

Europe, Transatlantic Co-operation, and Democratization

I Introduction

Since I understand that we will be engaging in an initial exchange of ideas, rather than the presentation of polished research papers reading for publication, I propose to use this opening slot to stake out my initial positions on these big questions. As I learn more about the agenda and contributions of the other participants I reserve the right to reposition myself later on (and also to tackle other questions that may arise from our exchanges).

The obvious questions raised by this title are – a) which Europe; b) what transatlantic co-operation; and c) democratization where? There is also a somewhat more academic question lurking in the background – what do the two sides of the Atlantic understand by “democratization” (both as concept and as object of co-operative endeavours), and how difficult is it for them to cope with any underlying disagreements concerning both what it is, and where and how it can be promoted. The third and final section of my paper will reflect on this underlying issue.

a) On “which Europe” I’d like to focus on the enlarged (twenty-five member) European Union, but also with some gestures towards the even larger democratic Europe that may be under construction (i.e. including much or all of the Balkans, Bulgaria, and Romania and potentially Turkey). Indeed there is a case for following the Council of Europe and the OSCE – “Europe from the Atlantic to the Urals”. That is the geopolitical zone where EU expansion and (possible) democratization currently holds sway. I am not what the British call a Eurofanatic, and I am quite conscious that substantial parts of this project could still seriously unravel. My point is not to argue for any particular boundary or stopping point beyond which the primacy of a democratising EU rams up against some alternative political model (although beyond Turkey and

into the Caucasus I can detect much more fundamental obstacles than in say Ukraine or even Muscovy). Wherever the EU's eastward expansion finally terminates, the key point is that from now onwards we need to be thinking in much more inclusionary terms about what "Europe" consists of – especially the "Europe" that may be engaged with democratization.

On the other side of the Atlantic I have also argued for an inclusionary standpoint. It may be rather British of me to insist that Canada's role in democratization merits strong inclusion as a partner (and occasional competitor) with the USA. But it should not be so hard in Stanford to add that of course California's foreign policy interests (e.g. Korea, greater China, etc.) merit quite as much attention as those of the East Coast's traditional Atlanticist interests. From my standpoint the whole of NAFTA - including Mexico – constitutes a potential transatlantic grouping that could in principle correspond to the enlarged EU, and that could articulate a more multilateral approach to democracy promotion than what happens when Washington acts alone. Of course there would be huge problems of foreign policy co-ordination within this enlarged North American community of democracies (just as there will be within the EU). Of course Washington will always expect to play the leading role in such a community (and in the transatlantic relationship more generally). But if we think of Los Angeles, and Miami, and Chicago as having diverse interests in democracy promotion (as is also true of Toronto, Montreal, Vancouver, and Mexico City) then a strong North American synthesis needs to draw on all these perspectives, just as a strong EU synthesis would take into account the diverse agendas of Berlin, London, Madrid and Washington, etc.

One major implication of adopting my inclusionary definition of both Europe and North America) or indeed "the America's") is that the centre of gravity shifts eastward in Europe, and westward on this side of the Atlantic. Instead of envisaging transatlantic relations in traditional seaboard elite terms (in my shorthand the "Ditchley Park" model) we would need to consider a much broader array of actors, perspectives, and indeed linguistic communities. French, Spanish, German, Polish, and eventually perhaps even Turkish and Korean voices would have to be heard. To some (the editor of the *Times*, and Professor Huntington, for example) this might seem like an

unmanageable babel, another case of “democratic overload”. But from my perspective it could represent a broadening and deepening of the transatlantic community, and a strengthening of its inclusionary agenda. But then, in my opinion, there is an urgent need to “democratize” the “democracy promoters”. (A point that I will develop in the second section of this paper, which reflects on the current international conjuncture and its consequences for the cause of democracy worldwide).

b) On “what transatlantic co-operation”, the aftermath of the “liberation” of Iraq has raised profound anxieties on both sides of the Atlantic about the content, direction, and control of any further collective political endeavours outside the putatively democratic heartland of Europe and North America. If Washington becomes further committed to escalation against those states it has classified as the “axis of evil”, or resolves to proceed unilaterally in its vast project to democratize “the Greater Middle East”, it will become much more difficult to carry substantial segments of European opinion with it. (Nor will the Canadians or the Mexicans be keen to volunteer). In this case any future “coalition of the willing” is likely to delineate a transatlantic community of democracies most of whose leaders (and almost all of whose voters) are likely to prove distinctly unwilling. That certainly would mean a reluctance to provide troops or to make budgetary sacrifices on behalf of a unilateralist agenda, and it might well lead to more overt expressions of dissent, and even in some quarters passive resistance. In other words, we could be on the brink of further, and still more damaging breakdowns in the solidarity required for transatlantic co-operation.

There is much anxiety about this, and it is certainly possible. However, before writing off transatlantic co-operation altogether, one should note some important counter-currents. First of all, Bush administration’s troubles with its allies over Afghanistan and especially Iraq cannot have passed unnoticed in Washington. So there is at least a basis for arguing that the next US administration has an incentive to explore the scope for some repositioning of its stance vis a vis its allies. This is unlikely to take the form of wholehearted reversion to multilateralism, and still less to the granting any explicit veto over the use of American power to partners outside the USA. But, of course, there

are many intermediate possibilities, whereby a unified and aroused American nationalism can still pay some heed to friendly advice from its more trusted allies, and can select (in the name of efficiency and burden-sharing, if not of internationalism) policy options that leave some scope for most transatlantic partners to exercise a residual restraining influence. Working with the likes of Blair and Berlusconi it is possible that a more Washington-centric and hard-nosed variant of transatlantic co-operation could be resuscitated on some such basis.

Many of America's friends and allies would be reluctant to classify such an outcome as a worthwhile variant to transatlantic co-operation, however, and in fact a reconstituted relationship based on such unequal terms would in all probability prove unstable. (The next US administration may well be advised to start some contingency planning for an eventual post-Blair Britain, and a post-Berlusconi Italy). For a durable transatlantic partnership worthy of the name, it would be best to look beyond the transient incumbency of individual friends of Washington to the deeper foundations provided by shared interests, convergent worldviews, and even common values. If this is true for the transatlantic partnership in general, it is all the more applicable when the subject of co-operation is democracy promotion.

So how solid are the foundations of interest and values linking the two sides of the Atlantic to the cause of democracy promotion in the rest of the world? I'll attempt to offer a provisional answer to this question at the end of this paper, but first we need to engage in some geographic/land disaggregation.

c) "Democratization, where?" The absence of democracy in Chile is a burning domestic political issue in the USA (above all in Florida). In Europe it is only of concern to a narrow stratum of specialists (even in Spain, where Castro polarises public opinion more than elsewhere, the issue is clouded by memories of the "disaster" of 1898, and of US complicity with Franco, so there is no sympathy for Helms-Burton). The absence of democracy in Pakistan means far more to many of the people of Bradford, in Yorkshire, than it does to Foreign Office mandarins or to Washington think tanks. The absence of democracy in Algeria is a point of critical sensitivity in Paris, and of relative

indifference in Berlin. (President Chirac's worldview was coloured by his first hand experience of the Algerian independence war to quite the same extent as Kerry and McCain were shaped by Vietnam). The political elite in Warsaw leads a country steeped in Catholicism including memories of the marauding Turk. They cannot directly oppose the entry of Turkey into the European Union, but they will argue (with much geography and history, and even some contemporary social science on their side) that the incorporation of the Ukraine is a more pressing priority for those concerned with democratization. Portugal cares about East Timor, and its precarious democracy, however fragile and distant. Montreal shelters about 150,000 Haitians, including much of that tragic country's educated elite. Examples could be multiplied still further. The key point is that even if all the members of the Transatlantic Community were to agree on the priority of democracy promotion in the rest of the world, they would diverge profoundly over where to concentrate their first efforts.

Some disagreement need not be a source of discouragement however. At least in principle a strong multilateral community of democratic states, all committed to democracy promotion, could be more effective, balanced, and trustworthy if they were required to assess and reconcile competing claims for attention to and chose between alternative methods of action, than if they unanimously and unthinkingly took up the currently fashionable priority, and demanded "showcase" results regardless of the obstacles. In practice different members of the transatlantic community not only have different priorities, they also have different instruments of action available to them for the purpose of democracy promotion. When it comes to subordinating the military to civilian control, Britain and the US may have an edge; but not perhaps if the topic is prison reform. If federalism is important, then Germany has more to offer than France; but the reverse is true for assimilation of divergent cultures. Mexico's understanding of the legacy of social revolution and its consequences for democratization, could be more relevant to a prospective transition in Cuba, than Florida's version of a "reconquista". Countries like Spain and Portugal, founded on the expulsion or forced conversion of Muslims and Jews, may not be the best leaders in any project to democratize the Islamic world. Turkey could eventually provide a better flagship. In synthesis, the pluralism and

historical diversity of the transatlantic democracies could (theoretically) provide the whole of “the west” with a wider range of influences, instruments, and examples to support democratization in the rest of the world, than would be the case for a much narrower or more homogeneous set of democracy promoters.

All this is only true, however, if transatlantic co-operation really does place democracy promotion high on its agenda; and only if effective means of co-ordination are developed to enable this community of nations to play to its strengths; and only if the underlying interest/value consensus supports a robust and shared understanding of what kind of democracy is worth promoting and what sacrifices are worth making to bring it about. But how closely do these demanding requirements correspond to conditions prevailing in international politics after September 11th and the “liberation” of Iraq?

II The Current International Conjuncture, and its Consequences for Democratization

The conditions specified in the last paragraph of the previous section are highly exacting, and rather far removed from the circumstances prevailing in late 2004. From a realist perspective it could be argued that democracy promotion (as a general project) could never be placed that high on the international agenda of any community of states, however internally democratic they might be, and however much they might dominate their authoritarian neighbours. Indeed, from a strict realist perspective the very idea of a “community” of states would be classed as an illusion. Similarly “shared value consensus” and “co-ordination” in pursuit of a shared understanding of democracy could be banished from the lexicon as idealist fantasies. However, on May 1st 2004 the European Union of democratic states did expand from 15 to 25 members, asserting a shared value consensus (that includes “democracy” as a prominent unifier), and binding their members through treaty and supranational legal obligations to some demanding forms of long run policy co-ordination (and integration). So we should not allow the dogma of realism to preclude the possibility that

international co-operation could actually serve to promote/ extend/ underwrite/ consolidate some fragile new democracies.

The possibility exists, the EU enlargement demonstrates its potential, and perhaps the enlargement of NATO proves that the EU is not alone in this respect. However, even discounting doubts and qualifiers to that argument, the fact remains that both these processes were set in motion in the immediate post-Cold War period, and both operated within the limited geographical setting of the legacy states from the Warsaw Pact and the disintegrated USSR. Within the loose framework of Huntington's "wave" metaphor this was a substantial forward surge, but it was limited in time and place. Now the tide is running in the other direction, uncovering hidden resistances and confirming the persistence of unconquered promontories.

On October 4th I will present a brief sketch of this landscape/seascape, attempting to situate the various cross currents in some historical perspective. Everyone does this for themselves as they respond to the flux of international events and my contribution will simply serve as a framing device to stimulate a group assessment of where we stand. The critical question is not how precisely we can balance the competing tendencies, but what implications we can derive for the future of democracy promotion, and of democratization at the international level. I will try to show that it is severely misleading to picture the prospective "democratization of the Greater Middle East" as a repeat of the democratization of the Soviet bloc, allegedly triggered by western resolve in the 1980s, and then stabilised through western assistance in the 1990s. I will try to redirect attention from the Middle East to East Asia (where the prospects for democratization are more finely balanced and where western democracy promotion would need to operate according to different guidelines from those currently envisaged from the Middle East). If there is time, I will also refer to the contrasting obstacles to full democratization in South Asia, sub-Saharan Africa, and indeed in Latin America. Finally, I will close this second section of my paper by stressing the still imperfect nature of democratic governance in Europe and North America, making the point that only those who practice and preserve high standards of democratic performance at home can hope to be credible and effective in promoting the same practices

elsewhere in the world. That will bring me to the concluding section of my paper.

III What Transatlantic Agreement on “Democratization” (Both as Concept and as Policy Objective)?

So what do the distinct components of the transatlantic partnership understand by “democratization” and “democracy promotion”, and is there enough consensus to support effective co-operation between them in this area? My approach to this large and controversial question will be partly empirical and partly conceptual. For the empirical side I have chosen to review two “contentious” examples – namely Cuba and Lebanon/Palestine. These are selected not as representative cases of the issues requiring transatlantic co-operation, but as “tough nuts”. A strong system of co-operation founded on a robust consensus about both objectives and procedures might be able to exert some influence on the prospects for democratization in these two settings. But a shallow and formal agreement, disguising underlying differences in diagnosis and prescription, will be blown apart when stress-tested in these contexts. So I’ll try to assess the scope for co-operation in these two instances, and from that comparison I will conclude the paper with some inferences about the analytical foundations of western official discourse on democracy promotion.

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