

Power in democracy promotion

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Title: Power in democracy promotion

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Abstract:

In many ways, the international promotion of democracy is about power. But in the scholarship on this issue, there is remarkably little systematic attention to the role and relevance that power might have in regards to democracy promotion. This article critically discusses the literature that explicitly deals with power in democracy promotion and proposes a multidimensional perspective as a way to improve our understanding of the international politics of democracy promotion. First, the typology of power proposed by Barnett and Duvall is applied to systematically conceptualize the power dimension of democracy promotion. Second, the article revisits the two main attempts to theoretically grasp the role and relevance of power in democracy promotion, which draw on the Realist notion of relative power and a neo-Gramscian theory of hegemony, respectively. With a view to both, it is argued that a multidimensional concept of power is analytically useful as it allows for grasping the complex nature of democracy promotion, which goes beyond inter-state relations and includes the attempt to change, from within, the very constitution of the recipient or target country.

Keywords: Democracy promotion; power; hegemony; Realism; Neo-Gramscianism

Short author biography:

Jonas Wolff is senior researcher at the Peace Research Institute Frankfurt (PRIF) and teaches at Goethe University Frankfurt and Kassel University. Recent publications include *The Comparative International Politics of Democracy Promotion* (London: Routledge, 2014, co-edited with HJ Spanger and HJ Puhle), “The interaction of interests and norms in international democracy promotion (*Journal of International Relations and Development* 2015, co-authored with HJ Spanger) and “Beyond the Liberal Peace: Latin American inspirations for post-liberal peacebuilding” (*Peacebuilding* 2015).

Power in democracy promotion

Jonas Wolff

INTRODUCTION

International democracy promotion is, in many ways, concerned with power. By supporting local agents of democratic change, external democracy promoters shape domestic balances of power.¹ In trying to get governments in target countries to embark on democratic reforms they would not otherwise pursue, democracy promoters also themselves exercise power.² In order to project such political power, democracy promoters need the capacity to do so, that is: they require corresponding relative power vis-à-vis the targets.³ This multiple relation between power and international democracy promotion is rooted in the very subject matter. On the one hand, democracy as a system of political rule “is above all a matter of power,” and democratization is basically a process of redistributing political power.⁴ On the other hand, democracy promotion – as a unidirectional relationship between a promoter and a “recipient” or “target” – almost by definition mirrors asymmetric international power relations.⁵

Given the unresolved debate about the concept of power in the discipline of International Relations (IR),⁶ it does not come as a surprise that there is no consensus view on the role and relevance of “power” in the international promotion of democracy. What is surprising, however, is the limited attention scholars have so far paid to this issue when studying democracy promotion. This corresponds to the “paradoxical” situation Michael Barnett and Raymond Duvall observed some years ago with a view to global governance: that the increasing attention to this topic “has not included a sustained consideration of power.”⁷ The present article, in this sense, aims at initiating a systematic consideration of power in the

academic study of democracy promotion. It therefore critically reviews the existing scholarship on democracy promotion that explicitly deals with power and proposes a multidimensional perspective on power as a way to improve our understanding of the international politics of democracy promotion.

The article proceeds in two steps. The first section draws on conceptual discussions about power in IR, and particularly on the typology of power developed by Barnett and Duvall,⁸ in order to systematically grasp the different ways in which democracy promotion is about exercising power. In line with Barnett and Duvall's multidimensional perspective on power, I argue that power in democracy promotion does not only show up when democracy promoters somehow exert coercion in the sense of compulsory power. Rather, democracy promotion – because it aims at changing from within the very constitution of a given target state – is about exercising what Barnett and Duvall call structural and productive kinds of power. Yet, as will be seen, such constitutive (structural and productive) kinds of power cannot be simply “exercised”; both the (re-)sources and the effects of constitutive power lie beyond the relation of interaction between a democracy promoter and its target. The second section, then, revisits those two strands of democracy promotion research that have explicitly dealt with power, namely those that draw on neoclassical Realism and neo-Gramscian International Political Economy (IPE), respectively. In discussing these two approaches to democracy promotion, I will show that both would benefit from a multidimensional perspective on power and, in particular, from recognizing the crucial and complex role of constitutive power in democracy promotion. Because democracy promotion is essentially about changing target countries from within, power cannot be limited conceptually to the notion of an external actor exercising “power over” a given recipient.

This paper, although sympathetic to the neo-Gramscian perspective, does not aim to put forward and defend a specific theoretic approach to democracy promotion. It rather suggests that the multidimensional concept of power is useful also for analyses of democracy

promotion that are informed by different – e.g., Realist or Liberal – theoretical perspectives. In general, I argue that the constitutive (structural, productive) dimensions of power very much explain why democracy promotion is so difficult, so limited in its ability to achieve the kind of effects it aims at, so contested and, in fact, so contradictory.

In focusing on power in democracy promotion, this paper does not argue that democracy promotion should be viewed as power politics and nothing else. As Martha Finnemore and Judith Goldstein have argued, “power politics rarely explains all international outcomes,” but “ignoring relations of power risks missing the underlying dynamic of international affairs.”⁹

This, I submit, does also hold for international democracy promotion. At the same time, the overall aim of this contribution is of a theoretical, conceptual nature. It is written as an issue-specific contribution to the “agenda for theorizing power” in international relations.¹⁰ I, therefore, deliberately focus on questions specifically related to this issue: How can we conceptualize power in democracy promotion? To what extent can we conceive of democracy promotion as an exercise of power? To what extent is power a factor shaping democracy promotion? And what is it that determines (relative) power in democracy promotion?

In what follows, I use a broad definition of democracy promotion that encompasses all measures that external actors take with the declared aim to contribute to establishing, strengthening, improving or defending democracy in another country. Such activities range from development aid projects and diplomatic appeals to democratic conditionality (incentives and sanctions) and the use of military force. Democracy assistance, in turn, refers to the subset of activities that are non-violent and concern the delivery of economic resources and technical know-how through foreign or development aid.¹¹ Generally, democracy can be promoted by different kinds of external actors, be they states, international organizations, NGOs or even private companies,¹² but the focus here will be on states. International organizations and non-state agencies are, thus, considered only as instruments of governmental democracy promotion, not as actors in their own right. Although democracy

promotion implemented by, or on behalf of, states still represents a large part of activities in the field, this certainly implies that the argument put forward in this article is limited. Here, I cannot discuss whether and how the conceptual framework proposed might also grasp the power of multilateral or nongovernmental democracy promoters. This state-centered perspective, however, does not apply to the recipient side. Target governments constitute a crucial counterpart for democracy promoters, and supporting and/or reforming state institutions is a core area of democracy assistance. Yet, cooperation with and support of non-state actors – such as nongovernmental organizations, trade unions and business associations, private media, schools and universities – are also crucial avenues for democracy promotion which have to be considered when discussing the question of power in democracy promotion. The above definition of democracy promotion implies a normatively rather agnostic perspective: Democracy promotion is what a given external actors declares to be aimed at promoting democracy. This means, first, that the kind of democracy that is promoted in any individual case is dependent on the conception of democracy held by the particular democracy promoter.¹³ Second, to treat an activity as democracy promotion does not imply the assumption that it will necessarily have a corresponding effect: Whether democracy promotion actually promotes democracy – and if so, which kind of democracy – is an empirical question and not to be defined beforehand.

CONCEPTUALIZING THE POWER DIMENSION OF DEMOCRACY PROMOTION

In order to grasp the power dimension of international democracy promotion, this paper adopts the multidimensional concept of power in international relations developed by Barnett and Duvall.¹⁴ For three reasons, this approach is particularly suited for the issue at hand. First,

Barnett and Duvall substantially broaden the concept of power and therefore allow for grasping types of power that go beyond notions of material-based coercion. This is crucial because most activities of democracy promotion do not consist in the simple exercise of physical, compulsory force. Second, however, their concept of power is still “restricted to the production of particular kinds of effects, namely those on the capacities of actors to determine the conditions of their existence”:¹⁵ Power, as they define it, “is the production, in and through social relations, of effects on actors that shape their capacity to control their fate.”¹⁶ This focus – which deliberately rejects an all-encompassing notion of power synonymous with causality –¹⁷ is well-suited to the topic of democracy promotion, which is, by definition, about such kinds of effects.¹⁸ Third, their taxonomy of four types of power enables scholars to look at the “multiple forms of power [that] are simultaneously present in international politics,” including at the connections between these different forms.¹⁹ As will be seen, this multidimensionality of power is indeed important if we are to understand the complex role of power in democracy promotion.

Barnett and Duvall’s four types of power are defined by differences in terms of two analytical dimensions. On the one hand, “power is either an attribute of particular actors and their interactions or a social process of constituting what actors are as social beings, that is, their social identities and capacities.”²⁰ On the other, there are different degrees “to which the social relations through which power works are direct and socially specific or indirect and socially diffuse.”²¹ The resulting four types of power are: (1) *compulsory power*, which refers to “relations of interaction of direct control by one actor over another”; (2) *institutional power*, which refers to “the control actors exercise indirectly over others through diffuse relations of interaction”; (3) *structural power*, which concerns “the constitution of subjects’ capacities in direct structural relation to one another”; and (4) *productive power*, which concerns “the socially diffuse production of subjectivity in systems of meaning and signification.”²²

The former two types of power refer to an actor-centered kind of “power over”: Compulsory power directly refers to Robert Dahl’s definition of power as a relation that enables control (“A has power over *B* to the extent that he can get *B* to do something that *B* would not otherwise do.”)²³ and includes Realist approaches in IR; the notion of institutional power has been emphasized especially by the literature on international institutions and regimes. The latter two types of power, by contrast, refer to a constitutive kind of “power to”: Structural power, in particular, takes up the neo-Gramscian expansion of the concept of power as prominently developed by Steven Lukes, while the notion of productive power draws explicitly on Michel Foucault.²⁴ Table 1 summarizes Barnett and Duvall’s four types of power. The ways in which they can be applied to democracy promotion, also summarized in the table, will be outlined in the following.

Table 1: Barnett and Duvall’s four types of power and democracy promotion

Type of power	General characteristics	Application to democracy promotion
Compulsory power	Actor-centered & direct	Concerns the capacity of democracy promoters to directly shape behavior of (actors in) recipient countries
Institutional power	Actor-centered & diffuse	Concerns the capacity to indirectly influence recipient behavior through a democracy promoter’s impact on international institutions and nongovernmental organizations
Structural power	Constitutive & direct	Concerns the capacity to directly shape the structure of relations between democracy promoter and recipient as well as the structural conditions in recipient countries through interaction with (actors in) recipient countries
Productive power	Constitutive & diffuse	Concerns the capacity to indirectly shape the structure of bilateral relations and the structural conditions in recipient countries through effects on general systems of knowledge and discursive practices

Source: Author's compilation based on Barnett and Duvall, "Power in International Politics."

Power is a social phenomenon, a property or opportunity characterizing a social relationship.²⁵ As democracy promotion – as defined in the introduction – concerns activities by an external actor that take place in or are related to another country, this relationship, at least, includes such an external actor and one or more recipient(s) in the target country. This holds true no matter if we are concerned with inter-governmental democracy promotion through diplomatic appeals, with official development cooperation between aid agencies and local "partners" or with purely non-governmental relations between international and local NGOs. Democracy promotion is, thus, exercised in "relations of interaction of actors,"²⁶ which points to the first two – actor-oriented – types of "power over."

Actor-Centered Power in Democracy Promotion: Compulsory, Institutional

By definition, democracy promotion is about exercising compulsory power: it refers to "relations between actors that allow one to shape directly the circumstances or actions of another."²⁷ This is unequivocal in the case of democracy promotion by imposition²⁸ or "foreign-imposed regime change."²⁹ But promoting democracy by exerting pressure or imposing conditionality also includes the use of direct power: Even if democracy promoters avoid outright coercion and no matter their potentially "benign intent," by imposing costs on and offering incentives to a given target government, they aim at causing the latter "to concede, to do something it would not otherwise choose to."³⁰ This is an exercise of power in the narrow (Dahlian) sense of compulsion or control.³¹

Democracy promotion as an exercise of compulsory power, on the one hand, draws on material capabilities (military force; economic resources spent on democracy assistance; asymmetries in the distribution of material capabilities and vulnerabilities that allow for political conditionality and sanctions). On the other hand, it may also include the strategic usage of non-material resources. In the neo-Gramscian reading of democracy promotion, as coined particularly by William Robinson, democracy promoters do also exercise power if their activities are strictly limited to cooperative measures based on an explicit consent of the counterpart. In fact, the possibility to largely replace the use of “straight power” (i.e., coercive control) by “persuasion” as a means of consensus-based domination (“hegemony”) is precisely seen as the strategic advantage of democracy promotion.³² In this neo-Gramscian sense, Jeff Bridoux distinguishes between “coercive and consensual power” – a distinction that can be found, with different connotations, also in Joseph Nye’s concept of soft (as opposed to hard) power.³³ In Nye’s conceptualization, “soft” (or “co-optive”) power concerns the capability of one country “to get other countries to *want* what it wants”, as opposed to “the hard or command power of *ordering* others to do what it wants.”³⁴ Both “consensual” and “soft” power, therefore, explicitly include an element of ideological, or ideational, compulsion that is exercised by one actor over another.³⁵

But why should democracy assistance delivered in the form of development aid or moral appeals raised by diplomats be considered to involve power? Of course, democracy assistance does not involve (the use of) power as long as development cooperation is really equitable cooperation, based on “collective choice” and “joint action,”³⁶ without any asymmetry. In the area of diplomacy, ideal-type persuasion that is “completely voluntary,”³⁷ entirely based on the better argument and not shaped by any kind of asymmetric (economic, institutional, ideational) playing field is not power-related. Yet, these two theoretical constructs of “power-free” democracy promotion are in fundamental tension with a basic asymmetry that is at the heart of the whole endeavor: Democracy promotion always presupposes the existence of some

external actor able and qualified to promote democracy and another one in need of receiving this kind of external support. In this “pedagogical” relationship constituted by the practice of democracy promotion,³⁸ donors and recipients are, thus, fundamentally unequal, and it is the latter only whose “capacity to control their fate”³⁹ is affected.⁴⁰

In addition, democracy promotion also operates through the activities of multilateral organizations and the effects of international regimes, which point to institutional power. When, for instance, the Organization of American States (OAS) promotes democracy in the Americas and democracy-related norms established at the level of the Western Hemisphere constitute collective expectations as to the appropriate structure and behavior of political regimes in the region, this is something different from the kind of direct power the US may exercise when it promotes democracy bilaterally. These are examples of institutional power because, here, the US as a democracy promoter exercises power “through institutions rather than directly.”⁴¹ Given the US government’s privileged influence on inter-American institutions, the US does still exercise power over other American countries (and does not just engage in horizontal cooperation) – but it does so by “working through the rules and procedures that define those institutions.”⁴² Also in the area of bilateral democracy promotion, governments in part deliberately chose indirect or mediated ways to pursue their policies. This is best exemplified by the public funding of NGOs that execute democracy aid projects. The criterion – that distinguishes compulsory from institutional power – is whether the democracy promoter maintains direct control over the intermediate institutions.⁴³ Thus, when USAID contracts consulting firms to implement its democracy assistance programs, it still exercises compulsory power – just as the German government does through its official implementing organizations, the German Agency for International Cooperation (GIZ) and the KfW Development Bank.

Constitutive Power in Democracy Promotion: Structural, Productive

Democracy promotion is by definition about (external) actors that do something. Yet, the logic of democracy promotion cannot be grasped by looking only at the interaction between a democracy promoter and a recipient or target. The specific thing about democracy promotion – as compared to other areas of foreign policy – is that it is intentional action that does not focus on “changing the policies of their counterparts in other countries but on altering the domestic authority structures within which these counterparts are embedded.”⁴⁴ Democracy promoters, thus, aim at producing constitutive effects in the sense of the other two types of power. Even if a donor is capable of exercising (a certain amount of) control over a given recipient government or NGO *through the interaction* between the two, the real target (the shape of the political regime in question) lies beyond these direct “behavioral relations.”⁴⁵ In their attempt to shape the political regime of another country, democracy promoters normally have neither direct nor indirect “control [...] over the conditions of existence and/or the actions” of the recipient.⁴⁶ This points to constitutive – structural and also productive – power. In less theoretic, but rather policy-oriented terms, this power dimension of democracy promotion has been highlighted by what Peter Burnell has dubbed the “Carnegie Perspective.”⁴⁷ Analysts from the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace and, in particular, Thomas Carothers have emphasized that democratization implies “struggles over power”⁴⁸ and that democracy promotion, therefore, is about redistributing political power by strengthening “those groups inside countries who look most likely to make a difference.”⁴⁹ But supporting specific change agents is not enough: In order to make a difference, democracy promoters also have to deal with the “underlying relationships and structures of power at work in any particular sector they are trying to change.”⁵⁰ The core issue at hand is what Nicolas Guilhot has called the “intrinsically revolutionary” nature of democracy

promotion: “To promote democracy is fundamentally to promote change. It aims at restructuring societies from the grass-roots level of civil society to the formal structures of power, transforming their economies as well in the process.”⁵¹

Democracy promotion, thus, involves much more than the direct or institutionally mediated power external actors exercise *over* local recipients or targets. Democracy promoters, in acting in target countries with a view to shape their domestic politics and polities,⁵² exercise structural and productive power. They change – from within – the very constitution of a given counterpart: its properties, capacities and also its interests and collective identity. Constitutive effects in terms of democracy promotion thus depend on constitutive types of power – otherwise, democracy promoters do nothing but produce “uncertainty.”⁵³ While democracy promoters directly interact with actors on the recipient side, democracy promotion is about (indirectly) contributing to the establishment, in other (recipient) countries, of democratic political institutions and democratic “change agents” (structural power) as well as of an overall “democratic political culture,” i.e. generalized systems of meaning and signification (productive power).⁵⁴

Furthermore, just like the capital-labor and master-slave relationships mentioned by Barnett and Duvall, donor-recipient relations in the area of democracy promotion are also an example “of how social structures constitute unequal social privileges and capacities.”⁵⁵ In the case of democracy promotion, however, the logic behind this asymmetric relationship is its overcoming: The “deficient” recipients are to become what the donors already are. Looking at the *problematique* from the perspective of structural power, then, shows that democracy promotion very much depends on the target country: At least a critical bloc of domestic actors has to buy into this subordinate role and the notion of a deficient state of their country, while accepting the role model status of the donor that shows to the recipient country “the image of its own future,” to use Karl Marx’ famous expression. This relationship – as internalized by the recipient – therefore constitutes a crucial element of the power base on which democracy

promotion rests. The donor-recipient relationship is shaped by the structural power of the democracy promoter, but it also depends on more general “systems of knowledge and discursive practices of broad and general social scope,”⁵⁶ which are only indirectly influenced by the democracy promoter and point to the productive type of power. The latter, for instance, refers to the importance of the global development discourse which constitutes the categories of developed and developing countries and establishes concepts and standards of development (such as good governance or liberal democracy).⁵⁷

In sum, constitutive power (structural and productive) is crucial for democracy promotion in two related ways. On the one hand, a specific democracy assistance project or a diplomatic exercise in shaming and blaming may be regarded as being based on compulsory power (see above) – but their very aim requires democracy promoters to use these interaction-related power resources in order to exercise constitutive power. On the other hand, the very practice of democracy promotion is enabled and constrained by bilateral/direct and broader/diffuse relations that constitute structural and productive power.⁵⁸ Democracy promoters, in the end, largely depend on recipients to acquire the corresponding “beliefs” and form the corresponding “desires.”⁵⁹ In this sense, Levitsky and Way have argued that the (compulsory) use of “leverage” by Western states in order to promote democracy is most effective when combined with “extensive linkage to the West.”⁶⁰ It is such economic, political and social linkage that “shapes the preferences of domestic actors,” creates “domestic stakeholders in democracy” and “redistributes domestic power in ways that favor democracy.”⁶¹ Democracy promotion, thus, involves the exercise of constitutive power at the level of the target country; but, at the same time, this exercise of power depends on democracy promoters and their targets being embedded in power relations that constitute the material and ideational conditions enabling democracy promotion. As I will argue in the following section, recognizing these constitutive dimensions of power offers important insights for existing approaches to the role and relevance of power in democracy promotion.

ANALYZING DEMOCRACY PROMOTION WITH A MULTIDIMENSIONAL CONCEPT OF POWER

Two types of scholars working on democracy promotion have explicitly dealt with power: those informed by neoclassical Realism and those drawing on neo-Gramscian IPE. In this section, I will discuss these two approaches to democracy promotion in order to show that both would benefit from a multidimensional perspective on power. With a view to the Realist perspective, which is characterized by a narrow focus on relative power understood solely in terms of compulsion, the multidimensional power concept demonstrates that the different ways in which democracy promotion implies and requires an exercise of power concern not only the (more or less coercive) instruments used, but also the kinds of effects that are to be produced. Acknowledging the constitutive dimension of power, I will argue, allows for broadening the Realist explanation of variance in democracy promotion policies so that it can better grasp observable empirical patterns.

Recognizing the need of democracy promoters to exercise power also in institutional, structural and productive terms has crucial consequences for the neo-Gramscian perspective on democracy promotion, too. As will be shown, prominent neo-Gramscian interpretations of democracy promotion, while including a deliberate attempt to go beyond a narrow, materialist notion of power and hegemony, very much stick to a compulsory (“top-down”) understanding of power. The multidimensional concept of power, I argue, enables differentiating the neo-Gramscian attempt to theorize democracy promotion so that it can better capture the contradictions inherent to the very endeavor to promote democracy from the outside.

Explaining Variance in Democracy Promotion Policies: Revisiting the Realist Perspective

In drawing on neoclassical Realism, scholars such as Henry Nau,⁶² Jonathan Monten⁶³ and Benjamin Miller⁶⁴ have emphasized that “relative power” is a significant factor that shapes (US) democracy promotion by constraining and enabling “the capability to use intervention as a mechanism of democratic change.”⁶⁵ Power, here, is used as an explanatory factor. More specifically, Monten and Miller have argued that shifts in relative (US) power help explain why some US administrations have adopted democracy promotion as a major goal of their foreign policy and were even willing to use military force in its pursuit, while others have not (or much less so). None of the authors mentioned regards (relative) power as the one cause that explains everything (all of them, in fact, integrate identity-based and/or perceptual factors into their theoretical models). Still, relative power is regarded a necessary, if not sufficient, “precondition to actively promoting democracy abroad.”⁶⁶ Because the relative power of a would-be democracy promoter determines its potential to exert influence on a given target state, relative power is regarded an important causal factor that helps explain variance in the democracy promotion policies of states.⁶⁷

In line with (neoclassical) Realism, power is defined as relative power of states measured by the relative distribution of material capabilities among states. Monten explicitly refers to the overarching Realist argument that “as their relative power rises states will seek more influence abroad, and as it falls their actions and ambitions will be scaled back accordingly.”⁶⁸ As power in neoclassical Realism is defined as the material capabilities “with which states can influence one another,”⁶⁹ relative power is understood as “the relative amount of material power resources countries possess.”⁷⁰ Such a materialist definition of power is explicitly defended against a relational definition of power as put forward, most prominently, by Dahl:

Neoclassical Realists see Dahl's notion of power as a relation that enables control (see above) as practically unusable and also theoretically problematic (because power here is defined by its – potential – effects).⁷¹ Still, the theoretical argument advanced is clearly relational: As already mentioned above, Monten considers relative power as crucial in shaping democracy promotion because it defines a state's capability to effectively support "democratic change" in other countries.⁷² This, of course, immediately provokes the question whether it is (relative distributions of) material capabilities alone that determine the capability to exert this kind of influence (see below).⁷³

A second issue raised by the Realist conceptualization of power concerns the question relative to what material (power) capabilities are to be measured. Again following neoclassical Realism, relative power for Monten and Miller means the power of one state (the US) "vis-à-vis the rest of the international system."⁷⁴ While this may be reasonable when trying to account for overall changes in US grand strategy, democracy promotion policies are, by definition, oriented not at the systemic level but at a particular target state (where democracy is to be promoted). Such policies, according to the overall Realist logic, will then be shaped by the specific capability of power projection *in a given bilateral relationship* – and, therefore, by relative (US) power vis-à-vis the individual target country. This is, in fact, the way Henry Nau conceptualizes and measures relative (US) power: as the (dyadic) distribution of power capabilities between the US and an individual counterpart. At any point in time, therefore, US relative power in a given dyad can range from "decentralized and relatively equally distributed" to "unequally distributed and eventually centralized."⁷⁵

Third, a major empirical problem with the grand theory explanations offered by Monten and Miller is that they tend to overlook the dramatic differences within one and the same US administration at any given point in time. For instance, the George W. Bush administration is categorized as having pursued an aggressive vindicationism (Monten) and as having turned to offensive liberalism (Miller). Even after 9/11, however, President Bush's actual policies were

far from consistently aimed at spreading democracy across the world in an assertive manner. As Carothers has concluded, “[t]he main lines of Bush policy, with the singular exception of the Iraq invasion, have turned out to be largely realist in practice, with democracy and human rights generally relegated to minor corners.”⁷⁶ In the Middle East, events such as the “electoral gains by Islamists in Egypt, Palestine and Lebanon” quickly caused the Bush administration “to abandon its pro-democracy push”; around the world, the so-called War on Terror and the administration’s international energy policy drove the US “into closer relations with helpful non-democratic governments.”⁷⁷ While questions of power are certainly not the only relevant issues for this story, a multidimensional concept of power does help understand the dynamics at play.

A research project comparing US (and German) democracy promotion in Belarus, Bolivia, Ecuador, Pakistan, Turkey and Russia found that “relative power” as measured by the distribution of material capabilities between donor and recipient does play an important role in shaping democracy promotion policies.⁷⁸ The causal effect of power, however, was not as clear-cut and homogenous as in the Realist conception. There was an unambiguous effect only in the case of small (or even negative) power asymmetries. In these circumstances, limited relative power directly led to a perception, on the part of the democracy promoter, that the potential influence on the recipient country was small. Under such premises, donors were reluctant to promote democracy and, as far as they did, avoided confrontational strategies. Conversely, however, high power asymmetries did not necessarily lead to high assertiveness.⁷⁹ Taking the above discussion about the role of structural and productive power for democracy promotion into account, the reason for this finding is straightforward: Success of democracy promotion largely depends on the local conditions that enable constitutive effects within the given recipient country. These local conditions – as emphasized by the “Carnegie Perspective” – include, for instance, the existence of potent entry points and partners for the democracy promoter; a favorable domestic balance of power that includes

existing alternatives to the incumbent government; and an ideational acceptance by a critical bloc of domestic political forces of the donor-recipient relationship as well as of the shared goal (liberal democracy). Interaction-related (compulsory and institutional) power is a necessary condition for democracy promotion. Therefore, its absence effectively constrains what external actors can and will do in this policy area. Still, its presence is not sufficient for effectively enabling democracy promotion.

This argument also explains why, as Carothers observed, the electoral victories by Islamist movements led the US administration to adopt a much more reluctant stance on promoting democracy in the Middle East. Events such as the 2006 victory of Hamas did not reduce the relative power of the US vis-à-vis Palestine. Yet, it showed the limited US capacity to shape domestic internal dynamics in Palestine and other Arab countries, the overall loss of attraction of ideas and values associated with “the West” as well as the risks for US strategic interests in the region associated with democratic procedures under such circumstances. The failure to bring democracy to Afghanistan and Iraq confirms that such a lack of constitutive power cannot be compensated by the use of military (compulsory) power.⁸⁰ Very clearly, a specific distribution of material power capabilities does not directly imply the necessary structural and productive power required to exert the intended influence in a given recipient country. It is, therefore, not the dyadic distribution of power capabilities as such, but the perceived power of the donor in terms of influence that shapes democracy promotion. This requires a broader perspective on power, even when seeing the world from the perspective of neoclassical Realism. Given the fact that scholars such as Miller, Monten and Nau have already incorporated ideational factors into their theoretical models, there is no reason why they should not be able to broaden also their perspective on power.

Theorizing Democracy Promotion: Revisiting the Neo-Gramscian Approach

The concept of power used by Neo-Gramscian perspectives on democracy promotion goes beyond mere material-based compulsion. Most prominently, William Robinson has theorized democracy promotion as a deliberate strategy led by the US government that aims at securing “the hegemony of a transnational elite which is the agent of transnational capital.”⁸¹ Recognizing this overall strategic purpose, according to Robinson, is necessary to understand what the US does – and does not – when it promotes democracy. For instance, democracy promotion is about promoting “polyarchy” or “low-intensity democracy” because it aims “not only at mitigating the social and political tensions produced by elite-based and undemocratic status quos, but also at suppressing popular and mass aspirations for more thoroughgoing democratization of social life.”⁸² In contrast to the Carnegie perspective, democracy promotion here is seen as a strategy to basically guarantee existing structures of power both at the national and the international level.⁸³

Although neo-Gramscian analyses of democracy promotion are among the few works that are explicitly interested in “the power politics of today’s democracy promotion,”⁸⁴ existing studies mostly do not engage with the concept of power as such.⁸⁵ Neo-Gramscian analyses generally focus on a specific kind of power relation (hegemony) that, in Gramsci’s understanding, relies on “consensual domination.”⁸⁶ Under conditions of hegemony, power structures – or relations of domination – are based on (ideological) consent protected by at least potential (material) coercion.⁸⁷ In this sense, the neo-Gramscian understanding of power is broader than the narrow materialist conception in neoclassical Realism. As prominently argued by Steven Lukes, the most effective power structures are those in which open resistance is prevented in the first place because “[t]hose subject to it are led to acquire beliefs and form desires that result in their consenting or adapting to being dominated.”⁸⁸

In line with a broader understanding of power, neo-Gramscian analyses of democracy promotion, therefore, emphasize the ideational dimension of exercising power (hegemony as consensus-based domination).⁸⁹ Yet, they nevertheless tend to reduce democracy promotion to an instrument that is deliberately manipulable and deployable by those forces exercising global hegemony: They “ultimately rest on a conception of hegemony as a process of centrifugal or top-down diffusion of power, permeating civil society, culture, educational institutions and so forth, without ever encountering resistance.”⁹⁰ Democracy promotion, according to Robinson, follows “the view that ‘democracy’ is the most effective means of assuring stability, the former seen as but a mechanism for the latter.”⁹¹ The implicit assumption seems to be that not only coercion-, but also consensus-based ways of exercising power in and through democracy promotion enable hegemonic forces to directly control the constitutive outcomes of their activities (“low-intensity democracy”). Yet, when seen from the perspective of a multidimensional concept of power, this is not a convincing application of the neo-Gramscian perspective.⁹² Taking the shape of hegemony, power, in the neo-Gramscian reading, is exercised at two levels: the international (between donor and recipient) and the domestic (intra-recipient). At both levels, the peculiar constitutive power of democracy promotion consists in its “ideological dimension,” namely “that democracy is a universal aspiration and the claim to promote it has mass appeal.”⁹³ This ideational power base of democracy promotion imposes limits on the use of compulsory power.

At the international level, democracy promoters need at least a certain amount of credibility in order to be able to exercise the kind of power associated with democracy promotion. In other words, the international institutions and norms that support democracy promoters’ compulsory power in terms of institutional power at the same time limit their capacity to unilaterally do (in the name of democracy promotion) whatever they please. Otherwise, they will undermine the very power base on which democracy promotion rests – as the experience with George W. Bush’s Freedom Agenda clearly shows.⁹⁴ As Ned Lebow has argued, the Iraq War “offers

dramatic evidence that power [here understood in terms of material, compulsory power, JW] does not necessarily produce influence, and that its use in inappropriate ways – at odds with prevailing norms and practices – can seriously erode a state’s influence. For the United States, it has led to the seeming paradox that the most powerful state the world has ever witnessed is increasingly incapable of translating its power into influence.”⁹⁵

The same holds true for the intra-state level. In order for (US) democracy promotion to function the way Robinson claims, the people in the recipient countries have to believe, at least to certain extent, in polyarchy-as-democracy. Hegemony, in the neo-Gramscian framework, requires “*active consent*” and, therefore, involves “the internalization on the part of subordinate classes of the moral and cultural values, the codes of practical conduct, and the worldview of the dominant classes or groups.”⁹⁶ Democracy, in this sense, has to be real to some extent.⁹⁷ Otherwise, it cannot fulfill its dual role to enable “intra-elite compromise and accommodation” and to politically incorporate “popular majorities,”⁹⁸ and it will lose the ideological capacity to filter out “as illegitimate demands that actually call into question the social order itself.”⁹⁹

Robinson seems to assume that “the generation of consent – or hegemony – in civil society” can be thought of “as a unidirectional flow going from the top, i.e. the transnational elites, to the bottom, the popular masses.”¹⁰⁰ Again, the experience with (US) democracy promotion in Iraq after the invasion shows very clearly that this is not that easy,¹⁰¹ as do cases of non-violent democracy promotion such as Bolivia.¹⁰² Theorizing democracy promotion from a neo-Gramscian perspective, therefore, would benefit from a broader perspective on power which recognizes the need for democracy promotion – even in terms of Robinson’s promotion of polyarchy – to rely on constitutive power if it is to effectively support the emergence of polyarchic, consensus-based political regimes in other countries.

This brief discussion suggests the need to incorporate the dimensions of institutional and, especially, constitutive (structural and productive) power into the neo-Gramscian theorization of democracy promotion.¹⁰³ Prominent neo-Gramscian analyses of democracy promotion, while

embracing the ideational dimensions of power, tend to stick to an overly compulsory understanding of power. The theoretical move proposed here, in particular, reveals the intrinsic contradictions in democracy promotion as a simultaneous exercise of multiple kinds of power.¹⁰⁴ Most notably, coercion- and consensus-based strategies to promote democracy are not simply complementary instruments that may be combined as need be in order to guarantee a given hegemonic world order. The result is paradoxical: Democracy promoters have the greatest power to effectively do the work they proclaim if they rely, in a consistent way, on (material and ideational) resources of compulsory, institutional, structural and productive power. At the ideational level, however, these power resources shrink once democracy promoters try to simply manipulate or instrumentalize democracy promotion to their advantage. The other way round, power is greatest when democracy promoters least compromise the capacity of the recipients to control their fate. Yet, the production of effects that constrain other actors' "capacity to control their fate" is precisely part of Barnett and Duvall's definition of power (see above). This implies that any successful *exercise* of power in and through democracy promotion – as it, by definition, impairs a recipient's self-control – tends to reduce the very power *base* on which this exercise rests. This inherent inconsistency of democracy promotion is exemplified by the common call for local "ownership,"¹⁰⁵ which is seen as necessary for effective democracy promotion but is, at the same time, basically denied by the very activities of democracy promoters.¹⁰⁶ The limited effectiveness of democracy promotion is, thus, very much a consequence of its intrinsic contradictions. Acknowledging this is, by the way, also much more in line with "Gramsci's own assertions on the complex and contradictory relationship between structure and agency within the fashioning of hegemony."¹⁰⁷

CONCLUSION

More than half a century ago, Robert Dahl predicted that scholars were not likely to produce “anything like a single, consistent, coherent ‘Theory of Power’,” but most probably only “a variety of theories of limited scope, each of which employs some definition of power that is useful in the context of the particular piece of research or theory but different in important respects from the definitions of other studies.”¹⁰⁸ While certainly not exhaustive, the typology of power proposed by Barnett and Duvall has the advantage of conceptually grasping multiple forms of power that are of relevance for international politics in an integrative manner that refrains from treating them as competing concepts. As seen, this offers a promising way to conceptualize the role and relevance of power in international democracy promotion.

By promoting democracy in other countries, states exercise power over others. This may include the use of material power resources, but it is obviously more than that. Furthermore, democracy promotion is not simply about an actor-centered kind of “power over,” be it material or ideational, compulsory or institutional. Promoting democracy also requires the capacity to exercise a constitutive “power to”: The aim, in the end, is to change from within the political regime of another state and, thus, its properties, capacities, interests and collective identity. At the same time, the whole endeavor of democracy promotion is dependent on inter- and transnational relations that constitute an asymmetric power relationship between democracy promoters and their “recipients.” A multidimensional concept of power helps us understand and conceptualize the ways in which the different types of power are relevant for democracy promotion and connected to each other.

Specifically, a broad perspective on power draws our attention to the structural conditions – material and ideational, both within and beyond the recipient country – that enable and constrain the capacity of external actors to exercise constitutive kinds of power, be they structural or productive. This, on the one hand, helps to better grasp the role of (relative) power as a factor shaping democracy promotion policies – and thereby serves to overcome

some of the theoretical limitations inherent to a neoclassical Realist approach to democracy promotion. On the other, it explains why democracy promotion is so limited in its ability to achieve the kind of effects it aims at, and, in fact, so contradictory. It, thereby, also helps to improve the attempt to theorize democracy promotion from a neo-Gramscian perspective.

Yet, the core claim of this article – that the multidimensional concept of power is useful for understanding the international politics of democracy promotion – is independent from these two specific theoretical approaches. Just as Barnett and Duvall have argued, each theoretical tradition may favor “one or another” type of power, but this should not prevent scholars from drawing on those types of power “that are associated with other theoretical schools.”¹⁰⁹ No matter the theoretical predisposition of the individual scholar, this article has suggested that it is futile to think about power in democracy promotion without paying attention to the local, trans- and international power relations that constitute the very practice of democracy promotion and, thereby, enable and constrain external actors in exercising the constitutive power they require in order to effectively promote whatever they regard as democracy. In the field of democracy promotion, actor-centered, top-down kinds of power are systematically dependent on constitutive conditions and local dynamics which can, themselves, not be simply produced “from the outside,” not even by overwhelming physical compulsion.

NOTES

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The Comparative International Politics of Democracy Promotion (London: Routledge, 2014).

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¹ Thomas Carothers, *Aiding Democracy Abroad. The Learning Curve* (Washington, DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 1999), pp. 105-108; Nicolas Guilhot, *The Democracy Makers. Human Rights and International Order* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 2005), p. 31; Sandra Lavenex and Frank Schimmelfennig, “EU democracy promotion in the neighbourhood: from leverage to governance?,” *Democratization* 18, no. 4 (2011): 890-891.

² Jeff Bridoux, *American Foreign Policy and Postwar Reconstruction. Comparing Japan and Iraq* (London: Routledge, 2011), chapter 1; Peter Burnell, *Promoting Democracy Abroad. Policy and Performance* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 2011), pp. 77-78; William I. Robinson, *Promoting Polyarchy. Globalization, United States Intervention and Hegemony* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), chapter 1.

³ Jonathan Monten, “The Roots of the Bush Doctrine. Power, Nationalism, and Democracy Promotion in U.S. Strategy,” *International Security* 29, no. 4 (2005): 112-156; Henry R. Nau, “America’s Identity, Democracy Promotion and National Interests: Beyond Realism, Beyond Idealism,” in Michael Cox, G. John Ikenberry, and Takashi Inoguchi, eds., *American Democracy Promotion. Impulses, Strategies, and Impacts* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), pp. 127-148.

⁴ Dietrich Rueschemeyer, Evelyne Huber Stephens, and John D. Stephens, *Capitalist Development and Democracy* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1992), p. 5.

⁵ Philippe C. Schmitter, “International democracy promotion and protection: Theory and impact,” in Nuno Severiano Teixeira, ed., *The International Politics of Democratization: Comparative perspectives* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2008), p. 32; Teivo Teivainen, “The Pedagogy of Global Development: The promotion of electoral democracy and the Latin Americanisation of Europa,” *Third World Quarterly* 30, no. 1 (2009): 163-164.

⁶ See David A. Baldwin, “Power and International Relations,” in Walter Carlsnaes, Thomas Risse, and Beth A. Simmons, eds., *Handbook of International Relations* (London: SAGE, 2002), pp. 177-191; Michael Barnett and Raymond Duvall, “Power in International Politics,” in *International Organization* 59, no. 1 (2005): 39-75; Michael Barnett and Raymond Duvall, eds., *Power in Global Governance* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005); Felix Berenskoetter and Michael J. Williams, eds., *Power in World Politics* (London: Routledge, 2007); Martha Finnemore and Judith Goldstein, eds., *Back to Basics: State Power in a Contemporary World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013).

⁷ Michael Barnett and Raymond Duvall, “Power in global governance,” in Barnett and Duvall, *Power in Global Governance*, p. 2.

⁸ See Barnett and Duvall, “Power in International Politics”; Barnett and Duvall, *Power in Global Governance*.

⁹ Martha Finnemore and Judith Goldstein, “Puzzles about Power,” in Martha Finnemore and Judith Goldstein, eds., *Back to Basics: State Power in a Contemporary World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), p. 5.

¹⁰ Finnemore and Goldstein, “Puzzles about Power,” p. 5. See also Barnett and Duvall, “Power in International Politics”; Barnett and Duvall, *Power in Global Governance*; Berenskoetter and Williams, *Power in World Politics*.

¹¹ Dinorah Azpuru, Steven E. Finkel, Aníbal Pérez-Liñán, and Mitchell A. Seligson, “Trends in Democracy Assistance: What Has The United States Been Doing?,” *Journal of Democracy*

19, no. 2 (2008): 151. See also Peter Burnell, “Democracy Assistance: The State of the Discourse,” in Peter Burnell, ed., *Democracy Assistance. International Co-operation for Democratization* (London: Frank Cass, 2000), pp. 3-33.

¹² See Peter J. Schraeder, ed., *Exporting Democracy: Rhetoric vs. Reality* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 2002); Richard Youngs, *International Democracy and the West. The Role of Governments, Civil Society, and Multinational Business* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004); Milja Kurki, *Democratic Futures: Re-Visioning Democracy Promotion* (London: Routledge, 2013), chapters 7-10.

¹³ On this overall issue, see Christopher Hobson and Milja Kurki, eds., *The Conceptual Politics of Democracy Promotion* (London: Routledge, 2012); Kurki, *Democratic Futures*.

¹⁴ Barnett and Duvall, “Power in International Politics”; Barnett and Duvall, *Power in Global Governance*. The edited volume by Finnemore and Goldstein (*Back to Basics*) also draws on this typology. For a different, not as systematic discussion of power in international relations, see Berenskoetter and Williams, *Power in World Politics*.

¹⁵ Barnett and Duvall, “Power in International Politics,” p. 42.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 45.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 42.

¹⁸ As defined above, democracy promotion concerns activities by external actors that aim at producing effects on/in other countries.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 44. In the same vein, Finnemore and Goldstein have argued that “attention to multiple dimensions of state power is helpful, even essential, to understanding many of the puzzling manifestations of it we see in contemporary politics.” Finnemore and Goldstein, “Puzzles about Power,” p. 4.

²⁰ Barnett and Duvall, “Power in International Politics,” p. 42.

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 43.

²² Ibid., p. 43. Defining structural power through the use of the qualifier “in direct structural relation” risks making the definition circular. What is meant here is, in other words, “the production and reproduction of internally related positions of super- and subordination, or domination, that actors occupy.” Ibid., p. 55.

²³ Robert A. Dahl, “The Concept of Power,” *Behavioral Science* 2, no. 3 (1957): 202-203, emphasis in original.

²⁴ See the discussion of the various concepts of and perspectives on power in IR in Stefano Guzzini, “Structural Power: The Limits of Neorealist Power Analysis,” *International Organization* 47, no. 3 (1993): 443-478; Baldwin, “Power and International Relations”; Barnett and Duvall, “Power in International Politics,” pp. 49-57; Berenskoetter, “Thinking about power,” pp. 4-12.

²⁵ Berenskoetter, “Thinking about power,” p. 3. See also Dahl, “The Concept of Power,” p. 203; Barnett and Duvall, “Power in International Politics,” p. 45; Finnemore and Goldstein, “Puzzles about Power,” pp. 3-4.

²⁶ Barnett and Duvall, “Power in International Politics,” p. 45.

²⁷ Ibid., p. 49.

²⁸ Laurence Whitehead, “The Imposition of Democracy,” in Abraham F. Lowenthal, ed., *Exporting Democracy. The United States and Latin America. Case Studies* (Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1991), pp. 234-260.

²⁹ Steven D. Krasner, “New Terrains: Sovereignty and Alternative Conceptions of Power,” in Finnemore and Goldstein, *Back to Basics*, p. 349.

³⁰ Burnell, *Promoting Democracy Abroad*, p. 78. See also Steven Levitsky and Lucas A. Way, “International Linkage and Democratization,” *Journal of Democracy* 16, no. 3 (2005): 21-22.

³¹ See also Krasner, “New Terrains,” pp. 349-50.

³² Robinson, *Promoting Polyarchy*, chapter 1.

³³ Bridoux, *American Foreign Policy and Postwar Reconstruction*, p. 27. Gramsci's original distinction was between "domination" (*dominio*) and "intellectual and moral leadership" (*direzione*); the former implies ruling "by coercion and direct domination," the latter through the organization of "consent and hegemony." Translations are taken from David Forgacs, eds., *The Gramsci Reader. Selected Writings 1916-1935* (New York, NY: New York University Press, 2000), pp. 249, 420.

³⁴ Joseph S. Nye, "Soft Power," *Foreign Policy* 80 (1990): 166, emphasis in original.

³⁵ Yet, what is crucial about Gramsci's take on hegemony – and, thus, consensual power – is that, while involving such an element of unidirectional control, it is based not simply on one-sided manipulation but includes active consent, which "presupposes that account be taken of the interests of the groups over which hegemony is to be exercised." Forgacs, *The Gramsci Reader*, p. 211; see below, section "Theorizing Democracy Promotion."

³⁶ Barnett and Duvall, "Power in International Politics," p. 42.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 42.

³⁸ Teivainen, "The Pedagogy of Global Development."

³⁹ Barnett and Duvall, "Power in International Politics," p. 45.

⁴⁰ Hence, Schmitter has argued that, no matter how "voluntary and reciprocal in principle," the practice of democracy promotion "is almost always semi- to in-voluntary and asymmetric" – not least because it is based on "the presumed superiority of well-established liberal democracies." Schmitter, "International democracy promotion and protection," p. 32.

⁴¹ Krasner, "New Terrains," p. 351.

⁴² Barnett and Duvall, "Power in International Politics," p. 51.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 51.

⁴⁴ Krasner, "New Terrains," p. 341. See also Bruce Bueno de Mesquita and George W.

Downs, "Intervention and Democracy," *International Organization* 60, no. 3 (2006): 631.

⁴⁵ Barnett and Duvall, “Power in International Politics,” p. 45.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 48.

⁴⁷ Burnell, *Promoting Democracy Abroad*, pp. 75-9.

⁴⁸ Thomas Carothers, “Democracy Assistance: The Question of Strategy,” *Democratization* 4, no. 3 (1997): 123.

⁴⁹ Burnell, *Promoting Democracy Abroad*, p. 76.

⁵⁰ Thomas Carothers, “Taking Stock of Democracy Assistance,” in Cox et al., *American Democracy Promotion*, p. 194; see also Carothers, *Aiding Democracy Abroad*, pp. 105-108.

⁵¹ Guilhot, *The Democracy Makers*, p. 31. In actual practice, of course, democracy promotion has rarely fully embraced this revolutionary task. With a view to US democracy promotion, Tony Smith has, for instance, detected “a paradoxical form of ‘conservative radicalism’.” Tony Smith, *America’s Mission. The United States and the Worldwide Struggle for Democracy in the Twentieth Century* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1994), p. 17.

⁵² See Julia Leininger, “‘Bringing the outside in’: illustrations from Haiti and Mali for the re-conceptualization of democracy promotion,” *Contemporary Politics* 16, no. 1 (2010): 63-80.

⁵³ Bueno de Mesquita and Downs, “Intervention and Democracy,” p. 631. From their actor-centered rational choice perspective, the promotion of democracy by means of military intervention – i.e., by exercising compulsory power – is, therefore, normally not a rational strategy (and, thus, most of the time not really pursued by intervening states).

⁵⁴ As Barnett and Duvall (“Power in International Politics,” p. 55) emphasize, the two types of constitutive power “overlap in several important respects” but are different in that structural power “works through direct structural relations” and concerns “the production and reproduction of internally related positions of super- and subordination,” whereas productive power “entails more generalized and diffuse social processes” and concerns “the constitution of all social subjects with various social powers through [broad and general] systems of

knowledge and discursive practices.” In the following, I shall refer to constitutive power in a general sense when this distinction is not important to the argument.

⁵⁵ Barnett and Duvall, “Power in International Politics,” p. 53.

⁵⁶ Barnett and Duvall, “Power in International Politics,” p. 55.

⁵⁷ See, for instance, Rita Abrahamsen, *Disciplining Democracy: Development Discourse and Good Governance* (London: Zed Books, 2000); Guilhot, *The Democracy Makers*; Kurki, *Democratic Futures*; Teivainen, “The Pedagogy of Global Development.”

⁵⁸ It is this second way in which constitutive power is relevant for democracy promotion that directly corresponds to Barnett and Duvall’s thinking about constitutive (structural and productive) power in international relations and global governance. The first notion of constitutive power – as exercised by an external actor *within* a given target country – is different in that it responds to the specific character of democracy promotion as something taking place at the level of domestic politics.

⁵⁹ This refers to what Lukes has called an “imposition of internal constraints”: “Those subject to it are led to acquire beliefs and form desires that result in their consenting or adapting to being dominated, in coercive and non-coercive settings.” Steven Lukes, *Power. A Radical View. Second Edition* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), p. 13.

⁶⁰ Levitsky and Way, “International Linkage and Democratization,” p. 22.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 24-25.

⁶² Nau, “America’s Identity, Democracy Promotion and National Interests”; Henry R. Nau, *At Home Abroad. Identity and Power in American Foreign Policy* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2002).

⁶³ Monten, “The Roots of the Bush Doctrine.”

⁶⁴ Benjamin Miller, “Explaining Changes in U.S. Grand Strategy: 9/11, the Rise of Offensive Liberalism, and the War in Iraq,” *Security Studies* 19, no. 1 (2010): 26-65.

⁶⁵ Monten, “The Roots of the Bush Doctrine,” p. 115.

⁶⁶ Monten, “The Roots of the Bush Doctrine,” p. 118. Monten is interested in explaining the “long-term shift [in US foreign policy] from exemplarism to vindicationism” that culminated in the Bush doctrine, which he does by looking at changes in relative power and national identity (ibid., p. 115). Miller, by contrast, focuses on the “major change in the Bush Administration’s security policy before and after 9/11” (Miller, “Explaining Changes in U.S. Grand Strategy”, p. 28). This shift, he argues, cannot be explained by Monten. In his explanation, Miller basically amends the focus on relative power by adding a second “material-systemic” factor, namely “the degree of external threat”; further two “domestic-ideational” factors are only considered intervening variables (ibid., p. 29).

⁶⁷ For a non-Realist approach to relative power, see for example the notion of “relative bargaining power” which is considered to shape the bargaining process characterizing EU democracy promotion by conditionality. Here, relative power is regarded the “result of the asymmetrical distribution of the benefits of a specific agreement.” Lavenex and Schimmelfennig, “EU democracy promotion in the neighbourhood,” pp. 892-893.

⁶⁸ Gideon Rose, “Neoclassical Realism and Theories of Foreign Policy,” in *World Politics* 51, no. 1 (1998), p. 152. See Monten, “The Roots of the Bush Doctrine,” p. 117.

⁶⁹ William C. Wohlforth, *The Elusive Balance: Power and Perceptions during the Cold War* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1993), p. 4.

⁷⁰ Rose, “Neoclassical Realism and Theories of Foreign Policy,” p. 152.

⁷¹ See Wohlforth, *The Elusive Balance*, p. 4; Rose, “Neoclassical Realism and Theories of Foreign Policy,” p. 151, fn. 15.

⁷² Monten, “The Roots of the Bush Doctrine,” p. 115.

⁷³ This “disconnect between capabilities and outcomes” is well-known from the literature on power in international relations (Barnett and Duvall, “Power in International Politics,” p. 40;

see Baldwin, "Power and International Relations," pp. 179-181; Robert O. Keohane and Joseph S. Nye, *Power and Interdependence. Third Edition* (New York, NY: Longman, 2001), p. 10). Given the aim to produce profound domestic effects in another country, this disconnect is significantly greater in democracy promotion than in traditional inter-governmental relations.

⁷⁴ Rose, "Neoclassical Realism and Theories of Foreign Policy," p. 150. See Miller, "Explaining Changes in U.S. Grand Strategy," p. 29; Monten, "The Roots of the Bush Doctrine," p. 141.

⁷⁵ Nau, *At Home Abroad*, p. 27. See also Nau, "America's Identity, Democracy Promotion and National Interests."

⁷⁶ Thomas Carothers, "The Democracy Crusade Myth," *The National Interest* 90 (2007): 8.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 9-10.

⁷⁸ See Wolff et al., *The Comparative International Politics of Democracy Promotion*.

⁷⁹ US policies towards Bolivia are a case in point: Although vital US security interests (related to the so-called War on Drugs) and regional strategic interests (related, in particular, to the alliance led by Hugo Chávez in Venezuela) were directly challenged by the elected government of Evo Morales (since 2006), the US government reacted rather ambivalently and, in any case, refrained from openly confronting the Bolivian government while trying seriously to somehow remain engaged with the country. See Jonas Wolff, "Democracy promotion, empowerment, and self-determination: conflicting objectives in US and German policies towards Bolivia," *Democratization* 19, no. 3 (2012): 415-437.

⁸⁰ See Richard Ned Lebow, *A Cultural Theory of International Relations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), p. 557; Christian Reus-Smit, *American Power and World Order* (Cambridge: Polity, 2004), pp. 2-3.

⁸¹ Robinson, *Promoting Polyarchy*, p. 4.

⁸² Robinson, *Promoting Polyarchy*, p. 6.

⁸³ The “underlying objective” of (US) democracy promotion is to maintain “essentially undemocratic societies inserted into an unjust international system.” Robinson, *Promoting Polyarchy*, p. 6. For related approaches to democracy promotion, see also Rita Abrahamsen, “The Victory of Popular Forces or Passive Revolution? A Neo-Gramscian Perspective on Democratisation,” *Journal of Modern African Studies* 35, no. 1 (1997): 129-152; Colin S. Cavell, *Exporting “Made-in-America” Democracy. The National Endowment for Democracy & U.S. Foreign Policy* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 2002); Neil A. Burron, *The New Democracy Wars. The Politics of North American Democracy Promotion in the Americas* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2012).

⁸⁴ Kurki, *Democratic Futures*, p. xiv.

⁸⁵ But see Bridoux, *American Foreign Policy and Postwar Reconstruction*, chapter 1.

⁸⁶ Robinson, *Promoting Polyarchy*, p. 21.

⁸⁷ Robinson, *Promoting Polyarchy*, p. 22. See also Bridoux, *American Foreign Policy and Postwar Reconstruction*, pp. 28-36, and Forgacs, *The Gramsci Reader*, pp. 189-221, 235.

⁸⁸ Lukes, *Power*, p. 13. A similar argument is made by Guilhot with reference to Bourdieu’s concept of “symbolic power,” i.e. “the power to make domination seem legitimate” (Guilhot, *The Democracy Makers*, p. 168). An even broader – and, in fact, all-encompassing – concept of power is used by those scholars that draw on Foucault and, in particular, his concept of governmentality. On the latter, see Felix Berenskoetter, “Thinking about power,” in Berenskoetter and Williams, *Power in World Politics*, pp. 10-12. With a specific view to democracy promotion, see the integrated Gramscian/Foucauldian perspective proposed by Milja Kurki, *Democratic Futures*, chapters 11-12.

⁸⁹ See Robinson, *Promoting Polyarchy*; Barry K. Gills, “American Power, Neo-liberal Economic Globalization, and Low-Intensity Democracy: An Unstable Trinity,” in Cox et al., *American Democracy Promotion*, pp. 326-344.

⁹⁰ Guilhot, *The Democracy Makers*, p. 15.

⁹¹ Robinson, *Promoting Polyarchy*, p. 66.

⁹² See Jeff Bridoux, “‘It’s the political, stupid’: national versus transnational perspectives on democratisation in Iraq,” *The International Journal of Human Rights* 15, no. 4 (2011): 552-571; Jonas Wolff and Iris Wurm, “Towards a Theory of External Democracy Promotion: A proposal for theoretical classification,” *Security Dialogue* 42, no. 1 (2011): 86.

⁹³ Robinson, *Promoting Polyarchy*, p. 16. See also Guilhot, *The Democracy Makers*, p. 15.

⁹⁴ See Thomas Carothers, “U.S. Democracy Promotion During and After Bush” (2007), available at:

{http://carnegieendowment.org/files/democracy_promotion_after_bush_final.pdf} accessed 14 February 2013; Michael McFaul, *Advancing Democracy Abroad. Why We Should and How We Can* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2010), chapter 1; Reus-Smit, *American Power and World Order*; Laurence Whitehead, “Losing ‘the Force’? The ‘Dark Side’ of democratization after Iraq,” *Democratization* 16, no. 2 (2009): 215-242.

⁹⁵ Lebow, *A Cultural Theory of International Relations*, p. 557. In much the same way, Christian Reus-Smit has stressed “the importance of authority, legitimacy and institutions for sustainable political influence,” exposing a “central paradox of hegemony: that stable, enduring leadership requires power to be socially embedded, and that unilateral action can be socially corrosive, with implications for both the preponderant state and world order.” Reus-Smit, *American Power and World Order*, p. 6.

⁹⁶ Robinson, *Promoting Polyarchy*, p. 21, emphasis in original. In general terms, the same applies to Bourdieu’s symbolic power or a Foucauldian notion of governmentality (see note 88).

⁹⁷ See Guilhot, *The Democracy Makers*, p. 18; Bridoux, “‘It’s the political, stupid’”, p. 556; Wolff and Wurm, “Towards a Theory of External Democracy Promotion,” p. 86.

⁹⁸ William I. Robinson, “Promoting Capitalist Polyarchy: The Case of Latin America,” in Cox et al., *American Democracy Promotion*, p. 312.

⁹⁹ Robinson, *Promoting Polyarchy*, p. 30.

¹⁰⁰ Bridoux, “‘It’s the political, stupid’”, p. 561. See William I. Robinson, “What to Expect from US ‘Democracy Promotion’ in Iraq,” *New Political Science* 26, no. 3 (2004): 441-447.

This tendency of neo-Gramscian scholars to see hegemony, contra Gramsci, “as a one-directional power relationship [...] forced or imposed on subaltern classes” is a general feature also outside the study of democracy promotion. Randall D. Germain and Michael Kenny, “Engaging Gramsci: International relations theory and the new Gramscians,” *Review of International Studies* 24, no. 1 (1998): 18.

¹⁰¹ See Bridoux, *American Foreign Policy and Postwar Reconstruction*; Bridoux, “‘It’s the political, stupid’”.

¹⁰² See Wolff, “Democracy promotion, empowerment, and self-determination.”

¹⁰³ With a view to productive power, see the proposal for integrating Gramscian and Foucauldian concepts in an analysis of democracy promotion by Kurki, *Democratic Futures*, chapters 7-10.

¹⁰⁴ There are, of course, also other issues with Robinson’s interpretation of democracy promotion that would merit discussion and, from my point of view, revision. See Bridoux, “‘It’s the political, stupid’”; Kurki, *Democratic Futures*, chapter 11; and the forum on “Democracy and world order” in *International Relations* 27, no. 2 (2013): pp. 226-257.

¹⁰⁵ See, for instance, Larry Diamond, *The Spirit of Democracy. The Struggle to Build Free Societies Throughout the World* (New York: Times Books, 2008), pp. 316-317.

¹⁰⁶ For a more general discussion of the inherent contradictions of democracy promotion, see Annika E. Poppe and Jonas Wolff, “The Normative Challenge of Interaction: Justice Conflicts in Democracy Promotion,” *Global Constitutionalism* 2, no. 3 (2013): 373-406.

¹⁰⁷ Owen Worth, “Recasting Gramsci in international politics,” *Review of International Studies* 37, no. 1 (2011): 384. See also Germain and Kenny, “Engaging Gramsci,” pp. 18-19.

¹⁰⁸ Dahl, “The Concept of Power,” p. 202.

¹⁰⁹ Barnett and Duvall, “Power in International Politics,” p. 45.