do you think that it is possible to transform a non-democratic country into a democratic country without simultaneously changing its culture? If so, why so? If not, why not?
- Do you think that culture has a greater effect upon democracy than democracy has upon culture? And why?
- Do you think that trying to tailor our democratic nation-building efforts to each country’s culture and conditions could render ‘democracy’ a meaningless term that can be applied to every and all forms of government once we ‘understand’ them properly? If so, why so? If not, why not?
- Do you think that placing too much emphasis upon understanding the culture of a society could enable some countries to play us for fools? If so, why so? If not, why not?

## NEVER GO IT ALONE

*This possibility would require that we undertake democratic nation-building activities abroad only in concert with other democratic countries, NGOs, and international organizations such as the UN and NATO.*

**Do you think** that building democratic nations abroad is in the interest of all democratic nations, and that all democratic nations should thus share the responsibilities and costs of doing it? Do you feel that it somehow compromises the legitimacy of the whole democratic nation-building endeavor, if not the legitimacy of democracy itself, if one democratic state tries to go it alone? And do you worry that trying to build democracies all by ourselves may also undermine our chances of success?

**This possibility** flows from a concern that democratic nation building is a costly and risky endeavor that can all too easily appear illegitimate, and even more easily drain a country of its resources—especially when it decides to act by itself or without material support from its allies. It also flows from a belief that working in concert with other democratic countries, NGOs, and international organizations such as the UN and NATO could lend more legitimacy to our efforts, bolster the impression that democracy is good for the world, ease the financial burdens of building democratic nations abroad, and blunt the perception that we may be acting only to further our own economic and political interests. Working in concert with other democratic countries and organizations may also give us more options and resources than we might otherwise have, since they may have different ideas about what democracy actually is, better ideas about how to build democracies abroad, a better understanding of the different societies that we are trying to “democratize,” and more actual experience on the ground. Working in concert with other democratic nations and organizations should, for all of these reasons, improve our chances of success. This possibility would thus forbid us from acting alone to build democratic nations abroad, and it would require us instead to act together with a coalition of democratic states if and when we think it is necessary or desirable to build democratic nations abroad.

**Far from trying to prevent us** from building democratic nations abroad, this possibility aims only at enhancing our democratic nation-building projects and their chances of success. It would not require that we get “permission” from the international community before we engage in democratic nation-building projects. But it would require that we get other democratic countries and organizations to share in their costs and responsibilities.

*This possibility flows from a concern that democratic nation building is a costly and risky endeavor that can appear illegitimate and drain a country of its resources—especially when it acts all by itself. It also flows from a belief that acting with other democratic countries and organizations can lend more legitimacy to our efforts, bolster the impression that democracy is good for the world, ease the financial burdens of building democratic nations abroad, and blunt the perception that we are only trying to further our own interests.*

**Other Perspectives.** But even if you agree that it is good to cooperate with other democratic nations and to have their support when we are trying to build democracies abroad, you may still feel that this policy is not the right way to go. You might feel that actually forbidding us from acting on our own goes too far in restricting our ability to take action if we think it is necessary. You may worry that some countries may offer us lip service and moral support instead of the material and practical support that we actually need. Or you may think that there may be situations in which we simply have to act—and that a policy that prevents us from acting alone would only encourage other countries to try to manipulate us by refusing to act with us unless we do what they want us to do. But if you share any or all of these concerns, then you might think we should always keep our options open—and never agree to never go it alone.

<b>Possible Implementations</b>	<b>Possible Effects of These Actions</b>
<p><i>We could—</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create an international association of democracies for the specific purpose of building democratic nations abroad</li> <li>• Empower that association to make decisions about where, when, and how to engage in democratic nation-building projects</li> <li>• Create an independent international democratic nation-building organization to build democracies</li> <li>• Relinquish our decision-making power to these organizations</li> <li>• Build consensus within the international community before taking any actions to build democratic nations abroad</li> <li>• Require financial and military contributions from other countries for specific democratic nation-building missions</li> <li>• Set the level of moral, financial, military, legal, etc., commitment that we require from other countries</li> <li>• Define what “going it alone” means, and how many is “not alone”</li> <li>• Act only if other countries commit money or soldiers</li> </ul>	<p><i>These actions could—</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Legitimize our activities by involving other international actors; lead to greater success since we would have other countries to help us</li> <li>• Blunt the perception that we are imposing democracy for our own benefit on countries that do not want to be democratic</li> <li>• Slow down our nation-building activities; create tensions, conflicts, and a very dangerous world for nations not in the association of democracies</li> <li>• Show other countries that we are willing to act democratically instead of unilaterally</li> <li>• Go a long way toward legitimizing our actions; prevent us from taking action that we think is necessary when we think it is necessary</li> <li>• Prevent certain wars; lead us to include blatant dictatorships in the club of democracies; drag us into conflicts outside our sphere of interests</li> <li>• Result in countries being included and excluded from the club for extraneous political reasons; lead us to act with questionable democracies</li> <li>• Reestablish the status quo by creating coalitions of the more-or-less coerced</li> <li>• Save us lives, money, and face; make our taxpayers happier</li> </ul>

**For Further Discussion . . .**

- Do you think that building democratic nations abroad is in the interest of all democratic nations, and that all democratic nations should thus share the responsibilities and the costs of doing it? If so, why so? If not, why not?
- Do you feel that it somehow compromises the legitimacy of democracy and the whole democratic nation-building endeavor if any one democratic state tries to go it alone? If so, why so? If not, why not?
- Do you think that trying to build democratic nations all by ourselves may undermine our chances of success? If so, why so? If not, why not?
- Do you think that this possibility would ultimately do more to help or to hinder our efforts to build democratic nations abroad? And why?
- Do you think that this possibility would enable other countries to manipulate our policies on issues unrelated to democratic nation building? If so, why so? If not, why not?
- Do you believe that we should retain the right to ‘go it alone’ in trying to build democratic nations abroad? If so, why so? If not, why not?



## BUILD THE INFRASTRUCTURE FOR DEMOCRACY

*This possibility would use public and private sector resources to improve an underdeveloped country's infrastructure—including its education, health care, transportation, and communications systems—in an effort to provide the economic and educational prerequisites for democracy itself.*

**Do you believe** that a democratic government is a luxury that a society can neither afford nor maintain until it has achieved relatively high levels of economic and educational development? Do you think that it is senseless to try to build democratic institutions and processes in societies that have not yet achieved those levels? And do you think that we would be more successful in the long run if we tried to develop the material and educational prerequisites for democracy instead of democracy itself?

**This possibility** flows from a belief that democracy requires citizens with relatively high levels of education and economic prosperity in order to succeed—and from a concern that many of the non-democratic countries that we would like to “democratize” are simply too economically and educationally underdeveloped to support it. It thus maintains that a well-functioning democracy requires citizens who can read and write and reason—and that it is difficult to build a successful democracy in a country that cannot meet the basic needs of its citizens. This possibility would focus upon building the economic and educational infrastructure that is necessary for a successful democracy instead of democracy itself. Private enterprise, business, and commercial trade can obviously play a critical role in building a country's infrastructure, since they produce the material things that people need in order to survive, and since the market and the laws that are necessary to support it almost always help to liberalize a country. But public support can play a critical role as well, especially in improving a country's education, health care, transportation, and communication systems—which private enterprise might ignore. This possibility would thus pursue both paths toward developing a country's infrastructure in order to lay the foundations for its eventual adoption of democratic values, processes, and institutions.

**Instead of linking our aid** to democratic reforms, this possibility would separate our decision to help a country from its decision to adopt democracy. It would instead focus our aid upon developing a country's infrastructure and its ability to meet its citizens' basic needs in an effort to provide the economic and educational prerequisites for democracy.

*This possibility flows from a belief that successful democratic institutions require that the people who use them have relatively high levels of education and prosperity, and from a concern that many of the societies that we would like to “democratize” have simply not yet achieved those levels of development.*

**Other Perspectives.** But even if you agree that democracy is likely to fail in countries that lack the material and educational prerequisites for it, you may feel that offering aid to a country without tying any political strings to it is not the right way to go. You may think that there is little evidence to support the idea that democracy will emerge of its own accord in societies once they have achieved a certain level of economic and educational development. Or you may think that what matters most is not how wealthy a society is, but whether or not it wants to govern itself. Or you may think that it is never too early to teach people the values and ideals of democracy and civil rights, and that doing so would provide a much better foundation for democracy than developing their country's infrastructure—even if they are not yet ready to govern themselves. If you are inclined to believe any or all of these things, then you might also think that, instead of trying to develop a country's infrastructure, we would do a better job of laying the foundations for democracy by trying to develop democratic values and ideals, and a respect for civil rights, among its citizens.



<b>Possible Implementations</b>	<b>Possible Effects of These Actions</b>
<p><i>We could—</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Remove obstacles to this possibility by revising our legal codes to allow more companies to do business abroad</li> <li>• Offer incentives to private industry to build the infrastructure that is necessary for a successful democracy, and construct business plans by which our companies can benefit from it</li> <li>• Promote and disseminate new information technologies in developing countries</li> <li>• Increase funding to international development organizations</li> <li>• Unilaterally remove trade barriers to the products of third-world countries, such as tariffs on sugar</li> <li>• Offer incentives for private companies to lead by example in areas regarding good governance, competition, good business practices, and respect for labor rights and standards</li> <li>• Defend intellectual property rights and patent and copyright laws</li> <li>• Support basic education in developing countries</li> <li>• Build more professional schools—such as law, medical, business, and engineering schools—in developing countries</li> </ul>	<p><i>These actions could—</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Magnify the perception and labor argument that we are exporting jobs, growth, and competitiveness instead of enhancing them at home</li> <li>• Encourage private industry to invest in countries that they would not invest in otherwise; help to build the infrastructure necessary for a successful democracy in those countries</li> <li>• Result in short-term support for dictatorships, but long-term erosion of authoritarian regimes</li> <li>• Stimulate economic and material development; create new dependencies upon public funds</li> <li>• Improve local markets; help third-world countries to become self-sufficient; hurt some of our own producers</li> <li>• Put businesses in an untenable position by asking them to manage their affairs according to principles that may not enhance shareholder values</li> <li>• Protect our intellectual property rights; improve the rule of law in authoritarian states</li> <li>• Help prepare a country for democracy by improving its educational infrastructure</li> <li>• Help a country achieve the higher levels of education and prosperity that are necessary for democracy by developing its professional class</li> </ul>

**For Further Discussion . . .**

- Do you believe that democracy is a luxury that a society cannot really afford or maintain until it has achieved fairly high levels of economic and educational development? If so, why so? If not, why not?
- Do you think that it is senseless to try to build democratic institutions and processes in societies that have not yet achieved relatively high levels of education and prosperity? If so, why so? If not, why not?
- In what ways might the lack of a high level of economic and educational development make it difficult to use or maintain governmental institutions as an elected legislature, an independent judiciary and the rule of law? And why?
- Do you think that our efforts to build democratic nations abroad would be more successful if we focused upon building the infrastructure for democracy instead of democracy itself? If so, why so? If not, why not?
- Do you agree that democracy is likely to emerge of its own accord and be more successful in a country that has reached a high level of material development? If so, why so? If not, why not?
- Do you believe that we should attach political strings to our foreign aid? If so, why so? If not, why not?

## PROMOTE DEMOCRATIC VALUES

*This possibility would focus our democratic nation-building activities upon promoting democratic values and ideals in an attempt to lay the foundation for a democratic government. It would, in this way, try to instill the mental habits and social practices that embody a democratic culture.*

**Do you believe** that our democratic institutions and our respect for the democratic process are a natural outgrowth of the value we share for individual freedom, equality before the law, and respect for minority views? Do you think that the people in many of the societies that we would like to democratize do not yet share these values? And do you worry that our democratic nation-building activities put too much emphasis upon creating democratic institutions and processes, and not enough upon instilling the values that underlie them?

**This possibility** maintains that democratic institutions—such as free and fair elections, an independent legislature, an impartial judiciary, and a free press—work best when they emerge of their own accord within a society, that they are likely to emerge of their own accord in societies that value them, and that they are not likely to work too well in societies that do not value them. But it also maintains that these institutions do not add up to democracy itself. Democratic societies value self-governance, individual freedom, freedom of speech, civil rights, and equality before the law. They also tend to value the entrepreneurial spirit and the right to own private property. They will generally defend the civil rights of social minorities. And they will generally defend an individual’s right to speak his or her own mind and to express his or her own beliefs and values, regardless of whether they agree with them. This possibility maintains that attempts to introduce democratic institutions and processes into societies that do not share these values may all too easily backfire by producing “democratic” institutions that are both run by authoritarians and riddled with corruption. It would thus focus our democratic nation-building efforts upon preparing the intellectual, moral, and cultural foundations for successful democratic institutions instead of trying to build those institutions themselves.

**But far from equating democracy** with democratic institutions, this possibility maintains that elections, legislatures, judiciaries, the rule of law, the press, and, indeed, the will of the people itself are neither democratic nor desirable unless they protect our democratic values, our civil society, and our human rights.

*This possibility maintains that protecting democratic values, civil society, and human rights is the very essence of democracy. But it also maintains that democratic institutions and the will of the people may not always protect these things—and that they will not function well unless the people who use them share the basic values, mental habits, and social practices that are supposed to underlie them, and unless they actually protect what they are supposed to protect.*

**Other Perspectives.** But even if you agree that democracy should protect civil society and human rights, you may feel that making them the primary focus of democratic nation building would somehow place the cart before the horse. You may feel that democratic institutions and democratic values are two sides of the same coin, that human rights require strong democratic institutions to enforce and protect them, and that a country that neglects the importance of building strong democratic institutions may unwittingly end up with a government that neglects human rights and civil society as well. Or you may think that interacting with democratic institutions is a useful first step for developing the mental habits, values, and goals that underlie them. Or you may think that it is easier to create democratic institutions in a country than it is to change the hearts and minds of its citizens, and that successfully doing the latter may require generations of work. But if you think any or all of these things, then you may also think that a society’s willingness to change itself is the first step toward building democratic nations abroad.

Possible Implementations	Possible Effects of These Actions
<p><i>We could—</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support international conventions on human rights, human rights activists, human rights watches, and security sector reforms to reduce human rights abuses</li> <li>• Use pop culture, especially television and Hollywood movies, to promote democratic values and ideals</li> <li>• Make international institutions abide by human rights agreements as a prerequisite for our support</li> <li>• Offer citizenship development programs in non-democratic countries</li> <li>• Give more assistance for education and educational exchanges in developing countries</li> <li>• Translate and disseminate classics of democracy into languages of authoritarian states</li> <li>• Create governance advisories to support grass roots governance building</li> <li>• Form and fund NGOs that foster democratic values and ideals</li> <li>• Insist upon unfettered world wide access to the Internet—thereby creating an Internet-Free Europe, Free Asia, Free Africa, and Free South America</li> </ul>	<p><i>These actions could—</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Give us prestige as a champion of human rights; encourage people in other countries to stand up for their rights; make us appear arrogant if we try to define human rights</li> <li>• Help to spread democratic values and ideals on a subliminal level among citizens in the societies we want to “democratize”</li> <li>• Lead authoritarian regimes to reform themselves or to make deals with activists to preempt greater or more radical change</li> <li>• Create a foundation for democracy in non-democratic states; make us appear arrogant</li> <li>• Pave the way for democracy; lead to worse relations with autocratic regimes</li> <li>• Educate more people about democracy, human rights, and civil society</li> <li>• Increase citizens’ sense of self-governance and ownership; make them more self-reliant</li> <li>• Make governments and citizens more ready to accept our influence</li> <li>• Foster the mental habits and social practices that embody a democratic culture; lead to the adoption of more technologies without government bureaucracies</li> </ul>

**For Further Discussion . . .**

- Do you believe that our democratic institutions and our respect for the democratic process are a natural outgrowth of the value we share for individual freedom, equality before the law, and respect for minority views? If so, why so? If not, why not?
- Do you agree that the right to free speech and the right to own property are essential for people to govern themselves? If so, why so? If not, why not?
- Do you think that building democratic institutions or protecting human rights and civil society is more important when it comes to building democratic nations abroad? And why?
- Do you agree that elections, the rule of law, and the will of the people are neither democratic nor desirable unless they protect our civil society and human rights? If so, why so? If not, why not?
- Do you feel that democratic governments always protect democratic values, civil society, and human rights? And if not, why do you think they don’t?
- Do you think that our efforts to build democracy in societies whose members do not share our democratic values are likely to succeed? If so, why so? If not, why not?

## BY INVITATION ONLY

*This possibility would focus our policy toward democratic nation upon sustaining fledgling and struggling democracies instead of trying to build new ones. But it would offer support only to countries whose governments make a formal request for our assistance or give their formal approval for such activities.*

**Do you sometimes wonder** why we spend so much time and money and energy trying to establish democracy in countries that are rich in natural resources, but whose governments and people do not seem to want it? Do you think that there is something inherently undemocratic about these efforts and that they rightfully open us to charges of hypocrisy? And do you worry that they are also bound to fail for the simple reason that the people in these countries do not really want democracy?

**This possibility** flows from a belief that democracy works best when it emerges from within a society, and that it may not work at all if it is imposed from the outside upon people who do not want it. It also flows from a concern that we too often seem to be trying to impose democracy upon governments and people who neither value nor want it. It flows from a concern that our efforts to build democracy in a country are likely to fail if we do not have the support of its government. And it flows from a concern that our efforts to build democratic nations abroad are often perceived as a new form of colonialism in which we try to get control over a country's natural resources by first getting control over its government. This perception—that democratic nation building is really a cover for colonialism—may or may not be true. But it raises difficult and embarrassing questions about the legitimacy of our actions, about the legitimacy of the advice that we give to the countries we are trying to “assist,” and, indeed, about the legitimacy of democracy itself. These questions may ultimately render our efforts ineffective, regardless of whether or not the perception is true. And all of this suggests that the best way to ensure that our efforts to spread democracy abroad will succeed is to limit them to countries that have already adopted democracy, and whose governments formally request our assistance or formally approve requests that others have made.

**Far from pushing democracy** upon countries that do not want it, this possibility maintains that we should try to avoid any and all situations in which we might even be perceived as doing so. It would not oblige us to provide assistance to any government that might request our support. But it would forbid us from providing support for democracy in countries whose governments do not approve of it.

*This possibility maintains that we should focus our efforts upon sustaining fledgling and struggling democracies that actually request our support—trying to consolidate the gains for democracy that we have already made—instead of trying to push democracy upon people who may be unreceptive or even hostile to it.*

**Other Perspectives.** But even if you agree that we should focus our support upon helping democracies that request our help, you might think that this policy would probably miss some of the most egregious human rights abuses, or tie our hands unnecessarily in responding to them. You might think that it is often difficult to distinguish between real democracies and “show” democracies, and that some of the governments that have been “democratically elected” in other countries do not seem democratic by our standards. And you might think that it is easy to get manipulated in places that we do not know much about, and that this policy may unwittingly undermine struggling and fledgling democracies by supporting leaders who came to power through election fraud. If you think any or all of these things, then you may wonder whether this policy would actually end up supporting democracy or corrupt governments that came to power by abusing it. And you may think that we should try to find and support local reformers and activists who really want democracy instead of trying to decide which governments to back.

Possible Implementations	Possible Effects of These Actions
<p><i>We could—</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cease all democratic nation-building projects, democracy promotion activities, and assistance to local democracy activists and reformers in countries whose governments oppose it</li> <li>• Establish criteria to identify fledgling and struggling democracies</li> <li>• Develop a menu of democracy assistance programs to help fledgling and struggling democracies whose governments request our assistance</li> <li>• Increase trade benefits and reduce trade tariffs for fledgling and struggling democracies</li> <li>• Support more cultural, educational, and professional exchanges for democracy activists and reformers whose governments support it</li> <li>• Broadcast speeches that promote democratic ideas and values in struggling democracies</li> <li>• Fund more domestic and foreign democracy education programs</li> <li>• School Congress and the American people that democratic nation building requires long-term commitments</li> <li>• Work more consistently with international institutions that also require host government approval of their efforts</li> </ul>	<p><i>These actions could—</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Slow the spread of democracy; marginalize non-government actors; crush civil society in some countries; improve relations with autocracies</li> <li>• Alienate some countries that we identify as fledgling or struggling democracies</li> <li>• Increase the appeal of democratic assistance programs to our taxpayers if they result in stronger democracies; reduce their appeal if they are abused by corrupt governments</li> <li>• Raise difficult questions about what constitutes a fledgling or struggling democracy</li> <li>• Reassure democracy activists that we will support their efforts; result in fewer genuine democracies</li> <li>• Make our efforts more successful; waste resources on things we do not need to do</li> <li>• Make loyal allies in and alliances with consolidated democratic states</li> <li>• Fuel debates about where and when we should stay the course; put our forces in harm’s way for longer periods of time</li> <li>• Lead to a growth in GONGOS—or government organized non-governmental organizations—at the expense of real civil society</li> </ul>

**For Further Discussion . . .**

- Do you think that we spend a lot of time, money, and energy trying to build democracy in countries that do not want it? And if so, why do you think we do it?
- Do you think that there is something inherently undemocratic about telling non-democratic countries that they should adopt a democratic form of government? And if so, what is it?
- Do you think that the people in the countries that we would like to transform into democracies would have adopted democracy themselves if they really valued and wanted it? If so, why so? If not, why not?
- Do you think that our support of democratic institutions and movements, and our efforts to build democratic nations abroad, might open us to charges of hypocrisy? If so, why so? If not, why not?
- Do you think that there is a difference between true democracies and “show” democracies? And if so, what do you think the difference is?
- Do you think that there are ordinary citizens—as opposed to authoritarian leaders—who are opposed to democracy and self-governance? And if so, why do you think they might be opposed to it?



# JUST SAY NO

*This possibility would have us forgo all active efforts to build democratic nations abroad.*

**Do you feel** that we spend too much time and money and energy trying to build democratic nations abroad? Do you worry that these attempts are both costly and risky, that they are often seen as illegitimate and hypocritical, and that they too often fail? And do you think that we would be better off if we stopped telling other people how to govern themselves, and openly pursued our own interests instead?

**This possibility** flows from the belief that trying to build democratic nations abroad is a dicey proposition that may ultimately not be in anyone's national interest. Democracy, first of all, does not always bring stability to a country. Some countries need strongmen to hold them together. And there are some authoritarian regimes that we need and like. Democracy can also lead to bad results—such as the election of illiberal leaders—when it is imposed upon people who are not ready for it. And this, in turn, may lead to charges of hypocrisy if we do not accept their elected leaders as legitimate. But quite aside from that, democratic nation building can be very expensive. It can use up valuable resources that could be better spent at home. And it can leave us with financial obligations that may prove difficult to fulfill. Building successful democracies may also require long-term commitments that we may not be willing to make or fulfill. Our politicians and citizens have very short attention spans, especially when things are not going well on the ground. And they both may lack the political will to stay the course. Finally, there seems to be a contradiction in the very idea of democratic nation building—since democracy is supposed to be all about self-governance, and since nation building is all about telling other people how they should govern themselves—that makes it difficult to see how it could ever really work. All of this, together with the perception that democratic nation building is a new form of colonialism in which we try to get control over a country's resources by first getting control over its government, suggests that we should simply forgo all efforts to build democratic nations abroad.

**Far from being an isolationist policy**, this possibility would encourage us to pursue our economic, military, and geo-political interests openly instead of linking them to efforts to spread democracy abroad. It would not prohibit us from offering foreign aid, or from participating in nation-building projects in underdeveloped countries, or from offering humanitarian aid to countries that need it. But it would forbid us from trying to build democracies in those countries and from engaging in *democratic* nation-building activities abroad.

*The perception that we are using democratic nation building as a cover for pursuing our own national interests may lead people to regard it as a new form of colonialism. And this may raise difficult and embarrassing questions about the legitimacy of our efforts to build democratic nations abroad, about the legitimacy of the advice that we give to countries that we are trying to assist, and even about the legitimacy of democracy itself.*

**Other Perspectives.** But even if you agree that trying to build democratic nations abroad is not always in our national interest, you may still think that it is sometimes in our national interest. You may think that there is nothing wrong with pursuing our own economic, military, and geo-political interests around the world. You may, on the contrary, think that we should pursue our own interests whenever and wherever possible, and that it is actually our government's duty to do so. And you may think that we have every good reason to try to build democratic nations abroad if doing so makes it easier for us to pursue our national interests—especially if we are open and honest about what we are doing and why we are doing it. If you are more inclined to think this way, then you might also think that it would be better for us to try to build democratic nations abroad whenever and wherever they can help us to achieve our own national interests than it would be to forget about democratic nation building altogether.

**Possible Implementations**

*We could—*

- Cease all public funding and financial support for democracy promotion and democratic nation-building projects abroad
- Cease all activities related to democracy promotion and democratic nation building and pull our troops out of countries in which they are engaged in such activities
- Cease trying to link trade deals, military alliances, and diplomatic relations to democratic reforms
- Refocus foreign policy on supporting friendly and strategically important nations without regard to their regime type
- Focus more on alleviating and controlling global conflicts than on making democratic reforms
- Work with any government that can keep the peace, even if it is not democratic
- Redirect funds from direct democracy promotion to publicizing the benefits of democracy in the United States
- Support strategic non-democratic groups that are “on our side,” even to the point of backing authoritarians and installing “friendly” dictators

**Possible Effects of These Actions**

*These actions could—*

- Bolster the reputations of European and non-American democracy actors and donors, and make them more influential
- Change how Americans see themselves and define their role in the world; result in our increased vulnerability to sudden power shifts and an inability to respond to them
- Make us some new friends; lose us some old friends; and lead some democratic nations to shun us for dealing with dictators
- Strengthen the impression that we are pragmatists; associate us more closely with unpopular and illegitimate regimes
- Make some regimes less hostile to the United States; lead to the failure of some emerging democracies
- Provide opportunities for those seeking to create or maintain authoritarian regimes
- Make Americans happier with their democracy at home; make some regimes more hostile to the United States
- Produce more cases where the successor regime becomes an implacable enemy of the United States when a U.S.-backed dictator falls from power

**For Further Discussion . . .**

- Do you feel that we spend too much time, effort, and money in far-away countries trying to build democratic nations that have little if any chance of success? If so, why so? If not, why not?
- Do you agree that our efforts to transform non-democratic countries into democracies can be intensely destabilizing? And if so, why do you think that is?
- Do you agree that democracy has certain cultural, educational, and economic prerequisites? And if so, what are they?
- What differences, if any, do you see between nation building on the one hand, and democratic nation building on the other?
- Do you agree that trying to transform non-democratic countries into democracies is ultimately not in our own national interest? If so, why so? If not, why not?
- Do you believe that our efforts to transform non-democratic countries into democracies are often not even in the interests of those countries whose governments we would like to change? If so, why so? If not, why not?

# ON CONTRASTS AND CHOICES

## AMONG THE POSSIBILITIES

**There are many contrasts** among the eight conceptual possibilities in this report, and many choices that you would have to make in order to adopt any of them. Some of these contrasts and choices concern the nature of democracy. Others concern whether we should try to build democratic nations abroad. Others concern the way in which we might try to build democratic nations abroad. Still others concern the roles that governmental and private institutions might play. And still others concern what we are trying to build, and to accomplish, when we try to build democratic nations abroad. We will not attempt to describe all of these contrasts and choices. But a few examples of the more salient ones might help you to recognize others, and to better understand the possibilities that we have described and the need to choose among them.

**Support Democracy Whenever and Wherever Possible, By Invitation Only, and Just Say No** each give different answers to the question *Should we try to build democratic nations abroad?* **Support Democracy Whenever and Wherever Possible** says that we should pursue democratic nation building whenever and wherever we can, even to the point of taking direct unilateral military action in certain cases. **By Invitation Only** says that we should provide support only for fledgling and struggling democracies whose governments either ask for our assistance or approve of requests that others make — but it also says that we should not try to build any new democracies. And **Just Say No** says that we should not build democratic nations abroad at all, since it is not in our own national interest and may not even be in the interests of the nations we would build. These policy possibilities move in very different directions, and it is difficult to see how we can consistently adopt all of them at once. We must, instead, choose among them.

**Some of the possibilities** that our panelists developed proceed from different ideas about what democracy is and what successful democratic nation building requires.

**Thus, most of the possibilities** in this report conceive of democracy as a set of government institutions, such as free and fair elections, an independent legislature, an independent judiciary, the rule of law, and a free press. But **Promote Democratic Values** maintains that these institutions are not really essential to democracy; that democracy is really more about the protection of democratic values, civil society, and our human rights — especially our right to free speech and our right to own property, which it regards as essential for free people to govern themselves. And it also maintains that it is possible for a state to have the usual democratic institutions without really being a democracy. These are very different concepts of democracy, and it is difficult to see how we can adopt both of them at once.

**Lead By Example** and **Just Say No** would both cease all activities and all funding for building democratic nations abroad. But they would do so for different reasons. **Just Say No** would do so because it maintains that trying to build democratic nations abroad is ultimately not in our national interest. But **Lead By Example** would do so because it maintains that our current efforts are ineffective and that we would have a better chance of success if we reformed our own system and set an example of democracy that other countries find attractive. It is difficult, once again, to see how we could adopt both possibilities at once. **Lead By Example** also gives a different answer to the question *How might we best promote democracy abroad?* than **Build the Infrastructure for Democracy** and **Promote Democratic Values**. **Build the Infrastructure for Democracy** maintains that a well-functioning democracy requires a relatively high level of economic prosperity and education. **Promote Democratic Values** maintains that it requires a society's acceptance of certain values. These possibilities would both promote democracy in indirect ways, instead of trying to persuade non-democratic countries to build democratic institutions. They would, however, do it in different ways.

**Our conceptual possibilities**, when taken together as a whole, reflect a mixed view about the wisdom of trying to build democratic nations abroad. Our panelists repeatedly said that we have a historic mission to spread democracy around the world, that it is part of our national ethos and part of the story that we tell ourselves about who we are, that it is in our national interest to do so, that it is also in the interests of the countries we would “democratize,” and that it is morally the right thing to do. These sentiments inspire **Support Democracy Whenever and Wherever Possible, Build the Infrastructure for Democracy**, and **Promote Democratic Values**. But they also expressed serious concerns about it that are reflected in possibilities that would limit or cease our efforts to build democracies abroad. **Just Say No** and **Lead By Example** would thus stop all funding to build democratic nations abroad. And **Lead By Example, By Invitation Only, Think Local**, and **Never Go It Alone** are each designed with an eye toward ensuring that the recipients of our democratic nation-building aid really want it.

**Our panelists developed** a number of possibilities that are not included in this report. They thus discussed possibilities called ‘Advocate Democratic Ideals and Values – But Don’t Intervene in Internal Affairs’, ‘Change the Society, Not Its Government’, and ‘Make Human Rights an Essential Component of Democratic Nation Building’ for much of the project. But they eventually decided that they could all be subsumed under a single possibility called ‘Protect Civil Society and Human Rights’ – which emphasized the importance of democratic ideals and values over democratic institutions – and that this, in turn, could be subsumed under **Promote Democratic Values**. They also decided that the possibilities they called ‘Support Local Democracy Activists and Reformers’, ‘Respond Only to Government Requests for Assistance’, ‘Protect Our Investments in Democracy’, and ‘Support Democracy Consolidation Instead of Democracy Promotion’ could similarly be subsumed under a possibility called ‘Support Democratic Reform Where It Is Already Underway’ – and that this could then be subsumed under **By Invitation Only**.

**We should point out** that each of our conceptual possibilities presents at least three different choices pertaining to public policy. For you might choose to accept it or to reject it – *or* to modify it in some way to make it more acceptable. And we should remind you, once again, that we have developed these possibilities for the purpose of public discussion, and not because we want to recommend that you adopt any of them as policy. Our panelists selected the possibilities presented in this report with these ideas very much in mind. They thus discussed many possibilities that are polar opposites – such as ‘Support Local Democracy Activists and Reformers’ and ‘Respond Only to Government Requests for Assistance’ – during the course of the project. But they generally chose *not* to include possibilities that are diametrically opposed to each other in their final report, partly because they thought that a discussion of either one of them would naturally engender a discussion of the other, and partly because they thought that a smaller number of possibilities would be more useful for public discussion. The panelists also chose to present the possibilities that they thought would be most provocative of citizen discussion, regardless of whether or not they agreed with them. And they decided to present some of the reasons why someone might oppose each of the possibilities in the report to help those citizens who might feel skeptical about the possibility but have difficulty saying why.

**We have described** just a few of the ways in which the possibilities in this report contrast with each other, and just a few of the choices that you would have to make to adopt any of them. There are, of course, many ways in which they overlap. And some of the possibilities, as we indicated in the introduction, are mutually consistent and could be adopted together – though even then, you would probably have to make choices about which should take priority. We hope that pointing out these differences will help to dispel the idea that we are recommending any of them, or that we present them as separate planks in some comprehensive or unified policy platform regarding democratic nation building. We are, once again, recommending them only for your thoughtful consideration.

## AFTERWORD

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**Finally**, we hope that these contrasts, and the need to choose among the possibilities that we have presented, will stimulate and enhance your exploration of democratic nation building as an area of public policy concern, the different governance concerns that people might have about it, and the different policy possibilities for addressing them. We also hope that you will enjoy discussing these concerns and possibilities – and any others that you might develop – with your families, friends, and neighbors. And we hope that you will carefully consider each of the possibilities in this report, and many more of your own, before deciding which of them, if any, to pursue as public policy.



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## **An Open Invitation to Further Discussion & Interactivity**

We hope that you will use this report to carry forward the discussion begun by our project panels.

We have developed a discussion process that may be helpful for groups interested in discussing the ideas presented in our reports or in discussing matters of public interest more generally. We have also developed facilitation and discussion guidebooks to assist in the planning and conduct of those discussions. These materials, as well as copies of this and other Interactivity Foundation reports, may be downloaded from our website (listed below). You can also obtain additional printed copies of any of our publications (at no cost) by sending us a request that briefly indicates their intended use. See the contact information listed below.

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Finally, we welcome your comments, ideas, and other feedback about this report, its possibilities, any of our publications, or our discussion processes.

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