



A University Dialogue on Democracy

2007–2008

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Foreword

Unpacking Democracy: An Introduction

The collection of twelve essays contained in this monograph is meant to initiate and inform the 2007–2008 University Dialogue. “Democracy” is a complex concept in contemporary American culture for a variety of reasons. While it is a term used by citizens of all political persuasions, ethnic identities, social classes, and geographic locales, its meanings have varied over time and place, and interpretations of the ideals connoted by “democracy” seem to be as much a function of the speaker as of a common, shared set of understandings. The authors of the essays offer several interesting and thought provoking insights into democracy, each of which deserves careful thought and reflection. In an effort to help structure some of your own interpretations and to provoke new insights, we offer a brief guide intended to stimulate not only personal reflection but also discussion with your peers, family, and faculty. With the upcoming presidential primary elections and New Hampshire’s status as “First in the Nation,” these conversations are especially relevant and important.

As we read the essays, we identified five main organizing themes that constituted the authors’ areas of focus and interest. You might find different key themes, depending on your own past experiences with this thing called “democracy.” But here is a starting point.

Definitions/Conceptions of Democracy

As simple as the question might seem, “What does democracy mean?” is perhaps the most important starting point for your journey through this monograph. Several authors offer definitions that they have either researched or constructed to suit the needs of their argument. This multitude of definitions is perhaps the most important thing to contemplate. Why are there so many divergent, even competing, definitions of this term in our culture and others? Do the terms traditionally associated with American democracy (equality, majority rule, fairness, citizenship, participation) mean the same thing to everyone in our culture? How are these concepts expressed and understood in other cultures? What, in fact, does democracy mean to you?

Ideals and Challenges to Achieving Democracy

We often hear ideals of democracy being championed in an effort to promote one point of view over another. In recent times it has become increasingly difficult to discern who is in fact a greater champion of these “democratic ideals.” The idea that one group, be it the majority or not, has a monopoly on being “democratic” is perhaps the furthest thing from democracy. Ideals are difficult to define and even more difficult to achieve, especially in a pluralistic culture that may seem to pit subgroups against one another. Articulating and examining ideals require analyses of history, culture, economics, society, and other factors far beyond the scope of these papers. However, asking questions and engaging others help to defend against two very powerful enemies of democracy: indifference and intolerance. Does everyone have equal access to democracy? Do some votes carry more weight than others? Are voters who are uninformed about the issues a detriment to democracy? Should money be able to buy influence in a democracy?

Cultural Variations

A number of the essays address the idea of democracy and its role in parts of the world other than the United States. As we noted earlier, democracy, even within the essays you are about to read, can be interpreted and applied in myriad ways, all of which are not culturally congruent or appropriate in all settings. That is, democracy may be less pan-cultural than some would assert. As a world leader and arguably the most famous (or infamous) democracy in the world, the United States occupies a particular (some might say peculiar) place on the world stage. Some might look to us as an example of democracy (making us the ideal); others might view our efforts to “export” democracy as a sign of aggression or even oppression; a kind of ideological colonialism that smacks of earlier efforts to create empires. Throughout American history we can see both successful and failed attempts by our government to export democracy. Each of these instances should be carefully examined to gain

a better understanding of the processes and practices of democracy. As you read these essays, you might ask yourself questions such as: Is “American” democracy appropriate for everyone? What motivates us to export democracy? Profit? Idealism? A sense of sacred calling? Noblesse oblige? What “ideals” are we really wanting to export and why? Ultimately, examining our attempts to export democracy can be a valuable way to better understand our own democracy here at home.

The Theory and Practice of Democracy, or Practicing What We Preach

Another important consideration in your thinking about democracy is the distinction between theory and practice. Defining ideals, instituting institutional structures to carry out those ideals, and establishing laws are all ways in which we realize the aims of democracy. The structures that we institute are meant to create a stable reality in which our “ideals” can flourish. We make provisions in our structures to protect minorities, protect Constitutional freedoms (speech, religion, assembly, etc.), level the playing field by assuring more equal access, and create a society in which citizens can feel safe. The “reality,” which manifests itself in our behaviors (within our defined structures), is oftentimes very different. We know that our society and the world are hardly safe. We know that money does buy influence in our democracy. We know that dissent is rarely embraced as an integral part of democracy. Why is there such a gap between the theory and the practice? Can that gap be narrowed? How?

The Role of the University in Teaching, Fostering, and Practicing Democracy

For several centuries democracy and education have been understood as interdependent. Since the time of Socrates education has been seen as necessary for a democracy to thrive and approach its ideal. In the American context we can review the writings of some of our most influential founders (Jefferson, Franklin) to see that the American democratic “experiment” was predicated on the participation of an educated and informed citizenry. Over the course of history in this country education has come to be seen as a fundamental right that every citizen is entitled to (even though the term “education” does not appear in the Constitution). In the United States, education is seen as a tool to create a more equitable society that is to equalize opportunity if not achievement. Perhaps ironically, the meritocratic nature of our school system, especially in higher education, works against the notion that simple effort is the

key to full participation in our society. The premise that it is effort that matters most, rather than intrinsic talent, is a democratic ideal but one that is hard to reconcile with selective admission processes, comparative grading practices (such as class rank), and other characteristics of our competitive educational system. Other ironies can be found in the ways in which colleges and universities are organized. Do students have an equal voice in university policy-making? Do staff and faculty, *vis a vis* administration? How representative is the Student Senate and Faculty Senate?

What is Your Role?

So, as the fortunate ones who are attending a selective university, who have been given access to great resources (professors, libraries, laboratories, peers, etc.), do you have any responsibility in this democracy? As a member of a fairly small percentage of the American population, for that matter the world population, that enjoys this privilege, what if anything should you be doing? We encourage you to read these essays with a critical eye, keeping in mind some of the questions and ideas that we have put forward here. Perhaps most importantly, we urge you to actively engage the questions we have raised and to formulate your own questions as well. To aid in your thinking, this monograph is accompanied by a pocket guide to the U.S. Constitution, the fundamental expression of how democracy should work in these United States. Does the Constitution help us to answer the question, “What is democracy?” Does it help us to practice what we preach? Does it apply equally to all members of our pluralistic society? If you were to modify the Constitution, what ideals and commitments would you be sure to include? If there were a Constitution for the University of New Hampshire, what might it say?

Happy reading.

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Who Wins When the Majority Rules?

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Introduction

It is often difficult to engage in critical discussions of fundamental democratic principles. Basic questions of democratic praxis are assumed to be easily answered or are thought to have been answered declaratively by the “founding fathers.” Thus, the question of *how* we ought to go about enacting systems of governance by, for, and of the people seems to have a simple answer: majoritarianism. Decision making, according to the will of the majority, appeals to a sense of fairness. Majoritarianism was a radical aspect of modern democratic revolutions. Ancient Greek elite philosophers such as Plato and Aristotle connected the dangers and instability of democracy to its base in mob rule, or rule by the majority class. The colonists, in what was to become the United States, strove to break away from rule by a minority aristocratic regime. (U.S.) Americans have, thus, grown to believe fervently in majoritarianism as the core of their democratic ideals.

More recently, many minorities and allies have begun to question a democratic system organized structurally to guarantee that the majority always wins. U.S. Supreme Court Justice Brennan wrote that “in pluralistic societies such as ours, institutions dominated by a majority are inevitably, if inadvertently, insensitive to the needs and values of minorities when these needs and values differ from those of the majority.” One can argue that strict proponents of majoritarianism are being, rather than democratic, too often anti-democratic. A strict interpretation of majority rule as the foundational answer to the “how” question of democratic practice tends to serve and protect the interests of those already privileged.

We thus must remember why majoritarianism was at times considered a radical technique of democracy, and therefore, or perhaps even more importantly, that it is *a technique of democracy* and not to be simply equated with democracy itself. The practice must serve the principle. If there are times when democracy will be better served by other means, then we ought to employ those other means. In fact, popular rhetoric in the United

States notwithstanding, democratic theorists have long questioned majority rule, myriad institutions, and governing bodies, and organizations in democracies have employed methods that run counter to the majoritarian principle, specifically in the interest of promoting democratic egalitarianism.

Madison's Majoritarianism

Many consider majoritarianism to be a founding U.S. principle and, therefore, attribute it to James Madison. Madison, however, was neither a democrat nor a majoritarian precisely, because he sought to promote minority elite interests. In *Federalist 10*, Madison tells us that he knows what a democracy is... and he is not interested. Instead, he argues for a republic. As described in *Federalist 10*, democracies are smaller, with more people participating, and are less guided by the rights of individual property. Republics can be larger, relying on representation of the people, and are better protectors of property.

Madison can be confusing for contemporary (U.S.) Americans because: 1) he was a thinker afraid of both minority rule and majority abuse, 2) he devised a system to protect minorities but used a version of majoritarianism to do so, 3) he did none of this in the service of democracy. His method is less straightforward, therefore, than it might first appear. One of the central benefits of a republic is that, relying on representation, it has the capacity to cover large geographical distances. This was essential to Madison as he knew that differences “are sown in the nature of man” and that the more diverse the geographical landscape, the more diverse the people. Madison thought that by structurally encouraging diversity in a vast geographical area, it would be almost impossible for any one idea or interest to be taken up by a majority. Although he designed the system to utilize a winner-take-all style of majority rule voting, the winning party would, of necessity, always be constituted by a temporary coalition of minorities. Due to the diversity structurally secured, Madison felt it was unlikely that any two issues would attract the same con-

figuration of minorities for and against. Thus, afraid of the tyrannical potential of majorities, Madison utilized a specific form of majority rule as a mechanism to prevent their formation and sustenance.

The persuasiveness of Madison's theory for *democratic* thinkers rests on the assumption that there are numerous and shifting factional interests and the dimension of time. Madison's logic suggests that each of us will find ourselves in the minority at some points, but not permanently. Similarly, no one group will persistently win political battles, nor will any lose so often that they are effectively disenfranchised. In a nation of myriad minority groups, your group might lose on this turn in politics, but the system remains fair and democratic, because it is sure that you will win in another turn. Losers are soothed by the promise of time.

Canonical Theorists and the U.S. Experiment

In *On Liberty*, British political theorist John Stuart Mill writes that "in political and philosophical theories as well as in persons, success discloses faults and infirmities which failure might have concealed from observation" (1984,61). Writing almost a century after the (U.S.) American Revolution, Mill looks back on this democratic experiment in practice, and he must face some of the "faults and infirmities," which have transpired since the actualization of the grand theoretical proposal. He tells us that "self-government and the power of the people over themselves" have not exactly turned out to be true. In a government "of each by all the rest," he considers "the will of the people, moreover, practically means the will of the most numerous or the most active *part* of the people—the majority, or those who succeed in making themselves accepted as the majority; the people, consequently, *may* desire to oppress a part of their number, and precautions are as much needed against this as against any other abuse of power" (1984,62).

We find a similar wariness on the part of de Tocqueville. De Tocqueville was a Frenchman who came to the United States in the 1800s to study the new form of democracy developing here. He was impressed in many ways with what he saw. But he also noticed something unusual. In its own ways, majority practices had so come to dominate U.S. culture that de Tocqueville thought the U.S. form of democracy had created a form of majority tyranny as yet unseen in any despotic form of government.

U.S. Democratic Theorists

In the contemporary U. S. context, scholars such as Schattschneider have also taken issue with the Madisonian formulation as a *democratic* formulation. He argues that there is an inherent class bias in understanding our system as made up of an array of groups competing in the political marketplace. Looking through another lens of diversity, Feldman argues that the freedom of religion clause found in the Bill of Rights served to bolster and protect majority Christian hegemony at the expense of non-Christian minorities. What is often seen as diversity protected by these clauses is merely a multiplicity of groups belonging to the dominant Christian majority.

One of the major thinkers exposing the gaps in the U.S. reliance on majoritarianism for a democracy characterized with tremendous racial diversity is Lani Guinier. Early in his first term, President Clinton nominated Guinier for the position of Civil Rights Enforcement Chief. Within a few months—marked by great dissension—though, Clinton withdrew his nomination. At the heart of the controversy were Guinier's legal writings on race, which analyzed the relationship between democratic values and (U.S.) American one-person-one-vote, winner-take-all majority rule. The roots of her ideas may be found in early, second-wave feminist concerns with democratic praxis. The anti-democratic manifestations of Madisonian style majoritarianism not only kept certain minorities disenfranchised, but also women, a numerical majority of the population. Since Mill, we have seen that in this system certain groups can "succeed in making themselves accepted as the majority." Feminists and queer theorists and activists clarified the limitations in a majority rule system that can legally over-rule disempowered minority group concerns, such as those emerging from LGBT communities, while also protecting already enfranchised minorities (e.g., men) over and against numerical, though disenfranchised, majorities (e.g., women).

In sum, we may note that one of the central flaws in the founders' majoritarianism is that in a heterogeneous society with relatively permanent minorities, certain groups will continuously end up on the outside. Our experiences in a country where minorities bear the brunt of the failures of liberal democracy illuminate how the consequences of substituting *majoritarianism* for *democracy* are fatal. Replacing the principled goal of democracy with a particular strategy for running institutions has enabled—sometimes even well-meaning—people to use a culturally and historically specific

procedural method for anti-democratic purposes (i.e., the continued exclusion of many minorities). As the historical experiences of Jews, queers, women, Japanese, and African-Americans have demonstrated, minorities can be consistently ignored through perfectly legal means when the technique of majoritarianism is substituted for the principle of democracy.

This contribution to the UNH Discovery Program is adapted from Marla Brettschneider's *Democratic Theorizing From the Margins*. 2002. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, Chapter 7.

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What is Democratic Education?*

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Why does education matter in a democratic society and in particular, why does higher education matter? What should a democratic education be like, and who should decide how future citizens will be educated?

These questions suggest that education is a *political* matter as much as it is about teaching and curriculum. Plato understood this when he placed education at the center of his construction of the ideal Republic. Thomas Jefferson also understood this from the earliest days of the democratic revolution in America.

In 1779, Jefferson submitted a bill to the Virginia legislature that, had it passed, would have provided a system of education from primary school through university at public expense. His “Bill for the More General Diffusion of Knowledge” included a selection system through which young men (*yes, only young men*) of ability could rise through the system to university education regardless of family background and means.¹ He offered three interconnected rationales. First, ignorance enslaved the mind, and only education could liberate people from the powers of tyrants and the superstitions of priests. Second, publicly supported education would break down the artificial, inherited aristocracy that was characteristic of Europe and would replace it with an egalitarian society. Finally, Jefferson also well knew the inherent risks when the people rule. The rule of the people can so easily degenerate into the tyranny of the many. It has been said that in a democracy, one depends on the wisdom of strangers. It is, therefore, in our mutual interest to support the education, including higher education, of citizens in a democracy, since our fate depends on them. This was a new and radical idea, because it rested on a new and radical conception of citizenship.

How should we educate citizens for democracy? How we answer this question depends, in part, on what we think about democracy. Too often we identify democracy with such institutions as voting, representative

government, the rule of law, constitutional protections of individual rights, and so forth. As important as these are, democracy is more than this. John Dewey observed that “a democracy is more than a form of government; it is primarily a mode of associated living, of conjoint communicated experience” in which we understand our own actions and interests in relation to shared concerns of other citizens.² At its core, a democratic form of life is grounded in respect for individuals and our recognition of an obligation to come together with other individuals to make decisions about our common good.

This is more difficult than it sounds in a pluralist society such as ours. We often bring very different backgrounds and moral and religious perspectives to many of the issues that we must decide as a people. Think, for example, of the war in Iraq, of abortion policy, or of support for embryonic stem cell research. Our disagreement about the best policy is often based on fundamental differences in basic moral and political values—on different views about America’s role in the world, for example, or the right to life vs. right to choice, or when life begins. In a pluralist democracy, can anyone legitimately claim to be in possession of the truth of the matter and declare that opposing views are false? Plato wanted a philosopher king—someone who had ultimate wisdom—to rule. But in a democracy, the people rule (which is why Plato disliked democracy). And in a pluralistic democracy, the people often disagree about fundamental values, yet we still must make decisions that bind us all.

Political philosopher Benjamin Barber once observed that “democracy begins where certainty ends.”³ For him, the political world is necessarily uncertain; a world in which reasonable people can come to very different conclusions, a world in which we must recognize that other citizens have different values and also recognize the fallibility of our own best judgments. How should citizens and future citizens be educated for the challenges of a pluralistic democracy?

*This essay is adapted from chapter 6 of my book, *Doubt and the Demands of Democratic Citizenship*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006.

To frame this question, let me note a paradox about the condition of democracy in the late 20th and early 21st century. When Amartya Sen, the Nobel Prize-winning economist was asked what he thought the most important development of the 20th century was, he responded, “the emergence of democracy as the preeminently acceptable form of governance.”⁴ His view is widely shared. Yet many students of American culture believe that the idea of democracy at home is deeply strained. In her book, *Democracy on Trial*, for example, Jean Elshtain argues that democracy is in a particularly perilous condition in our country. Elshtain chronicles the ways in which we find ourselves being pulled between an increasingly fragmented society along the lines of race, ethnicity, and gender, on the one hand, and the desire to see ourselves a one people, on the other.

Elshtain begins her account of democracy’s perils with the ironic observation of John Courtney Murray that “disagreement is a very difficult thing to reach.”⁵ She believes that it is the task of a democratic citizen in a pluralist society to be able *to reach disagreement*, and she uses the task of reaching disagreement as a lever for diagnosing the fragile condition of democracy. She believes we need a new social covenant in America. A “new social covenant,” she writes, “is not a dream of unanimity or harmony, but the name given to the hope that we can draw on what we hold in common even as we disagree.”⁶

This, it seems to me, is the best formulation of the challenge we face in thinking about education suited for a pluralistic democracy. How are we to educate citizens and foster institutions that allow us to differ in ways appropriate to a pluralistic society, yet find the common ground necessary for social commitments and collective responsibilities? Sen’s optimism about the spread of democracy and Elshtain’s distress about its fragility in our pluralistic culture provide a powerful framework for situating the cultural context of thinking about democratic education. This paradox offers the possibility to foster an understanding of the hopes and risks of pluralistic democracy and, at a minimum, to give occasions such as this dialogue series to reflect on the connection between democracy and education.

The requirements of a pluralistic society have motivated a good deal of recent rethinking of the curriculum, most obvious in our attempts to deal directly with issues of race, ethnicity, and gender in the curriculum, and in requiring that students be introduced to non-Western cultural perspectives. These are central to the general education requirements for students at UNH

and most universities. But there are other, less obvious areas of the curriculum that also need to be rethought from the needs of democratic society. Think for a moment about why we require science of all students. Why do we believe that it is important for students to study biology, for example? Not why biology students or pre-med students should study biology, but why all students study biology? That it is intrinsically important—true as that might be—is not a sufficiently compelling answer. There are lots of things that are intrinsically interesting and important that we do not require of all students. That knowledge of biology is important in a society faced with significant policy decisions concerning the environment, for example, or stem cell research is compelling. Knowledge of biology or chemistry or an understanding of technology and its social implications is critical for informed citizenship. It is important for democratic participation in policy decisions that are consequential to us as members of society. If we believe that informed citizenship is the reason that knowledge of the sciences is important for all students, that is, if scientific literacy is critical for the deliberative processes of a democratic society, then this is the objective that should guide the science we require of all students. The democratic purposes of scientific understanding must influence how the sciences are taught as part of the general education of all students.

Another less obvious but equally important democratic purpose of the education we expect for all students has to do with communication. Everyone believes that a fundamental goal of the education of all students is effective communication. Some of the most impressive recent work on curriculum and on teaching has focused on the connection between writing and learning. But writing, and communication generally, should not be thought of as merely modes of individual self-expression. Communication, of course, is fundamentally dialogical—we are seeking to be understood by others. But what might this mean in the context of democratic education? What might teaching look like if it fostered the dialogical aspects of communication in a pluralist society?

In his essay, “The Voice of Poetry in the Conversation of Mankind,” Michael Oakeshott writes that “education, properly speaking, is an initiation into the skill and partnership of... conversation, to recognize the voices, to distinguish the proper occasions of utterance, and in which we acquire the intellectual and moral habits appropriate to conversation.”⁷ “Conversation” is a term of art for Oakeshott. Its contrast concept for Oakeshott is “inquiry.” The goal of inquiry is agreement about the

truth of the matter, and while this is the appropriate mode for many aspects of our life, it is unsuited to some of our most fundamental disagreements. Conversation, by contrast, is a partnership where the goal is less a matter of agreement than of understanding those who might differ. In a pluralistic society, we must recognize that there will sometimes be *reasoned disagreement* about some things—that sincere, intelligent, morally sensitive people can think from or arrive at different and incompatible values. In a pluralistic democracy, thoughtful disagreement should be expected and respected.

But still, in a democracy citizens must decide our collective good even when we disagree. This is why Elshtain thinks a pluralistic democracy requires a new social covenant through which we can reach disagreement about some things yet still seek democratic agreement where we must.

Reaching disagreement is a skill that is in exceedingly short supply. What we increasingly lack as a society is the capacity for a conversation of diverse voices. This is what I believe Elshtain means by a new social covenant. It is what Amy Gutmann, a political philosopher and president of the University of Pennsylvania, describes as the very nature of democratic education. According to Gutmann “the most distinctive feature of a democratic theory of education is that it makes a democratic virtue out of our inevitable disagreement...”⁸ That is, democratic education is not about getting to the truth. It is about the processes that cultivate the democratic dispositions of citizens and the institutions that foster those dispositions in the face of persistent differences. As Alan Keenan has put it, it requires “affirming rather than denying democracy’s constitutive incompleteness, such a mode of democracy would require attitudes of forbearance, self-limitation, and openness to collective self-questioning.”⁸

Here are some of my thoughts about ingredients of a democratic disposition. First—and less obvious than it may appear—it needs to be a disposition *for* democracy, for its aspirations, their incomplete realization, and its fragile nature. Second, it needs to include the capacity for democratic communication. Mutuality and respect for those who disagree are the conditions for the possibility of democratic communication. This is much more than expressing and respecting diversity. It is the willingness to understand those who differ while seeking common ground, given the persistence of differences. Third, it needs to include the capacity to hold strong convictions while recognizing one’s own fallibility and, thus, the fallibility of one’s convictions. The ideologues

have framed too many of our important debates as if our alternatives were true believers or the misguided, between “red-staters” or “blue-staters,” patriots or traitors, and so forth. What this divisive political landscape has produced is a great many people who have become cynical about politics, alienated from governmental institutions, and indifferent about the outcome of our crucial disagreements. It seems to me that the democratic disposition must find its place between the true believers and the cynics, since cynical indifference is as much the enemy of democracy as intolerance.

Finally, a democratic disposition needs to be skeptical—not its cynical version, the version fostered by world-weary editorialists and investigative reporters, nor an indifferent skepticism which doubts equally every opinion. I mean the kind of skepticism exemplified by Socrates who could conceive of himself both as son of Athens, its true citizen, and yet its sharpest critic. We need to commit ourselves to the democratic values at the core of American society while being willing to doubt and criticize presidents and congresses and non-governmental institutions when they put those values at risk. The historian, Daniel Boorstin, observed that “the courage to doubt, on which American pluralism, federalism, and religious liberty are founded, is a special brand of courage, a more selfless brand of courage than the courage of orthodoxy: a brand that has been rarer and more precious in the history of the West than courage of the crusader.”⁹ Democratic education should foster the courage to doubt.

What do you think about my suggestions and how would you subtract or add to this list? Entering into a conversation about what democracy is, about the relationship between education and democracy, and about how we might educate citizens for a pluralist and democratic society is itself an aspect of democratic education, since it recognizes that ultimately WE should decide the answers to these questions. And the answers we decide should be subject to the ongoing questioning by future citizens. This conversation itself might serve to invigorate your education and also to reinvigorate our democracy.

Endnotes

¹ A convenient source for this and other key documents about Jefferson's views on education is the appendix of James B. Conant, *Thomas Jefferson and the Development of American Public Education* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1962)

² John Dewey, " *Democracy and Education*, New York: The MacMillan Company, 1962, p. 57

³ Benjamin Barber, *Strong Democracy: Participatory Politics for a New Age*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004.

⁴ Amartya Sen, "Democracy as a Universal Value," *Journal of Democracy*, 10, (1999), p. 3.

⁵ Jean Bethke Elshtain, *Democracy on Trial*, New York: Basic Books, 1995, p. xi.

⁶ *Democracy on Trial*, p. 31.

⁷ Michael Oakeshott, "The Voice of Poetry in the Conversation of Mankind," in *Rationalism in Politics*, New York: Basic Books, 1962, p. 199.

⁸ Alan Keenan, *Democracy in Question: Democratic Openness in a Time of Political Closure*, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003, p. 15.

⁹ Daniel J. Boorstin, *Hidden History: Exploring our Secret Past*, New York: Vintage Books, 1987, p. 183.

Kill the Messenger: Why the Living Arts Reflect the True State of a Democracy

A play in one short act

DAVID KAYE

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(Briggs stands motionless on the stand. He stares off, caught somewhere between exhaustion and bewilderment).

NOTARY: (Holding out a Bible to Briggs) Do you solemnly swear that the testimony you will give before this court will be the whole truth and nothing but the truth so help you God?

BRIGGS: I beg your pardon, I'm not...

NOTARY: Not what? Of a Judeo/Christian persuasion? Think you can pull a fast one by refusing to swear on the Holy Bible? We can bring in other books you know. Koran, Bhagavad Gita... We got 'em all in the back room. You name it, and I'll bring it out. Everyone's equal under the law. That's what this is about, isn't it?

BRIGGS: Well, that's my question... What is this about? Why am I here?

PROSECUTING ATTORNEY: Your claim, sir! Your reckless statements! Your negligence in defaming our state of democracy by equating it with your own demise.

DEFENDING ATTORNEY: Objection, your honor! The trial has not even started, and already the Prosecuting Attorney is badgering my client.

JUDGE: Overruled. That was public criticism. Your client should be used to that sort of thing. Do you swear to... blah, blah, blah.

BRIGGS: *(Unsure, but feeling no choice)* Yes, it is my job to always tell the truth.

PROSECUTING ATTORNEY: We shall see about that. State your name and occupation for the record.

BRIGGS: Joseph Briggs. I am an artist.

PROSECUTING ATTORNEY: *(Mockingly)* An *Ar-teest*. And what exactly does an *Artist* do, Mr. Briggs?

BRIGGS: I'm not sure I can speak for every artist, but I try to serve as a... well a kind of mirror. I create a reflection of nature, of society... of ourselves.

PROSECUTING ATTORNEY: Well, I own many real mirrors... in my home, my office. I have several just on my car. I depend on them when I drive. Don't you think they do a far better job at "reflecting" than you ever could?

BRIGGS: Those mirrors are utilitarian. Art functions on... a higher level.

PROSECUTING ATTORNEY: What you mean is the mirrors in my car are *useful*. The so-called mirror you provide is not.

BRIGGS: A rear-view mirror reflects everything that is behind the car so that you may back up safely. Such a mirror makes no choices in what it reflects. My mirror is selective. Its purpose is to isolate an element of life so that it may be examined for its beauty... or for its flaws.

DEFENDING ATTORNEY: Your honor, we are here to deal with the issue of my client's statements about democracy, not the nature of art!

PROSECUTING ATTORNEY: They are inseparable! This man has claimed that the sorry state of the arts in America is a direct consequence of *(He reads from a file)* "the decaying state of democracy in this land." Before we can dismiss this outrageous statement, we must first establish exactly what this man believes art and democracy to be and how one affects the other.

JUDGE: Continue. But make it brief. This is a short play.

PROSECUTING ATTORNEY: Thank you, your honor. So *you* decide what beauty or "flaw" to examine.

BRIGGS: Yes.

PROSECUTING ATTORNEY: And what gives you the right to make such decisions?

BRIGGS: *Everyone* has the right to make these decisions.

PROSECUTING ATTORNEY: Yes, but not everyone puts these decisions on public display and expects people to pay for them!

BRIGGS: I don't necessarily...

PROSECUTING ATTORNEY: And when the public refuses to pay, either directly or through their hard-earned tax dollars, you have the audacity to relate it all to the state of our democracy! And just how do you define "democracy," Mr. Briggs?

BRIGGS: Equal rule by the people. One person. One vote.

PROSECUTING ATTORNEY: That's it? No philosophical treatise? No poetic flight of fancy? Seems to be hardly an "artistic" response.

BRIGGS: I have often responded more artistically...in art galleries, on stage, in concert halls, but you're right; you would need to purchase a ticket for that.

PROSECUTING ATTORNEY: (*In contempt*) Thank you, Mr. Briggs. Councilor? (*The Prosecuting Attorney sits as the Defending Attorney rises.*)

DEFENDING ATTORNEY: Mr. Briggs, how exactly do you back up your claim that the state of a democracy is somehow reflective of the state of the arts in a society?

BRIGGS: History bears it out. In the most un-democratic societies artists have always faced the highest degrees of oppression.

DEFENDING ATTORNEY: And why is that?

BRIGGS: Because of the nature of art we just spoke of. The artist is always in a state of observation. We cannot do what we must do if we are not constantly examining the world around us. That is our inspiration. And when one focuses intensely on any one object, sound, person, society...government, one cannot ignore all the imperfections that become apparent. Art is also sensual. It appeals to the senses, which in turn, appeal to the emotions. Oppressive regimes want to control the emotions of the populace, so one way they work to achieve this is to commandeer art. The artists who do not conform, who do not abandon what they see for what the government tells them to see, are oppressed...driven out of their work, exiled, arrested...or worse.

DEFENDING ATTORNEY: Can you give the court some examples?

BRIGGS: Perhaps one of the best would be what happened to art and artists under Hitler's Nazi regime.

DEFENDING ATTORNEY: He was an artist himself, was he not? A man whom one might think would be sympathetic to your cause...except that he evolves into a fascist. Fascism is a political system based on authoritarianism, where the individual is subordinate to the needs of the state, where the basic definition you gave us of democracy cannot be satisfied.

BRIGGS: Yes, I believe that is true.

DEFENDING ATTORNEY: And if you would, please tell the court Hitler's stand on art after he consolidates his hold on power as Chancellor of Germany?

BRIGGS: Perhaps Hitler's words would say it best: (*He takes out a small notebook from his coat pocket, finds the page, and reads*) "The cleansing of our culture must be extended to all fields. Theatre, art, literature, cinema, posters and window displays must be cleansed of all manifestations of our rotting world and placed in the service of a moral, political and cultural idea." (*There is a great deal of murmuring from the people observing the proceedings.*)

JUDGE: Order! Order! This is all very interesting, Mr. Briggs, but how does such a statement truly affect artists or their art?

BRIGGS: All art—visual, theatre, music—had to serve one central purpose—to unify the Arian people and glorify the Third Reich.

JUDGE: And if it did not...

BRIGGS: In most cases the artwork was removed at best, destroyed at worse. Those who created this work met the same fate. The great German artists of the day—Otto Dix, Emil Nolde, Max Ernst, and many more—were suddenly regarded as degenerates rather than geniuses. What works the Nazis did save were placed in a traveling exhibit called the "Schandausstellungen," or the "Exhibition of Degenerate Art"—a show specially designed to make their work appear incomprehensible and depraved.

PROSECUTING ATTORNEY: Your honor, we all feel pity and remorse for these poor, unfortunate people, but this proves nothing except that Hitler had a dislike for this particular artistic movement, and because he had complete control of the Government, he was in a position to abolish it. Now, if we wish to argue about personal freedom, then this is relevant. But we are dealing with this man's statements about democracy. By his very definition, he has left individual freedom out of the equation!

JUDGE: Do you wish to alter your definition, Mr. Briggs?

BRIGGS: No, your honor. You can still have a form of democracy with limited personal freedom. What suffers is the *quality* of that democracy. What Hitler did was remove art, theatre, music...any artistic form that provoked the viewer to interpret what they were seeing or hearing. The very act of interpretation is subversive to an authoritative government, because the interpretation cannot be controlled. If the art is reflective of politics or society, then politics and society are thrust into question.

JUDGE: So what did Hitler replace this “degenerate art” with?

BRIGGS: With art that was not subject to interpretation, with art whose message was simple and direct—German men are strong and masculine! Adolf Hitler is a knight in shining armor!

JUDGE: Was this phenomenon restricted just to the political far right?

BRIGGS: No, your honor. Stalin did almost the same thing. In 1932, he decreed that all art must conform to “Social Realism,” which rigidly required “realistic” portrayals of Communist values. The margins of interpretation were reduced to a minimum. In one of the most famous paintings of this genre, “Praised be to the Great Stalin,” one can see that the goal is to infuse a sense of elation and awe associated with Stalin while ensuring that the piece is viewed in a state devoid of any personal, societal, or political reflection.

PROSECUTING ATTORNEY: Yes, we’re all quite impressed by your command of art history, Mr. Briggs, but what does any of this have to do with art and the state of democracy in America TODAY? Fine. You have proved that if you are an artist living under a totalitarian regime and your artwork has the potential to make the populace reflect on the true state of their condition, then the art and the artist will likely suffer. But I see no evidence of such persecution here in America, or France, or The United Kingdom, or any other country where democracy is doing quite well, thank you very much.

BRIGGS: The artist may not be persecuted to the same extent, but the artist in the U.S. is just as oppressed, and this oppression is the sign of a dying democracy! *(The courtroom erupts into angry shouts at Briggs for this defaming remark. The Judge pounds the gavel.)*

JUDGE: Order! Order! Mr. Briggs, I must remind you that you are under oath!

DEFENDING ATTORNEY: *(Meekly standing and raising his hand)* Your honor, is it too late to change to an insanity defense?

JUDGE: Sit down Councilor. Mr. Briggs, I will give you the opportunity to retract that statement.

BRIGGS: I stand by what I say. The reason the artist in this country is not openly persecuted is because the American people make it unnecessary. It’s not a question of intolerance, but indifference, and it is through this indifference that we see the relevance to the state of our democracy.

PROSECUTING ATTORNEY: Your honor, this man is making a mockery of America, our sacred form of governance, and this court!

JUDGE: Briggs, I am going to give you one chance and one chance only to explain yourself.

BRIGGS: Your Honor, perhaps the best example I can give you is the through the life of Augusto Boal.

JUDGE: Augusto who?

BRIGGS: Boal, a theatre artist from Brazil who....

PROSECUTING ATTORNEY: Objection, your honor! Nazi Germany! Communist Soviet Union! And now Brazil?! What’s next? An example from Mars?

JUDGE: Overruled. I’ll hear it, but it better be good. I’m missing “Dancing with the Stars” for this.

BRIGGS: Boal started his career in Southeast Brazil during a brief quasi-democratic period in the mid-fifties. Over the years, he became less and less satisfied with the theatrical art he was producing. His plays then began to examine more deeply the politics and society of his audience. As Brazil returned to a state of strict military dictatorship, his theatre company, as well as most others, was shut down. Not to be deterred, Boal invented something he called “invisible theatre.” His troupe of actors would decide on a subject they wanted an audience to grapple with, for instance, the inability of much of the populace to purchase healthy foods. They would create roles and rehearse key lines and moments and would then go to a public place, like a grocery store, to perform the play. Here, one of the characters would gather food to buy and then get in line to pay. Once the cashier had rung-up the sale the actor/character would announce that she could not pay. The

other actors would join in the ensuing conflict with key lines designed to get everyone in the market involved with the problem. At the height of the debate, it would be announced that what everyone had just taken part in was just a play! As imperceptibly as it had begun, the actors would disappear, just before the authorities would arrive! Boal went on to create an entirely new theatrical form under the banner “Theatre of the Oppressed.” This was an approach where social and political issues would be explored in a completely interactive method, utilizing the audience whom he renamed spectators. One could say that he invented a completely democratic form of theatre wherein the audience decided on issues and possible outcomes of the play. He was eventually arrested, jailed...and tortured in 1971. Boal was exiled to Argentina, eventually finding his way to France. He wanted to continue his work, but what need had the French for his artistic invention? As far as he could see, the people of this democratic society knew nothing of oppression. He then made an earth shattering observation—The French were just as oppressed as the Brazilians! In Brazil, the oppression came from men with machine guns standing on the street corner. What he discovered with the French was that they were oppressed by men with machine guns in their heads. In Brazil, the external oppression made his audiences hunger for truthful reflection and self-expression. In France, the absence of external oppression led to the internal guards of apathy. They conformed, not because a dictator was threatening them to conform, but because they lacked the need or desire for socio-political self-examination. And that is what art does at its best.

PROSECUTING ATTORNEY: What art does at its best is entertain us! And it is entirely democratic, because I vote with my money! And if your incomprehensible avant-garde play, modern abstract art, or a-tonal classical music doesn't entertain me, then I don't have to vote for it. I withhold my money, or I encourage my legislator to cut your measly government funding and you thankfully go away.

BRIGGS: I am not the first to say that art isn't always easy, but neither is maintaining the quality of a democracy. Is it a coincidence that the birthplace of western democracy was also the birthplace of western theatre? These two are connected, because that same ancient Greek society that sought the ideal of rule by the people recognized the need for personal and societal self-re-

lection and understanding through theatrical art. They saw it as so important that they paid to have it produced for the people.

PROSECUTING ATTORNEY: But attending the theatre was a religious act, not a political one!

BRIGGS: But the plays enacted stories that put into question all aspects of Greek social and political life as well as their religious convictions. This was all done through the telling of their great Myths. Myths are always wrapped up in a swirl of symbolism and metaphor. Art is symbolic and metaphoric by its nature. Whatever has been created is subject to interpretation, and because of this, it stimulates thought, debate, and dialogue. When a society is only interested in art as entertainment and escapism, then we are seeing the self-imposed exile of thought that Boal witnessed. Art can help train us to think, to interpret, and to reflect. Will a society that runs from these qualities in its art do the same in their democracy?

JUDGE: Enough! I don't like the way this play is ending. It's preachy and imbued with righteous self-importance. Besides that, Kafka did this sort of thing far better anyway. I sentence you to an eternity of irrelevancy with little possibility of parole. May god, or whatever you artists believe in, have mercy on your soul. (*The courtroom empties. Briggs sits for a moment, alone. He takes out his note pad and begins to draw.*)

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Can Democracy Create World Peace?

Democratic Peace Theory: Misguided Policy or Panacea

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Can democracy create world peace? The idea that representative liberal governments can diminish the occurrence of war is one of the most appealing, influential, and at the same time, controversial ideas of our time. For centuries, thinkers have proposed that a world of democratic countries would be a peaceful world. As early as 1795, Immanuel Kant wrote in his essay *Perpetual Peace* that democracies are less warlike. Within the United States, this idea has held particular sway. Presidents like Woodrow Wilson have embraced this idea and advocated the creation of democracies to create a less belligerent world. Harry S. Truman once said, “Totalitarian regimes imposed on free peoples...undermine the foundation of international peace and hence security of the United States.”¹

The Democratic Peace Theory is based on several premises. The first argues that in democracies, populations will restrain elected leaders. This is to say that given the choice, people will be reluctant to bear the costs of war in terms of human life and financial treasure. Second, many think that democracies will use political institutions to settle their domestic disputes. Therefore, when conflict arises with another democracy, they will be more apt to use international institutions (i.e., the United Nations, International Court of Justice, G-8 Summits, etc.) to resolve their international disagreements. Others believe that democracies produce a political culture of negotiation and conciliation, claiming that people in democracies are taught that violence is not an appropriate means of conflict resolution. The argument holds that if a war-prone leader comes to power in a democracy, other institutions (e.g., Congress) will present cross-pressures (here checks and balances) and prevent an aggressive head of state from moving a country to war. Finally, people in democracies are believed to be more sympathetic and tolerant of people in other democracies.² Thus, whether it is common norms, institutional constraints, mutual respect, or popular will—democracy is viewed as a treatment for war

Democratic Peace and Political Science

In the 1970s, scholars began using the tools of social science to explore this thesis and have uncovered a significant amount of empirical research that supports these claims. Today there are over a hundred authors who have published scholarly works on the Democratic Peace Theory. One study examined 416 country-to-country wars from 1816-1980 and found that only 12 were fought between democracies.³ Bruce Russett writes that “Established democracies fought no wars against one another during the entire twentieth century.”⁴ Another proponent found that the probability of any two democracies engaging in war is less than half of 1%!⁵ This is not to say that democracies have not gone to war, but when considering pairs (or dyads) of democracies, there are almost no instances of war between two democracies. Four decades of research consistently finds significant support for this position. Moreover, the findings remain robust as the number of democracies in the world continues to grow. In fact, as Jack Levy points out, Democratic Peace Theory is “as close as anything we have to an empirical law in international relations.”⁶

Democratic Peace and American Foreign Policy

Beyond academics, the last two presidential administrations have particularly embraced this research as a policy objective and a way to build world peace. President Clinton in his 1994 State of the Union Address proclaimed, “Ultimately, the best strategy to ensure our security and to build a durable peace is to support the advancement of democracy elsewhere. Democracies don’t attack each other.” More recently, current President George W. Bush stated, “And the reason why I’m so strong on democracy is democracies don’t go to war with each other. And the reason why is the people of most societies don’t like war, and they understand what war means... I’ve got great faith in democracies to promote peace. And that’s why I’m such a strong believer that the way forward in the Middle East, the broader Middle East, is to promote democracy.”⁷ This

discussion has generated considerable excitement and promoted growing expectations by both policy makers and Western publics that this is something we should be pursuing.⁸ This theory has come close to conventional wisdom and served as a foundation for both moral and political missions. Former Secretary of State Henry Kissinger writes, “[a] majority of the American leaders were convinced then as they are now that America has a special responsibility to spread its values as its contributions to world peace.”⁹

The Problems of Democratic Peace

Just as the Democratic Peace Theory has its supporters, it has also generated considerable criticisms. Alexander Hamilton presents an early rejection of this idea in Federalist No. 6, writing: “Sparta, Athens, Rome, and Carthage were all republics; two of them, Athens and Carthage, of the commercial kind. Yet were they as often engaged in wars, offensive and defensive, as the neighboring monarchies of the same times. Sparta was little better than a well regulated camp; and Rome was never sated of carnage and conquest.”¹⁰

In terms of the current research, establishing the correlations have been relatively easy; however, establishing causation is more problematic. In fact, most scholars do not agree on why democracies are more peaceful. In addition, the research itself has come under heavy criticism with scholars claiming that the evidence changes depending on how you define “democracy,” “war,” and “peace.” One rebuttal to the democratic peace theory is found in the Big Mac Peace Theory; this cheeky modification points out that no two countries with a McDonald’s have ever gone to war.¹¹ The argument claims that what the scholars are actually measuring is economic development, not democracy. Here some argue that a stable middle class (people who like their current status) will not support a war that may jeopardize their standard of living. Alternatively, the causal factors may be powerful economic elites who block any move towards aggression against a country where they hold financial ties and where war puts their economic interests at risk. Along these lines, one compelling study finds that the Democratic Peace Theory only holds true between two democracies that have reached high standards of economic development. Here the research finds that poor democracies are more likely to fight each other.¹² So, perhaps it is economic development, global capitalism, and the interdependence of foreign trade that impedes war, not democracy.¹³

Stronger opponents actually argue that “good science” is creating dangerous policy. There are those that fear that the research provides justification for countries to go on democracy crusades. One issue they raise concerns the assumption that democracies create peaceful peoples. Here, scholars question the idea that popular will can mitigate war, particularly since war seems to be rather popular in certain democracies.¹⁴ The United States presents an interesting example of this as public approval ratings of U.S. presidents tend to skyrocket during war. For example, President George H.W. Bush saw his public approval ratings rise to an unprecedented 89% during the 1991 Persian Gulf War when Americans “rallied around the flag.”

Perhaps the most problematic aspect of the Democratic Peace Theory concerns implementation—**how** do you create a world of democracies? Here we find two minds, one that advocates the active pursuit of a globe full of democracies and one that promotes a more passive policy. The latter view is found in the early writings of Thomas Jefferson as he proclaimed, “A just and solid republican government maintained here will be a standing monument and example for... people of other countries.”¹⁵ Jefferson held that leadership by example (where Western and American governments practice virtue, self-restraint, and rule of law) would be contagious. The second, stickier position involves the active or even forceful pursuit of democratic political systems. This position assumes that democracy will be welcomed across the globe and can be transplanted with relative ease. However, we are beginning to see that some people do not see democracy as desirable. In fact, there are people who view the Democratic Peace Theory and its policy implications as thinly veiled imperialism. In effect, they view the spread of democracy as an effort to homogenize the world, rejecting local culture, indigenous institutions, and even popular preferences. Thus, rather than viewing themselves as liberated, people and their leaders in many non-democratic countries hear this policy mandate as smug rhetoric. This also touches on the very contentious debate about whether “gunpoint democracy” will work or whether this actually presents a contradiction to the ideas of conflict resolution through nonviolence.

Another thorny issue is that democratically elected governments may not guarantee peaceful interests. Here “one must be careful what one wishes for” as democratically elected leadership may not always be benign and/or may pursue agendas in contrast to American interests. For example, during the Iraqi war Turkish voters pressed their government not to provide support to the

U.S. invasion of Iraq. The newly elected Hamas majority in the Palestinian National Authority has also demonstrated its agenda is far from peaceful.

In conclusion, there is strong support on both sides of the debate. One finds the quest for democratic universalism as a powerful panacea to interstate war, while the other sees it as a misguided and dangerous foreign policy. What the debate does point out is that creating democracies is enormously complicated and requires significant time. One cannot just set up ballot boxes, hold elections, and create moderate Democrats and Republicans. Issues like rule of law, civic culture, a stable and committed middle class, and legitimacy of a democratic system may take years, if not decades, to build. Furthermore, in *Electing to Fight: Why Emerging Democracies Go to War*, Edward Mansfield and Jack Snyder point out that transitional states or “semi-democratic regimes” may be extremely dangerous and actually **more likely** to start wars.¹⁶ There is no guarantee that the introduction of democratic institutions will be smooth, permanent, or accepted by either the political elites in a country or by the masses. In fact, some scholars point out that in most cases of newly created democracies (the third-wave democracies) the political institutions are weak, frail, and easily reversible.¹⁷

Perhaps it is helpful to remember that in the United States (typically regarded as **the** democratic success story) it took almost 200 years, a civil war, a woman’s suffrage movement, and a violent civil rights movement before we had universal suffrage and granted most citizens of the country the right to participate in politics. Thus, it may take decades or even generations to establish embedded norms of tolerance, compromise, and the value of power sharing in transitional countries. One thing remains clear: the ideas and debate on Democratic Peace Theory will persist in both academic and policy circles. This is particularly true as the United States attempts implementation of these ideas in Iraq. In fact, Presidential candidate Senator John McCain recently affirmed his support for this view, calling for a “new League of Democracies [to] form the core of an international order of peace based on freedom.”¹⁸

The research is exciting and leads this author to optimism. At the same time, this is a guarded optimism, as the scholarship needs to be implemented with a sophisticated understanding and a fine instrument. Forcibly pulling the weeds of non-democratic regimes by their roots and bluntly transplanting western democracy into areas where the soil may not be fertile

may be ineffective and actually promote violence. A fact that policymakers tend to overlook is that in order for the Democratic Peace Theory to hold, democracy itself must be authentic, robust, stable, and accompanied by economic development.

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Can the United States Export Democracy?

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Today we hear politicians, pundits, and the public grapple with this question, particularly as the United States struggles to guide democratization in Afghanistan and Iraq. This question is far from new, however, as democracy promotion has featured prominently in U.S. rhetoric for some time. In some cases, the U.S. encouraged democratization with carrots, dangling financial incentives in the faces of countries contemplating free and fair elections. In others, the U.S. used a stick, sending the electoral ballots in with the marines. Have these efforts worked? Can the U.S. export democracy with carrots, sticks, or some combination of the two? A historical review of the empirical evidence provides some fascinating answers to these questions. Based upon this evidence, this paper argues that the method of exporting democracy is not nearly as important as commitment: be it through the carrot or the stick, to export democracy successfully the United States must fully fund and staff its democratization efforts.

Promoting Democracy: A Historical Overview

Democracy promotion first featured prominently in U.S. foreign policy rhetoric in the aftermath of the 1898 Spanish American War. Defeat of the Spanish propelled the U.S. to superpower status, and as a superpower, the U.S. sought to increase its influence in the western hemisphere. From 1898–1933, the marines were dispatched approximately 30 times to Latin American countries and occupied some nations as long as 34 years. Frequently, the U.S. cloaked its interventions under the guise of democracy promotion. U.S. leaders argued that such active intervention was necessary in order to promote democracy throughout the region. However, critics noted that the countries with the most U.S. intervention (e.g., El Salvador, Guatemala, Cuba, Dominican Republic, and Nicaragua) also had repressive authoritarian governments. Furthermore, critics pointed out that patterns of U.S. intervention were not conducive to democratization, but they did succeed in

promoting U.S. economic interests. Indeed, President Teddy Roosevelt's foreign policy was known as "Dollar Diplomacy" due to its heavy focus on the protection of U.S. economic interests.

As early as 1928, U.S. officials themselves began to criticize democracy promotion tactics. President Hoover argued, "True democracy is not and cannot be imperialistic," and he pledged to reverse the policy of democratization by invasion. Five years later President Franklin Roosevelt went even further and launched his "Good Neighbor Policy." Under the Good Neighbor Policy, the U.S. would withdraw all of its troops from Latin America, refrain from future intervention, and emphasize diplomatic consultations and negotiations. The U.S. adhered to this policy until World War II, and while the Good Neighbor Policy promoted trade and U.S. investment, it still did not improve democratization of the region any better than its predecessor.

The Good Neighbor Policy was interrupted by World War II. In the aftermath of this war, the U.S. renewed its commitment to democratization, this time on a much larger global scale. Even the strongest critics of U.S. foreign policy tend to agree that at least in the cases of Germany and Japan, the rhetoric matched the action. The U.S. was genuinely interested in reconstructing Germany and Japan and transforming them into democracies (with capitalist economies). In Japan, democratization was choreographed by approximately 5,500 occupation officials, backed by the power of 150,000 troops. With complete control over Japanese territory, occupation officials moved quickly to dismantle military and police institutions, overhaul legal and educational systems, and author a new constitution. Democratization in Germany followed a similar pattern. Once again, foreign troops fully occupied German territory and became the de facto government for four years. Differences among the victorious Allies led to a division of Germany; however, France, Great Britain, and the U.S. were all committed to establishing a strong democratic state. Meticulous care was taken to design democratic institutions that would rectify the flaws that led to the collapse

of democracy and the rise of fascism in the 1930s. The resulting German system had numerous provisions that staunchly upheld human rights and government stability, while thwarting attempts of one political party to monopolize control of the country. By the end of the 1950s, democratization in Germany and Japan was considered an overwhelming success.

While the U.S. was strongly committed to democratization of Germany and Japan, it would be incorrect to characterize U.S. foreign policy as centered on democracy promotion during the Cold War. Just as democracy was taking root in Germany and Japan, the U.S. pursued a very different strategy in places like Guatemala. In 1954, the U.S. helped to overthrow the leader of Guatemala, Jacobo Arbenz. Elected democratically in 1950, Arbenz aimed to transform Guatemala's feudal economy into a modern capitalist state. He pledged that this transformation would benefit all Guatemalans, targeting in particular the rural poor, of which 70% were illiterate and only 18% had access to potable water. Unfortunately for Arbenz, the U.S. found two major flaws in his plan for economic transformation. First, his economic plan included the appropriation of unused land owned by the United Fruit Company—a company with strong ties to the Eisenhower administration that did not like the compensation package offered by the Guatemalan government. Second, while Arbenz was not a communist himself, there were communist sympathizers in his government. The U.S. deemed Arbenz too soft on communism as well as too quick to seize the land of an American company. The C.I.A. began to train a group of disenchanting Guatemalan military officers to overthrow the government, and in 1954, they helped launch a successful military coup against Arbenz. The overthrow of Arbenz plunged the country into four decades of civil war; not until 1996 would Guatemala find itself at peace, ready to start the process of democratization again.

Another prominent case of the U.S. reversing democratization occurred in Chile, which up until 1973 enjoyed a long democratic tradition. Chileans democratically elected President Salvador Allende with a razor thin plurality of the vote in 1970. Allende was a self-proclaimed Marxist who pledged to find a “Third Way” for Chilean economic development by incorporating some elements of socialism into Chilean democracy. Allende aimed to fund his poverty-reducing initiatives by expanding state ownership of key economic areas—particularly the copper industry. American companies were heavily vested in the Chilean copper industry, and American investment in Chile was estimated at \$1 bil-

lion. The Nixon administration labeled Allende a threat and aimed to overthrow him. In 1973, the U.S. supported Augusto Pinochet's military attack that led to the death of Allende as well as Chile's long democratic tradition. Pinochet ruled Chile with an iron fist until the end of the Cold War.

U.S. policy throughout the Cold War is marked by examples of democracy promotion as well as democracy reversal. However, in the aftermath of the Cold War, the U.S. began to take the task of democracy promotion more seriously, assisting democratization in the developing world in myriad ways. In some cases, the U.S. used financial incentives, or carrots, encouraging authoritarian regimes to democratize by providing technical assistance, loans, and grants. If such regimes proved hesitant to start democratic transformations, the U.S. would take these carrots away, leaving developing countries without access to the economic assistance they desperately needed. On the other hand, the U.S. has demonstrated that it is not averse to using a stick either. In Panama, Haiti, Afghanistan, and Iraq, the U.S. democratized from the barrel of a gun, invading countries and leaving democratic institutions in its wake.

Assessing the Success of Carrots and Sticks

When one examines the track record of U.S. democracy promotion after the Cold War, the results are mixed. In some cases, the carrots have worked extraordinarily well, as nations have begun to adopt democratic institutions and procedures in response to U.S. financial incentives. Such was the case in Chile, where in a dramatic turnaround the U.S. pressured Pinochet to step down and provided financial support to pro-democracy groups challenging his reign. These financial incentives worked extraordinarily well, leading to the downfall of Pinochet and the renewal of a strong and vibrant democratic government. In South Africa, the racist regime of apartheid crumbled in the face of U.S. and international economic sanctions and boycotts. The U.S. banded together with the rest of the global community to support democracy activist Nelson Mandela as he emerged from decades of imprisonment to become the first black South African president. With international assistance and against all odds, Mandela led his country from the brink of civil war to establish the first multiracial, democratic government in South African history.

In other cases, however, the carrots have languished. For example, while Guatemala received substantial amounts of U.S. aid, democracy has proven to be quite hollow, as former coup plotters and human rights abusers have undermined the constitution in order to run

for office. Guatemalans tend to evaluate democratic progress in their country in negative terms; in some cases, up to 30% of the population believes that democracy does not really exist in the country. Venezuela also received substantial sums of U.S. and international assistance throughout the 1990s, particularly to reform its judicial branch. This assistance did not succeed in halting the demise of the party system in the country, or in preventing the rise of a former coup plotter, Hugo Chavez, to the presidency. In yet another twist, from the U.S. perspective democracy worked perhaps too well in Nicaragua, where last year Nicaraguans democratically elected longtime U.S. nemesis Daniel Ortega to the presidency. Still, while financial incentives are not always sufficient to establish democracy, on average the track record is positive. A recent cross-national study of U.S. foreign assistance on democracy building found that while there are exceptions (and these exceptions should not be overlooked), countries that have received U.S. financial assistance to promote democracy have succeeded in doing so. That is, recipients of U.S. aid *on average* tend to be more democratic than non-recipients.

Democracy with a stick has a more checkered past in the post-Cold War era. Invasion was eventually successful in promoting democracy in Panama, yet has become mired in insurgency in Iraq. In Panama, the U.S. was guided by the Powell Doctrine, which stated that if the U.S. were to invade, it must do so with overwhelming force. To invade a country of approximately 2.5 million, the U.S. relied upon 26,000 troops. While the U.S. quickly ousted dictator Manuel Noriega and secured control of Panamanian territory, democratization was a long and tenuous process. The U.S. invaded Panama at the end of 1989, ostensibly to arrest Noriega for drug trafficking, yet realistically democracy did not take root until 1994, when the economy began to recover and newly elected President Balladares began to overhaul and democratize Panamanian institutions.

In contrast to the successful (albeit slow) democratization of Panama, subsequent attempts at democratization by invasion have proven less successful. Today Iraq and Afghanistan feature most prominently in the media; however, in 1994 the U.S. encountered similar problems on a much smaller scale in Haiti. To address massive human rights abuses occurring in Haiti and stem the tide of refugees headed towards the U.S., President Clinton authorized an invasion to remove the dictator Raoul Cédras from power and establish a democratic regime. Six hours after launching the invasion, the dictatorship agreed to step down, opening the path for democracy. Skipping the invasion, the U.S. moved to

the occupation phase, using more than 20,000 troops to control Haiti and assume temporary control of the government. While a large force was initially sent to occupy Haiti, by 1995 this force was replaced by 6,000 U.N. peacekeepers. By 1996, this mission had dwindled to 600. As U.S. and international commitment waned, so did prospects for democracy. Political instability, lackluster economic performance, and social unrest spiraled out of control, engulfing the nation in violence and chaos. Today prospects for democracy in Haiti remain dim, as pro-democracy leaders have not succeeded in maintaining control over the country.

These contrasts between Panama and Haiti raise several interesting questions concerning U.S. strategies for democracy promotion in Iraq and Afghanistan today. What can we learn from past experiences with democracy promotion to inform U.S. strategies today? First, it appears that success is possible with both carrots and sticks, yet so is failure. When distinguishing between the successful and unsuccessful cases, it appears that the deciding factor is commitment. Democratization is a long process that requires sustained commitment in terms of monetary and personnel resources. Second, democratization rarely proceeds in a linear fashion. Rather, it advances in spurts and occasional setbacks. Initial successes can easily be reversed, which is why it is essential to sustain close ties with democratizing countries to provide the needed assistance—not leave prematurely as soon as things start to improve. Finally, it is important to remember that the rest of the global community might be suspicious of U.S. motives for promoting democracy. While the U.S. most certainly was dedicated to promoting democracy in places like Japan and Germany, in cases like Chile, the record is a bit uneven, as the U.S. was willing to promote as well as reverse democratization. A familiarity with past efforts of democracy promotion can help the U.S. formulate successful foreign policy and understand global perceptions of U.S. efforts.

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In a Democracy, Are Some Citizens More Important than Others?

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The Individual Citizen

Ally Brown is a thirty-year-old kindergarten teacher who is raising her two children in a middle-class Northeastern suburb. Her six-year-old son, Alex, has been chronically ill for the past five years. As is typical in many chronic illnesses, Alex has good days and bad days. After years of tests, and appointments with different specialists, doctors concluded that Alex's illness is an allergy to a preservative used by food manufacturers to increase the shelf life of a wide range of products. The current Food and Drug Administration (FDA) regulations do not require the food manufacturers to identify the specific preservative on the label. Only the generic category must be displayed. Since generic preservatives are in almost every food product on the market, Ally Brown has few options for preparing her son's meals. If the FDA changed the current regulations, requiring all manufacturers to identify specific preservatives on the packaging, Alex's risk of getting sick from a product containing the preservative would be greatly reduced. During her lunch breaks at work and after her children have gone to bed, Ally Brown writes letters to her representatives in the Congress and the Senate, and she calls and writes to the appropriate people in the FDA. She also convinces some of her friends and neighbors to join in her efforts by taking the time to educate them.

The Corporate Citizen

As Ally Brown is devoting her time to reducing the incidence of illness in her child's life, lobbyists for the food industry are being paid handsomely to work in "Gucci Gulch." This term describes the Congressional corridors filled with lobbyists in fancy shoes whose job is to persuade elected officials to vote in a manner most beneficial to the corporation or special interest group paying their salaries.¹ These lobbyists meet and socialize with Ally Brown's elected representatives to provide them with "industry research" addressing Brown's concerns. Ironically, the food-manufacturing lobbyists have written legislation that reduces ingredient disclosure requirements. Industry representatives argue that there

are no differences in the dozen or so compounds that make up the generic preservative group in question.

In addition to providing the federal representatives with "research" and "completed legislation," lobbyists often have "golden rolodexes," or lists of donors who can write a \$10,000 check toward the elected official's re-election campaign. In a sense, the money enables corporate representatives to purchase "access" to elected officials who introduce and vote on legislation directly affecting the corporation.² The average cost of winning a congressional and senate seat during the 2006 campaign season was \$966,000 and \$7.8 million, respectively.² Thus, the high costs of election and re-election to federal office make it difficult for elected officials to ignore lobbyists' attention.

Money Talks

Ally Brown's phone calls and letters have netted her three form letters from the offices of her congressperson and senators. The form letters do not address her concerns. Instead, the letters thank her for her interest and one senator listed his unrelated legislative accomplishments. Friends and neighbors that Ally has engaged in her efforts had similar experiences. Her son, Alex, continues to have good and bad days. Ally Brown is worried that her son's chronic illness will interfere with his learning when he enters first grade in the fall. In the mean time, food-manufacturing lobbyists continue to meet with Brown's representatives to provide them with "research" and "written legislation" that will solidify the position of the food-manufacturer when their bill is introduced.

The Payoff

This scenario is not unusual. It is naïve to think that money elected officials need to fund campaigns is not extracted without high costs. "Representative Barney Frank jokes that 'politicians are the only human beings in the world who are expected to take thousands of dollars from perfect strangers on important matters and not be affected by it.'"³ In 2006, industry lobbyists spent

approximately \$2.45 billion to influence elected officials at the federal level. This is a 69% increase from 1998 when lobbyists' contributions totaled \$1.45 billion.² Terms like "Gucci Gulch," "Golden Rolodexes" and "access,"⁴ that describe daily business in the House and Senate, give one the impression that democracy in the U.S. is a commodity available to the highest bidders.

Three examples illustrate the high returns for investing in elected officials. When Lockheed Martin Corporation representatives invested \$8.2 million, lobbying legislators and contributing to their reelection campaigns, their efforts were rewarded with government contracts totaling over \$12 billion.⁵ In 2006, California legislators passed a bill to ensure that school breakfasts and lunches would include "fresh fruit." The food processing industry opposed what seemed like a reasonable measure to address the rising rates of childhood obesity. Because the food processing industry had contributed more than \$2.3 million to 189 state legislators, they were able to have the bill reworded. "Fresh fruit" was changed to "nutritious fruit," providing the industry an entrée for their canned fruit in syrup into the California public schools.⁶

Since 1990, pharmaceutical executives and corporations have contributed \$139,276,451 to federal campaigns. This is a 480% increase over the past 16 years from \$3,325,792 in 1990 to \$19,305,662 during the 2006 election cycle.² The massive contributions gave the industry representatives the ability to author the Medicare Modernization Act or Medicare Part D, as it is more commonly known. The resulting legislation directed billions of dollars to pharmaceutical corporations, while making modest improvements at best for individual citizens. The close relationship between the pharmaceutical industry and elected officials also begs the questions of drug safety. How can citizens expect their elected officials to have concern for the safety of their constituents, when the officials depend on the pharmaceutical and other industry representatives for continued contributions to their campaigns?

Two Citizen Classes

The money that corporate citizens invest in our elected officials has a return rate superior to the best investment firms on Wall Street. No wonder that some feel there are two classes of citizens: those who can pay (corporate citizens) and those who cannot (individual citizens). In recent years, American democracy has created laws that protect two groups, individuals, and corporations. Corporate citizenship is conceptualized "as the administra-

tion of a bundle of individual citizenship rights—social, civil, and political—conventionally granted and protected by governments."⁷ Individual citizens are "the people to whom a democratic government is accountable ... and are all are equal before the law and have the same fundamental rights, duties, and responsibilities."⁸ Federal legislation defines the rights for both individuals and corporations. For example, federal legislation mandates that all citizens 18 years and over are eligible to vote regardless of their race or color. Alternately, the minimum miles per gallon standards for automobiles are a federal mandate that manufacturers must meet.

While corporate citizens are quite healthy, as evidenced by the unprecedented growth in corporate profit margins and chief executive salaries, individual citizens have not fared as well. More than 12 million children live in households where there is not enough money to provide adequate nutritional needs.⁹ In 2004, 42 million people in the United States did not have health insurance.¹⁰ Therefore, they are often unable to afford routine physician visits and prescription drugs to reduce the duration of an infection or alleviate the pain of illnesses. How do the Ally Browns of the world advocate legislative change through letters and phone calls, when their elected officials receive campaign contributions from industry lobbyists? This is the very same group that Ally Brown is trying to challenge in an effort to improve her son's life. Where do the responsibilities of the elected officials lie?

Individual Citizens as Donors

Researchers find that individuals can and do purchase legislative favor, but for the American household with a median income of \$46,326, the decision to contribute competes with other daily priorities.¹¹ Further, one might question if a contribution of \$25 matters. The federal law allows individuals to contribute up to \$2,300 to a presidential candidate during the 2008 election cycle. The results of a random survey administered to individual campaign donors—half of whom had contributed a minimum of \$5,000 to a federal candidate—were compared with results from a survey administered to non-contributing registered voters.¹² The findings indicate that campaign donors were not average American voters. They were disproportionately white, male, older, and wealthier than the average voter.¹³

The Value of Connections

Recent analysis of federal election committee data indicates that in areas where one political party tends to dominate (e.g., Democrats in the Boston area), almost equal dollars are raised by the opposing party, both at the local and national levels. These fundraising networks enable donors to access more than political influence.¹⁴ In addition to buying “access,” participating in the political process as a “high roller” solidifies friendships in influential areas and provides access to desirable social networks. Social science research finds that these networks include business, education, and social connections and help facilitate social mobility.¹⁵

What Do We Do?

Recent analysis of contributions to the 2004 presidential election show that donors continue to be disproportionately wealthy, white, more educated, and older than the average American voter. However, during the 2004 campaign, individual contributions of \$200 or less increased as compared to the 2000 elections. These donors contributed not because they would receive something tangible in return, but as a result of the importance that they felt the election held.¹⁶

If the majority of individual contributions come from Americans in the highest income brackets, and if corporate citizens have greater powers than the majority of individuals, where does that leave the 99% of Americans like Ally Brown? Has citizenship been lost for the vast majority of Americans? Groups of individuals are working to develop ideas to address these inequities. What options do you think are possible?

Endnotes

¹ Jeffrey Birnbaum and Allen Murray use the term Gucci Gulch in their 1988 book titled *Showdown at Gucci Gulch—Lawmakers, Lobbyists, and the Unlikely Triumph of Tax Reform*.

² Center for Responsive Politics.

³ Ari Berman’s quotes Congressman Barney Frank (MA) in his comments titled “Making Elections Fair” in the April 30, 2007 issue of *The Nation*.

⁴ “Campaign Finance: Coming to Terms: A Money-in-Politics Glossary.” <http://www.campaignfinancesite.org/structure/terms/l.html>—website for the Hoover Institution which excerpted from www.opensecrets.org—website for Center for Responsive Politics.

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⁷ Matten, Dirk and Andrew Crane. 2005. “Corporate Citizenship: Toward an Extended Theoretical Conceptualization.” *The Academy of Management Review* 30:166–179.

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¹⁰ National Center for Health Statistics. “Fast Stats A to Z.” Retrieved on June 13th from <http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/fastats/hinsure.htm>.

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¹² Lake, Celinda and Robert Borosage. 2000. “Money Talks.” *The Nation*. August 20.

¹³ In fact, Lake and Borosage found that seventy-five percent of the donors were male compared to 48% of the average voters in 2000, 20% of the donors were under the age of 44 compared with 40% of the voters. Economically, 80% of the donors explained that that they had benefited from the economic boom leading up to the 2000 election compared to 42% of the average American voters.

¹⁴ Gimpel, James G., Lee, Frances E and Joshua Kaminsky. 2006. “The Political Geography of Campaign Contributions in American Politics.” *The Journal of Politics*. 68:626–639.

¹⁵ For example, the work of sociologist William Julius Wilson. *The Truly Disadvantaged: The Inner City, the Underclass, and Public Policy*, (1987) Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press; and *When Work Disappears: The World of the New Urban Poor*, (1996) New York: Knopf.

¹⁶ Panagopoulos, Costas and Daniel Bergan. 2006. “Contributions and Contributors in the 2004 Presidential Election Cycle.” *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 36:155–171.

Rights and Health: Democracy's Dilemma in the United States

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Democracy is a concept that is frequently misunderstood. A great deal of this is due to repeated misuse of the term by Americans as well as by others around the world. In trying to explain our political system to ourselves and to our children, we simplify and call it a democracy. This has led to an enculturation of the idea that democracies are good and other systems are "evil." The fact that there are various types of democracies and that those differences become very important in application tends to be overlooked. The confusion comes when other countries with very different political systems also call themselves democracies. We forget that the old Soviet Union called its system "democratic centralism." We must first answer the question, "what is a democracy?"

This paper uses the traditional definition of democracy (*i.e.*, majority rule). There are three essential conditions that need to be present in a democracy: sovereignty rests with the people, there is equality of voters (one person, one vote), and the majority rules. Depending on the historic time frame, the United States fails consistently on one or two of these conditions. However, it is the third condition, majority rule, which has always cancelled out the notion of democracy in the United States.

It is telling that when Benjamin Franklin was asked what type of government the founding fathers had created in the Constitutional Convention his answer was "A republic, if you can keep it."¹ Notice he did not say a democracy, for a democracy was something that the founding fathers feared as much as they did a monarchy. The founding fathers supported notions of limited government, individual rights, an independent judiciary, and the separation of powers between legislative and executive functions. The rationale behind this was that humans were bound to abuse power. The structure of government was intended to frustrate everyone, even the majority, from ever being able to gain too much control over the levers of government. As James Madison, author of the Federalist Paper #51 would state, "Ambition must be made to counteract ambition."² He would further state, "It is of great importance in a republic

not only to guard the society against the oppression of its rulers, but to guard one part of the society against the injustice of the other part.... If a majority be united by common interest, the rights of the minority will be insecure."³

There are so many structural and procedural blocks to majority rule in the United States that the majority seldom gets its way in our political system, especially regarding specific policies. You can look at issue after issue in which the majority's opinion is repeatedly overriden. This sometimes leads to cynicism with the system. To the founding fathers, frustrating the majority is a good thing, since the majority can be very dangerous. As stated by E. E. Schattschneider, "The American political system is less able to use the democratic device of majority rule than almost any other modern democracy..."⁴

The term that is most frequently used to describe our political system is democratic pluralism. Democratic pluralism is the ability of those who have an intense interest in a particular policy to petition members of the government. The right to petition government is covered by the First Amendment to the Constitution, and it is the chief argument used against restrictions on lobbying. Under democratic pluralism, no one group is powerful with all policies, hence the notion of pluralism. Instead, policies come from the competition, accommodation, and alliance of issue-specific organized groups (we nickname them lobbying organizations). Depending on the issue, these groups wax and wane in terms of their influence, but in the meantime, the majority sits by and watches, or more commonly ignores, the political process. It is not that the majority cannot act or become dominant. There are times that it gets riled and does just that. However, the majority is not likely to do so.

The U.S. system of government is built on the tension between democracy (majority rule) and individual rights. That is why most issues regarding individual rights are usually not put to a popular vote; the majority would not approve. The Equal Rights Amendment of the 1970s is a classic example of how a simple statement to eliminate discrimination based on sex was defeated.

One of the major contributions of the United States political system has been the formalization of the concept of individual rights. Rights are traditionally thought of as either positive or negative, “freedom to” or “freedom from.” Due to the concept of limited government, most of the American “rights” have been expressed in terms of freedom from government action (e.g., “Congress shall make no law respecting...”) with few freedoms being stated in positive terms. Some state constitutions are more explicit in terms of positive rights. One common example of positive rights in state constitutions is the right to education. This is boldly stated in the N.H. Constitution and has been the source of recent conflict in terms of how to make that right a reality and how to fund it.

On the international level since the 1940’s, the “right to health” has been adopted in multiple international agreements of which the U.S. is sometimes a signatory. This is reflected in article 25 (1) of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), article 12 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), article 24 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), and article 12 of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), and the right to non-discrimination as reflected in article 5(e)(iv) of the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (ICERD).

The notion of rights in the United States has also evolved. The 9th Amendment of the Constitution was inserted by James Madison; there was no controversy regarding it during the adoption of the Bill of Rights. It is basically an escape clause indicating that the founding fathers might have forgotten to name all the individual rights that exist, but that those rights not explicitly named still exist and remain with the people. In the 1960’s, the Supreme Court began to rule that a “right of privacy” was one of those unspecified rights that was covered by the 9th Amendment. Hence, the right of privacy became a protected right. A similar argument could be made for a “right to health care,” but that is unlikely.

Why should we begin to think of health care as a right? Why is the right to health care in our common interest? The argument of universal health care can be made on individualistic as well as societal levels. Just as we are not born with equal intellectual abilities, we are at least provided an equal opportunity to education. So too one can argue that while we are not born with the same genes, we should be provided an equal opportunity to health care. This too would allow everyone to

maximize their human potential. There is overwhelming epidemiological evidence that access to different levels of health care provides different health outcomes.⁵ To the extent that medical interventions can impact health outcomes, those should be available to all in an egalitarian society. The U.S. experience with Medicaid and State Children’s Health Insurance Program points to the importance of good health care to the educational and development process.

In addition, there are social advantages to universal health care. From a public health perspective, a healthy community leads to more healthy individuals from immunity and decreased risk from infectious diseases. This was the origin of the federal government’s involvement in medical care—the provision of marine hospitals to protect individuals and society in general for diseases brought into seaports. Developing countries tend to focus on creating a healthy workforce—hence the origins of employer-based health care in Germany in the 19th century. The notion of national defense has also been integral in the health debate. The draft during World War II demonstrated that a large percentage of the rural population (a normal source of military recruitment) was physically unfit for military service. Rural hospitals would strengthen national defense, hence the Hill-Burton Act of 1946. In addition, the concept of social solidarity, that we are one people who take responsibility for each other, is another part of the argument for universal coverage.

There are also characteristics of the medical care system that make it ill suited to the capitalist market system and require governmental intervention. There are natural monopolies of supply that exist. There is a lack of information regarding cost and quality. There is a lack of control by the patient in that the physician is the one that determines most of what is to be purchased. There are certain public goods such as research and education of health professionals that are not market-driven. Finally, most health economists agree that our problem with the cost of medical care cannot be addressed until we confront the problem of universal access. The problems of cost shifting and the actuarial burden on those with illnesses cannot be solved until there is a universal pool.

The United States spends almost twice as much per capita than any other country in the world, and one of the major reasons for this is that we have 46 million uninsured (18% of our population). In 2004, the United States spent \$6,102 per capita while Canada, the second most expensive country, spent \$3,165.⁶ The United States also spends almost twice the percentage of its

gross national product (GNP) as other countries in the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). In 2004, the U.S. spent 15.3% of its GNP on health care while the OECD average was 8.9%. The closest to the U.S. percentage was Switzerland at 11.6% while Canada was at 9.9%, and the United Kingdom was at 8.3%.⁷ The United States has clearly the most expensive health care system in the world.

Despite being the most expensive, the United States health care system is the most underperforming system for producing good health. The availability of data on a cross-national basis makes it difficult to measure all possible measures of a health care system. However, in 2000, the World Health Organization (WHO) completed the first major comparison of the world's health care systems. The United States ranked 37th overall.⁸ The Commonwealth Fund, a U.S.-based non-partisan health policy organization has done a comparison over the years of the Australian, Canadian, German, New Zealand, United Kingdom, and United States health care systems. Its study focused on quality, access, efficiency, equity, and healthy lives by using 69 different measures. Data comes from comparative system data as well as citizen surveys. In its most recent comparison, the United States came in last in most every measure of performance.⁹ This mirrors its previous studies. The provision of preventive care was the one area in which the United States performed well. In safe care measures, it was last or next to last in four of the five measures. In terms of efficiency, it was last or next to last in terms of seven out of the eight measures. The U.S. ranked last on all measures of equity.

One of the most comprehensive examinations of the quality of medical care in the United States was published in the *New England Journal of Medicine* in 2003.¹⁰ It found that patients in the United States receive 54.9% of recommended care that they should be getting according to standards of medical practice. This holds true for preventive care, acute care, or chronic care.

The provision of universal health care and the provision of high quality health care systems are not antithetical to the concept of democracy. OECD countries, nearly all being recognized democracies, have universal health care. Thus, the question is: "what is so different about the U.S. version of democracy?"

The Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation has been tracking the public's view of health care for a number of years.¹¹ In the most recent poll available as of this writing, the Iraq war is the top issue with 44% of the population agreeing that it was the most important issue. Second was health care with 29% considering it

the most important issue and third was the economy. Regarding health care, people were asked if they would support a new health care plan that would provide insurance for nearly all of the uninsured but would also involve substantial increases in spending. It received support by 52% of those polled (Democrats, 66%, Independents 52%, and Republicans 38%). The majority, although a slim majority, actually supports universal health care.

During the coming election each candidate and each party will put forth some type of plan to solve our "health care crisis." Some of these proposals, but not all of them, will call for universal health care coverage. This, of course, is not the first time that this issue has been debated. Lest we forget, Richard Nixon had a proposal for universal health care coverage in the 1970's long before Hilary Clinton attempted to solve it in the 1990's. Indeed, the issue has been debated on and off for 60 years. When we last debated the issue in the 1990's, there were 36 million uninsured instead of today's 46 million.

Since the 1940's, we have periodically put this issue to the test. Why has it not passed? Each time, democratic pluralism, our form of "democracy," has prevented its passage. Special interests involved with medical care have had the ability to block proposed legislation time-after-time. Sometimes it has been the medical community (e.g., the American Medical Society); at other times, it has been big business (e.g., US Chamber of Commerce), or small businesses (e.g., National Small Business Association), and/or insurance companies (e.g., Health Insurance Association of America, which is now America's Health Insurance Plans) that have objected to universal coverage. While the details of the proposals are not unimportant, the major point is that concentrated interests in every case have been able to defeat the concept of universal health care, because democratic pluralism and the political structure make it easy to do so. Attacks on universal health care frequently get disguised in ideological dress as "socialized medicine" and more recently as "big government." Any measure to promote the public good comes at a cost, but these costs are not evenly distributed, and those advantaged by the current system vehemently prevent change.

There are three major functions for a health care system in a country: to remove threats to the public's health and promote a healthy population (public health), to provide cures, repairs, stabilization, and/or comfort for individuals with diseases and disabilities (medical care), and to provide employment (hospitals, physician practices, laboratories, insurance companies,

etc.). We frequently overlook the fact that medical care is over a \$2 trillion business in the United States. Medical care is generally the largest single industry in any major city, major suburb, or dominant rural community. With the U.S. market relying on the free market, there is a great deal of money to be made or lost. To protect their interests, this industry employs a substantial number of relatively well-paid professionals who are organized in various professional associations at the state and national levels.

As an example, Americans have been subsidizing pharmaceuticals in most of Europe and Canada for decades. These countries negotiate with the pharmaceutical companies for their best price, and those companies are willing to give them major discounts, knowing that they have the U.S. market to make up the difference. In contrast, the Medicare Modernization Act of 2003 (MMA) prohibits the United States from entering into such negotiations, even though the Veterans Administration is able to achieve substantial savings by doing that.¹² The passage of MMA was a classic example of the power of lobbyists. In addition to the \$100 million per year that the pharmaceutical industry spends in Washington for lobbying activities, it spends an additional \$44 million to lobby state governments.¹³ Representative Billy Tauzin (R-LA), then Chair of the Commerce Committee and co-author of MMA, negotiated a \$2 million per year position as CEO of the Pharmaceutical Research and Manufacturers of America (PhRMA), the pharmaceutical industry's major lobbyist. Tom Scully, Director of Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS), who threatened to fire CMS' chief actuary if he revealed the higher than publicly revealed estimated cost of MMA, received an ethics waiver and left shortly after MMA was passed to become a health care lobbyist for two firms in Washington.¹⁴ There are 13,595 registered lobbyists in Washington, DC.¹⁵ Since there are 536 elected members of Congress, this means there are more than 25 lobbyists for every elected official making policy decisions. In 2003, lobbying in Washington surpassed \$2 billion per year. This number does not include money spent on campaign contributions.

The reason we do not have universal health care is not because democracies are unable to provide such benefits; most democracies around the world do so. However, one major factor is our type of democracy, democratic pluralism. Powerful interest groups have been able to defeat legislative proposals, one after the other, for the past 60 years. If we are to have universal health care, there are a few routes: to change the rules of political access by limiting the power of lobbying

groups, to have a division of interests among those who historically have opposed universal health care, to await the wrath of a re-wakened majority when there are 50 or 60 plus million uninsured, or to have an emergence of enlightened self-interest by the medical/insurance community to prevent more radical choices (a single payer system). The first route is the least likely, since the current system is constitutionally protected, and any change would threaten non-health care segments, as well. The forces of globalization whereby U.S. industries are competing with countries where health care's costs are substantially less and whose costs are not born principally by industry have begun to crack the opposition to universal health care by a united business community. As more middle class individuals become part of the increasing numbers of uninsured and have their medical care stability threatened, universal health care will become increasingly attractive to more people, and the majority may force its way back into the political process. It is not clear which of the alternatives will prevail, but our form of democracy has delayed the decision that other countries made long ago to establish universal health care as an equitable, effective, and cost efficient means of delivering health care.

Endnotes

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⁴ E. E. Schattschneider, *The Semisovereign People: A Realists View of Democracy in America* (New York: Rinehart and Winston, 1960).

⁵ Institute of Medicine, *Hidden Costs, Value Lost: Uninsurance in America* (Washington, D.C.: The National Academies Press, 2003).

⁶ Organization for Economic and Co-Operative Development (OECD) Health Data, 2006.

⁷ OECD Health Data, 2006.

⁸ WHO, *World Health Report*, 2000.

⁹ Karen Davis, Cathy Schoen, Stephen C. Schoenbaum, Michelle M. Doty, Alyssa L. Holmgren, Jennifer L. Kriss, and Katherine K. Shea, *Mirror, Mirror on the Wall: An International Update on the Comparative Performance of American Health Care*, The Commonwealth Fund, May 2007.

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¹¹ Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation, “Kaiser Health Tracking Poll: Election 2008,” March 2007, <http://www.kff.org/kaiserpolls/pomr032907pkg.cfm>

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Democracy and Capitalism: Oil and Water?

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We might consider freedom and equality the opposite poles that give democracy its magnetism. Although there are many competing “models” of democracy, all of them share a commitment to some form of human *equality*.¹ The first “self-evident truth” named in *Declaration of Independence*, for example, is the belief that “all men are created equal.” Lincoln opens the *Gettysburg Address* by invoking the idea: “Fourscore and seven years ago our fathers brought forth on this continent a new nation, conceived in liberty and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal.” Martin Luther King, Jr. orients his most famous speech by the principle: “I have a dream that one day this nation will rise up and live out the true meaning of its creed: We hold these truths to be self-evident: that all men are created equal.”

If equality is so central to the foundations and ideals of the United States, what do we mean by this rhetorically powerful but often ambiguous term? Equality of *what*? Equality *for whom*? As many have noticed, recent history tells the story of the parallel ascendance of democratic forms of governance and free markets. What is the relationship between capitalism and democracy? In this short paper, I will present a few troubling questions to organize our thinking about the relationship amongst democracy, equality, and capitalism.

The notion of universal human equality gained momentum through philosophers of the 17th and 18th centuries, culminating in Immanuel Kant’s conception of the freedom and dignity of all rational humans. Although Kant had trouble perceiving the dignity of all humans—several of his comments are undeniably sexist and racist—over time his arguments came to inform the belief that we should measure our progress by the degree to which we recognize and protect human equality.

The idea of human equality would have been considered absurd for much of human history. Despite a variety of religious traditions that speak of the equality of the soul, this often meant little in terms of social justice. If one was born into the favored race, ethnicity, caste, gender, or family—or if one possessed special beauty, skills, or wealth—she would be considered superior and

would enjoy the lion’s share of social benefits. We might associate such inequality with unenlightened ancient cultures, but our own nation’s history should remind us of the fragility of this newborn social value. Some signatories of the *Declaration of Independence* owned slaves, and the United States existed for nearly 150 years before the Constitution was amended to allow women the right to vote. Recent debates over gay marriage and health care make us wonder if equality will survive these growing pains. To paraphrase Orwell, some are more equal than others.

This should lead us to ask two basic but knotty questions: *Who* deserves equality and of *what* do they deserve equal proportions? Beginning with the question of who should be treated equally, set aside for a moment surprisingly difficult cases of non-human animals, fetuses, or humans in persistent vegetative states.² For the sake of argument, let us also ignore questions regarding whether convicted criminals should be considered equal to the innocent.³ Focus on the simplest cases of “fully-functioning” humans. If we have a moral responsibility to treat all such people with dignity, should one’s nationality be relevant to whether she is treated as an equal? If “all humans are created equal,” why should geopolitical boundaries limit our responsibilities to treat all humans with the same respect? Consider how such a question relates to immigration policy. When politicians assert that it is too expensive to allow immigrants from Central and South America to enjoy the benefits of U.S. citizenship, for example, do they imply that those denied citizenship do not deserve equality? Similarly, why would we treat children born in the United States differently from those born in Iraq? Participants in large-scale conflicts often refuse to recognize opponents as equal in moral worth, and demonizing the enemy is unfortunately not an antiquated practice. A 2006 study of U.S. soldiers serving in Iraq found that less than half believed that “all *noncombatants* should be treated with dignity and respect.”⁴

Here we can ask equality of *what*? We might assert an aggressive version of equality, claiming that everyone deserves the same share of all essential goods: food,

housing, education, health care, leisure, etc. We can call this *basic material equality*. Given that most modern democracies exist within capitalist economies, this seems like an untenable reading of equality for these institutions. Capitalism demands competition. Competition creates winners and losers, rich and poor. Capitalism therefore seems to require, at a basic structural level, material *inequality* of some kind. Marx worried that such inequality would be severe: “the accumulation of wealth at one pole of society is...at the same time accumulation of misery, the torment of labor, slavery, ignorance, brutalization, and moral degradation at the opposite pole...”⁵ For Marx, “democracy is the road to socialism” and ultimately to a radical form of equality according to which we would distribute goods “to each according to his needs.”⁶

Although Marx’s argument is unlikely to persuade those convinced of the necessary relation between democracy and capitalism, an example may illuminate the importance of material equality. If private corporations come to own significant portions of the diminishing supply of world’s drinking water and distribute it according to free markets, what would this mean for those who lack resources to buy clean water? If one cannot afford water, food, housing, or health care within free markets, she effectively cannot afford to live. If material wealth determines who lives and who dies, this seems like a severe affront to human equality.

If some version of material equality requires too much redistribution of wealth to be compatible with capitalism, perhaps we should think in terms of *equality of opportunity*.⁷ In this view, material inequalities are justifiable so long as individuals compete on some sort of “level playing field.”

Education plays an important role in such a theory, because it seems to be the “great equalizer”: even if I am born disadvantaged, hard work and a quality education should be all that I need to compete with everyone else. Setting aside differences in aptitude that might give some advantages on this supposedly level playing field, I imagine that most of us appreciate the vast differences in the qualities of education even within the United States. The wealthiest can send their children to private schools like Phillips Exeter Academy for the best education money can buy. Children learning in badly underfunded and often dangerous schools—whether urban or rural—surely do not receive an equal education to those attending prestigious private schools. A different example may hit closer to home for many of our students who work full-time jobs during the semester. If they hope to apply to law school, medical school, or some other com-

petitive programs, their grade point averages will compete with those of students who could afford to attend the finest private schools, who did not work at anything other than maintaining their grades during college, and who enjoyed tutoring from private firms like Princeton Review. If this seems unfair, it is probably because it offends your intuitions regarding principles of equality.

Perhaps *equality of opportunity* demands too much within capitalism, and instead we should prefer an even thinner conception that provides for *equality under the law*. Such a view would require only that the state afford individuals equal status in certain legal respects, for instance, in voting rights or the ability to enter into contracts. Here the emphasis is on the state not discriminating—for example, by forbidding women to own property—rather than on distributing some benefits equally. So long as everyone has a vote and the ability to enter into contracts, the argument goes, democracy need not guarantee any thicker form of equality if states apply the laws fairly. I imagine that readers will be suspicious here as well, as we all know that the law applies “more equally” to those who can afford the most skilled attorneys. The shadowy and extrajudicial status of prisoners at Guantanamo Bay Detainment Camp raises additional concerns that wartime provisions further undercut even the barest guarantees of equality before the law.

We often find this minimal conception of equality alongside arguments for allowing unfettered markets to determine social policy. According to this belief, people should effectively “vote with their dollars.” If enough people want fuel-efficient vehicles, the automotive manufacturers that produce the best value fuel-efficient vehicles will thrive. The government need not interfere with market forces. Notice, however, that within such a process those with more money have more votes to influence policy. If a small percentage controls the majority of wealth, this seems fundamentally opposed to even minimal conceptions of democracy requiring equality in voting procedures. Such concerns arise in contemporary Iraq, given that revenue from Iraqi oil promised to provide the wealth required to “build a democracy.” Will the competition for these profits ultimately advance or hinder the future of equality in Iraq? Will the “invisible hand” shepherd Iraq toward democracy or will it squeeze that last breath of egalitarianism from its throat?

Nobel prize-winning economist Amartya Sen, once claimed that “no substantial famine has ever occurred in any independent country with a democratic form of government and a relatively free press.”⁸ I suspect, how-

ever, that only democracies with some commitment to equality deserve this praise, and I wonder if we will be able to say the same for democracies of the future. If the popular slogan maintains that “freedom isn’t free,” is the price of universal equality becoming just too expensive? The answer to that question may, quite honestly, be yes. If so, we should wonder how we became too impoverished to honor the values of Jefferson, Lincoln, and King.

Endnotes

¹ David Held, *Models of Democracy* (Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, 2006).

² For those interested in such issues, I encourage you to consider my course titled Law, Medicine, and Morals (Philosophy 660).

³ For those interested in questions of punishment and justice, consider taking my course titled Philosophy of Law (Philosophy 635).

⁴ Office of the Surgeon Multinational Force-Iraq and Office of the Surgeon General United States Army Medical Command, “Final Report: Mental Health Advisory Team IV Operation Iraqi Freedom,” (2006): 35 (emphasis mine).

⁵ Karl Marx, *Capital Volume I*, trans. Ben Fowkes (New York: Penguin, 1992), 799. I will be teaching an undergraduate seminar title “Marx and His Critics” in the spring of 2008.

⁶ Karl Marx, “Critique of the Gotha Program,” in *The Marx-Engels Reader*, ed. Robert Tucker (New York: Norton, 1978), 531.

⁷ For a helpful overview of philosophical problems related to notions of “equality of opportunity,” see Richard Arneson’s entry for the *Stanford Encyclopedia of philosophy*: <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/equal-opportunity/>.

⁸ Amartya Sen, *Development as Freedom* (New York: Knopf, 1999), 152.

What is Democracy, and is it the One?

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Introduction

A press release from the White House dated December 12, 2005 contained the following summary:¹

Today, the President Addressed Iraq's Incredible Political Transformation. Two and a half years ago, Iraq was in the grip of a cruel dictator. Since then, Iraqis have assumed sovereignty of their country, held free elections, drafted a democratic constitution, and approved that constitution in a nationwide referendum. In three days, they will go to the polls for the third time this year and choose a new government under their new constitution. Difficult work remains, but 2005 will be recorded as a turning point in the history of Iraq, the Middle East, and freedom.

Today, the White House still maintains that a key strategic goal in the War in Iraq is the establishment and preservation of democracy in Iraq. In *National Strategy for Victory in Iraq*, published by the National Security Council and available on the White House website, we find that “[a]n emerging democracy in Iraq will change the regional status quo that for decades has bred alienation and spawned the transnational terrorism that targets us today.” While it is not my purpose to engage in the ongoing debate concerning our presence in Iraq or the inherent problems of introducing democracy specifically into the Middle East, let us be clear about one fact: it is in the best interest of the *United States* that Iraq become fully democratic and emerge as “an ally in the War on Terrorism.” Whether it is in the best interest of Iraq is another question altogether and perhaps remains to be seen. But for the purposes of this paper, the Iraq situation raises two fundamental questions: Why do we naturally assume that democracy is the best form of government for everyone (including ourselves), and what exactly do we mean by “democracy” anyway?

¹ <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2005/12/20051212-1.html>.

What is Democracy?

Let us take the second question first, since it is, on the surface at least, less complicated. The term “democracy” was invented by the ancient Greeks from the roots *dēmos* (people) and *kratos* (power) to describe a form of government in which political power rested primarily with the *dēmos*—a word variously interpreted as “the people,” “the majority,” and “the riff-raff.” Although democracies emerged in many Greek city-states (*poleis*) over the course of the sixth century B.C.,² we know almost nothing about the details of these constitutions.³ Only in the case of Athens do we have abundant evidence from a number of sources that inform us in detail concerning the specific form of her democracy. Though democracy was primarily a sixth-century phenomenon, scholars have identified important trends that reach back as far as eighth-century B.C. that suggest conditions in Greece were ripe for democratic development.⁴ Democracy, therefore, is not only a Greek word; it is also a uniquely Greek phenomenon.

The Athenian form of democracy, with which we are most familiar, is strikingly different than our own. Most substantially, the Athenians practiced a *direct* form of democracy whereas ours is an *indirect* or *representative*. All Athenian citizens (male, non-slave, that is) would

² Aristotle at *Politics* 1291b4 and following outlines the different types of Greek democracy based on the compilation of over 150 constitutions taken from Greek city-states.

³ The term *polis* (city-state, plural *poleis*), from which the English word “politics” derives, implies a small but autonomous area of land inhabited by members of the same clan. The term *politeia*, translated here as “constitution,” means not only the governmental structure but also the *customs* of a city-state.

⁴ Here are three: first, in the late 8th and 7th centuries B.C., a particular kind of warfare developed called “hoplite” warfare after the Greek word for shield. Hoplite warfare was based on tightly-packed formations with overlapping shields and relied on strict discipline in the face of the enemy. Most importantly, hoplite warfare was a cooperative and egalitarian affair: both wealthy and poor fought side-by-side as *equals*, relying upon each other for success in war, which was always a threat. Second, a seventh-century B.C. law in Crete imposing term limits on public office enacted by the *polis* and the *dēmioi* (= *dēmos*) suggests that the people participated in political affairs. Last, we may add the fact that “the Greek moral and political vocabulary was always thin on words for ‘obedience’ or ‘subordination.’” Homeric heroes in assembly must, just as citizens in Athens would later, *persuade* one another rather than *command, order, or decree*.

meet in the *ekklēsia* (assembly) and would vote directly on agenda items set by the Council. We might compare the modern referendum, where a motion or bill is submitted to the whole citizen body of a town or state. Additionally, in Athens all citizens had the opportunity to speak and to persuade the assembly to vote one way or the other, though our evidence suggests that the assembly was dominated by a handful of skilled speakers. Numerous other institutions placed power in the hands of citizens. To mention but one more, juries (sometimes as large as 2,501 members!) were selected by lot to judge all sorts of cases.

We have thus far been discussing democracy as a political institution—where the power lies, how the government is structured, how decisions are made—but the word democracy evokes, as much for the Athenians as for us, a set of political *ideals* centered around freedom and equality. One of the most forceful ancient expressions of this comes from Pericles' funeral oration, so vividly told in Thucydides' *History of the Peloponnesian War* (book 2, chapters 34–46). After articulating how all citizens, rich and poor, were treated equally before the law, he goes on, “and, just as our political life is free and open, so is our day-to-day life in our relations with each other. We do not get into a state with our next-door neighbor if he enjoys himself in his own way, nor do we give him the kind of black looks which, though they do no real harm, still do hurt other people's feelings. We are free and tolerant in our public lives; but in public affairs we keep to the law. This is because it commands our deep respect” (trans. Rex Warner).

As a sort of experiment, ask ten of your friends, acquaintances, and family members to define democracy; then, ask them what it means to them. Note how different the answers are.

The Best Form of Government?

I would like to relate to you a story—an absolutely true one—of what happened to me recently. In a local McDonalds I was waiting for my order (salad, I promise) when in comes a group of young adults laughing and chatting. Catching sight of a man with a Niagara Falls t-shirt on, one of them asks him where it was. When he mentions that it was on the U.S.-Canada border, another youth pipes up, “Really? I thought it was somewhere, like, in Arizona.” As if this was not bad enough, yet another chimes in, “I really never cared nothing about learning about America.” Are these people, citizens all, empowered and enfranchised, really the kind of people we want to decide the course of our community, not to mention our nation?

This is reminiscent of another story from the fourth-century B.C., one about an Athenian general and statesman named Phokion who lived in the middle of the fourth-century B.C., a time that might justifiably be called the “height” of Athenian democracy. Remember that in their particular form of democratic government the whole citizen body would assemble together, would listen to proposals, and would vote on them—and the majority vote would carry the day. Phokion was dismissive and contemptuous of the political judgment of the *dēmos*, so one day, when he himself put forward a particular proposal, and when it was met with spontaneous applause and approval by the assembly, he nervously turned to the man sitting next to him and asked “Did I say something foolish?”⁵

Debate around democracy usually was predicated on just this question: who is fit to rule? The political tension in the sixth and fifth centuries was mainly between oligarchic (“rule of a few”) and democratic factions, and so the choice was often between these two forms. An author known as the Old Oligarch,⁶ who wrote an important but highly critical book on the Athenian constitution, wrote, “in all of Greece the best elements of society opposes democracy” (1.5). Why is this? He continues: “This is natural, of course, since the least amount of overindulgence and injustice but the highest amount of scrupulousness in the pursuit of excellence are found in the ranks of the better class, while within the ranks of the *dēmos* will occur the greatest ignorance, disorderliness, rascality—poverty acting as a stronger incentive to base conduct, not to speak of lack of education and ignorance, traceable to the lack of means which afflicts the average of mankind.” Plato,⁷ too, argues strongly against putting power in the people's hands for two reasons. First, the common person lacks the knowledge and expertise to run a government; he equates the process of democracy with allowing the passengers on a ship to steer the course of the ship in place of the captain; this is the so-called “ship of state” metaphor.⁸ Secondly, the common people are less capable of controlling their desires and thus think less rationally

⁵ Plutarch *Life of Phokion* 8.5.

⁶ Although the name “Xenophon” (an important historian) is attached to the work on the Athenian constitution referred to here, it is certainly not by him, and so we call him “Pseudo-Xenophon.” Since the work is anti-democratic and pro-oligarchy, we often refer to the author as “The Old Oligarch.”

⁷ Plato (428/427–348/347 B.C.), student of Socrates, is arguably the most important philosopher within the western tradition. Aristotle, for different reasons, was also critical of democracy.

⁸ *Republic*, book 6 (488a–e). The ancients were fond of equating government with ship sailing, and the English word “governor” (as does “government”) is derived from the Latin *gubernator*, which itself is derived from the Greek word *kybernetes* (“ship-captain”).

about policy and the common good. Just as the mind overrides the stomach's ravenous appetite, he might argue, the best men of the state must curb the people's desires. We might note that Federalist Paper 63, published as all the others under the name Publius but perhaps written by James Madison, argued that the creation of the Senate was motivated, in part, by a desire to defend the people "against their own temporary errors and delusions."⁹

It seems to me that the main difference between the ancient philosophers' arguments against democracy and our own (tacit and usually unexamined) assumption that democracy is the "self-evident" mode of governance is one of perspective. We (as Thucydides) regard democracy from the eyes of an individual: democracy allows us to do whatever we want and pursue our own goals, and it is this right to privacy and freedom from governmental interference that we regard as sacred. The Greek thinkers approached the problem from a different angle; they asked what was best for the city-state, not the individual. And when it came to placing the power in the hands of either the *dēmos* or the (presumably enlightened) elite, they chose the latter.

Let me conclude by stating for the record that I do not wish to take up arms and foment a revolution. After all, it is our democratic life that allows me to spend my days and evenings reading Greek and Latin authors and writing about fundamental questions about the human condition, such as freedom, equality, and the best form of government. Yet Socrates' famous dictum "the unexamined life is not worth living" can and perhaps should be extended into the realm of political thought. We should repeatedly question our preconceived assumptions about the way we govern ourselves (not to mention others), if not to refashion our ways of doing things, at least to remain conscious and aware of the reasons we do things the way we do. A final thought: one would be hard pressed to argue that Iraqis are better off today under their fledgling democracy than they were under

the "brutal" dictator Saddam Hussein. Democracy, in other words, is not the only ingredient for prosperity, nor is it the only form of government that can lead to equality and freedom—those values we treasure so much in our own country.

Further Reading

The best study of Athenian democracy is Mogens Herman Hansen, *The Athenian Democracy in the Age of Demosthenes*, translated by J. A. Crook (Norman, OK 1999). A broader study of democracy's rise in Greece may be found in the excellent collection of papers in Kurt A. Raaflaub, Josiah Ober, and Robert W. Wallace, *Origins of Democracy in Ancient Greece* (Berkeley/Los Angeles/London 2007). Another fine collection of papers concerning the contemporary relevance of classical Greek democracy, written by both classicists and modern political theorists, is worth consulting: Josiah Ober and Charles Hedrick, ed., *Dēmokratia: A Conversation on Democracies, Ancient and Modern* (Princeton 1996).

⁹ Publius continues: "As the cool and deliberate sense of the community ought, in all governments, and actually will, in all free governments, ultimately prevail over the views of its rulers; so there are particular moments in public affairs when the people, stimulated by some irregular passion, or some illicit advantage, or misled by the artful misrepresentations of interested men, may call for measures which they themselves will afterwards be the most ready to lament and condemn. In these critical moments, how salutary will be the interference of some temperate and respectable body of citizens in order to check the misguided career, and to suspend the blow meditated by the people against themselves, until reason, justice, and truth can regain their authority over the public mind? What bitter anguish would not the people of Athens have often escaped if their government had contained so provident a safeguard against the tyranny of their own passions? Popular liberty might then have escaped the indelible reproach of decreeing to the same citizens the hemlock on one day and statues on the next."

Why is Democracy Elusive in the Middle East?

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In the aftermath of 9/11, discussions about counterterrorism quickly veered into broader concerns about the absence of democracy in the Middle East as a “root cause” of terrorist movements. The Bush Administration made “democratizing” the region by force one of the key justifications for pre-emptive war in Iraq, despite the fact that most regional analysts argued that a prolonged American occupation of Iraq would reduce prospects for democracy.

This has indeed been the case. The war in Iraq now has regional repercussions that rival those of the Israeli-Palestinian-Arab conflict. For instance, Iraqis now constitute the second largest refugee population in the Middle East after the Palestinians. Over two million Iraqis, as well as many Palestinian refugees who settled in Iraq, have fled to Jordan, Syria, Lebanon, and Egypt. These countries, with scarce resources, are tightening controls on refugees, who are leaving Iraq at an estimated rate of several thousand per day. Over two million Iraqis are internally displaced and unable to leave.¹

In addition, U.S. pressure on such different regimes as Egypt and Saudi Arabia to pursue political reforms has evaporated as the Iraqi situation deteriorates. These governments have employed new restrictive laws and simple coercion to limit the activities of both secular and Islamist opponents. As chaos spreads in Iraq, the growing clout of Iran and the U.S.’s disengagement from the Arab-Israeli peace process have further destabilized the region.

In this context, official American rhetoric about promoting democracy comes across to most Middle Easterners as insincere at best and callous at worst, even though many in the Middle East openly admire the American people and American democratic institutions. Public opinion polls consistently show that significant majorities of Middle Easterners favor democratic government for their own countries.

A Comparative Politics Approach

So why, the recent and tragic developments aside, has democratization thus far eluded the region? Scholars of comparative politics sometimes approach the problem of democratization by breaking it down into more bounded questions and seeking common patterns across a range of cases. How do authoritarian regimes come to power and manage to stay there? What roles do civil society or external actors play in challenging authoritarian rule?

In answering such questions, we find that we can explain the scarcity of democracy in the Middle East without resorting to the idea that the Middle East is somehow inherently resistant to democracy. It is misleading, in my view, to argue that Arab political culture or Islam are unchanging or inherently undemocratic. Instead, if we look at both past and present trends, we find long-standing patterns of external intervention, weak parliaments and strong executives, and a variety of popular movements that have advocated more representative, accountable government.

Colonial Rule and Weak Democratic Institutions

The Middle East has been subject to unusually significant levels of external intervention. The central political drama of the late 19th century and the first half of the 20th century in the Middle East was the emergence of movements for “constitutionalism” and against external rule. Reformers in the Ottoman Empire, North Africa, and Iran wanted to create popularly elected parliaments and adopt a written constitution to constrain the power of the ruler. Despite these desires, from the early 1800’s until the 1950’s, the region was the object of virtually continuous attempts at direct and indirect control by European powers. At different times, the British controlled Egypt, Sudan, Iraq, and Palestine; the French ruled with varying degrees of success in Lebanon, Syria, Tunisia, Morocco, and Algeria; the Italians decimated much of the domestic population of Libya, and the

¹ For more information on the Iraqi refugee crisis, see reports by Human Rights Watch (www.hrw.org) and the International Crisis Group (www.icg.org).

Russians and British played for influence in Iran—much as they did further a field in Central Asia.

External powers faced periodic, popular revolts against the colonial presence, and all used violence and co-optation of local elites to sustain their position. They also established monarchies or presidential systems with deliberately weak parliaments, as was the case in Jordan, Lebanon, Iraq, Syria, Sudan, and Egypt. Colonial powers and local rulers alike sought to limit the effectiveness and scope of parliamentary authority.

In addition, early Middle Eastern states were poor. Great differences in wealth and power divided society into relatively small numbers of elites and much greater numbers of poorer people. These popular classes increasingly joined in formal political life in the 1930's and 1940's through the creation of mass-based movements that called for an end to colonial rule and for more authentic and representative governments. Middle Easterners marched in the streets, organized political parties of all sorts, voted in elections where given the chance, and waged insurgencies when no political outlets emerged. Many were imprisoned, executed, and exiled in the process.

Colonial advisers and local rulers, concerned with controlling vast rural hinterlands and unruly cities, strengthened the armed forces and established new internal security forces. These came to occupy a privileged place within national economies and political life. In Morocco, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, and the small Gulf states, monarchs succeeded in creating family dynasties despite recurrent opposition. Elsewhere, in Egypt, Algeria, Iraq, Syria, and Tunisia, cliques of army officers eventually overthrew the colonial orders, perceived by most citizens as corrupt, ineffectual, and elitist.

The Growth of the State

Many of these army officers were populist—that is, they appealed to vast numbers of 'citizens' who had seemingly gained little under weak parliamentary governments. They rapidly expanded central state bureaucracies to consolidate control and enact ambitious plans for state-led development. They centralized the apparatus of the state in the capital city and around the institution of the president or monarch himself. Many leaders also cultivated support among the poorer segments of society by undertaking programs of land redistribution, expanding educational opportunities, and creating jobs in the growing public bureaucracies.

Some emerging Middle Eastern states could draw on revenues from oil and foreign military aid to consolidate their political systems. In Iran, Saudi Arabia, and small states of the Gulf, the nationalization of oil companies channeled increasingly large sums of money directly into the coffers of incumbent governments and families. (Nationalization of oil production was widely popular, as previously the vast majority of oil profits went to a cartel of foreign multinationals). Other countries, such as Egypt, Israel, Jordan, and Iran, were able to maneuver throughout the Cold War between the U.S. and the Soviet Union to obtain significant influxes of military hardware and economic aid, disproportionate to the size of their economies or their populations. The U.S. continues to arm Saudi Arabia, the small Gulf states, Israel, and Egypt by arranging for billions in subsidized loans that, in most cases, must be used to purchase U.S. military equipment.

Downsizing the State, Manipulating Politics

Over the last few decades, authoritarian rulers have faced greater challenges in maintaining their monopolies over political power. Since the 1970's, states have found they can no longer provide enough jobs, educational opportunities, and basic services to still rapidly increasing populations. Regimes both democratic and authoritarian have downsized and privatized. This process, still underway, is producing an increasingly diversified and vibrant private sector and increasing economic inequality as old forms of state support for the poor are withdrawn. Regimes have also experimented with new forms of political control, allowing small numbers of officially sanctioned parties to contest elections. Many of these elections are rigged or otherwise manipulated to ensure that the government's favored party maintains majorities in parliament and in other institutions such as professional associations and clubs.

The Islamist Trend

Some of the most successful movements in contesting even rigged elections, have been groups and organizations that define themselves as part of a broader Islamic resurgence. Islamist movements and networks have benefited from the failures of state elites to provide basic services, address corruption, and safeguard human rights. Sa'ad Eddin Ibrahim, a respected academic and secular democratic activist in Egypt who was recently released after several years in Egyptian jails, echoed the consensus of many analysts within the region when he

wrote recently that “mainstream Islamists with broad social support, developed civic dispositions, and services to provide are the most likely actors in building a new Middle East. Whether we like it or not, these are the facts.”²

At the end of the Cold War, hopes that the Middle East would finally be released from the machinations of great powers interested in oil and strategic real estate were short-lived. As suggested at the beginning, the U.S. “war on terror” has been counterproductive thus far for democratization prospects in the region. But conditions in the region are in flux. On a recent trip to Cairo, I found many Egyptians outspoken and frank about the incompetence of the ruling party and the system of presidential patronage that underpins it. Some feel that change is inevitable. A recent college graduate, active in the Kifaya (Enough!) movement, told me that “Democracy is only a matter of time. The only questions are when and at what price. But it will happen.”

What Can the U.S. Do?

What could the U.S. do to help promote rather than hinder democratization in the Middle East? The United States could work diligently to solve regional and civil conflicts, but only by recognizing the legitimacy of diverse interests and viewpoints, a task that has eluded several recent administrations. The United States could condition its military and economic aid on substantive political reforms and regional conflict-problem solving, something that the U.S. has thus far been unwilling to do except in token and small-scale ways.

As for Iraq, we face dismal options from a misguided intervention. The U.S. could signal its recognition of the costs to both Iraqis and the region by addressing the mounting humanitarian crisis in concrete and visible ways. For instance, on the refugee question alone, the U.S. could dramatically increase its assistance to such organizations as the United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR) and accept large numbers of Iraqi refugees rather than the token hundreds that have so far been admitted.

Interested in learning more?

At UNH:

- Courses on the Middle East and/or Islam are taught by Alasdair Drysdale (Geography), Ethel Sara Wolper (History) and myself (Political Science), among others.
- Arabic is currently being offered through the Languages, Literatures, and Cultures Department.

On the Internet:

- For up-to-date analysis of developments based on research in the field, check out the Middle East Research and Information Project (www.merip.org) and the periodic reports by the International Crisis Group (www.icg.org).
- For information on U.S. foreign policy and foreign aid, check out the bipartisan reports by the Congressional Research Service. Although supposedly restricted to members of Congress, most find their way online. The reference desk at Diamond Library can also help locate them.
- There are many English-language newspapers and news outlets from the Middle East on the web. Here are some of the major ones. (I am not endorsing any of the content.)

Al Ahram Weekly (Egypt, English),
www.weekly.ahram.org.eg

Al Jazeera, English edition, english.aljazeera.net

Arab News (Saudi Arabia, English),
www.arabnews.com

The Daily Star (Egypt edition, English),
www.dailystaregypt.com

The Daily Star (Lebanon, English),
www.dailystar.com.lb

Haaretz (Israel, English), www.haaretzdaily.com

- **Blogs:** Blogging is taking off and authoritarian governments take it seriously. Egypt, for instance, recently imprisoned several young bloggers on charges of “defaming the state.” These can be found through major search engines.

² Quoted in “Democratizing the Middle East?” *Occasional Paper No. 2*, The Fares Center for Eastern Mediterranean Studies, Tufts University. Report of a conference held at Tufts University, Medford/Somerville, MA, January 26–27, 2006.

Your Most Important Role in a Democracy: Thinking for Yourself

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Democracies are only as strong and effective as the citizens who put decision-makers in office. In the ideal situation, citizens elect leaders who make decisions that are in the best interest of the people and the nation. However, this is not always the case. Democracies can go awry when citizens unknowingly elect leaders who make decisions or institute policies that are not in their best interest. In this essay, I discuss research findings from social psychology that can inform us about how political strategists can manipulate voters into voting for candidates that may not be the best leaders for the people or the nation. My objective is to raise awareness and discussion about how citizens in a democracy can make themselves stronger, more thoughtful and more effective voters who resist the influence of political strategists and think for themselves.

Free Will and the Fundamental Attribution Error

For over half a century research by social psychologists has repeatedly shown that the social situations in which we find ourselves play a significant predictable role in shaping our decisions and behavior. In large part, this is because situational cues affect our emotions and emotions influence our behavior. There is no doubt that we are each unique individuals with the free will to make our own distinct decisions. However, in the United States our strong values regarding individuality and free will consistently cause us to underestimate the extent to which emotional cues in situations influence our behavior and decisions. The tendency for us to ignore the influence of the situation on our behavior is so common that it is referred to by social psychologists as the “fundamental attribution error.” That is, we attribute our own (and others’) behavior to values, personality or rational choice when, in fact, it’s our emotional reactions to cues or stimuli in situations that usually have the largest influence on our behavior and decisions.

Ignorance about the power of situational cues to affect our behavior makes us vulnerable to influence tactics. For example, imagine how a used car dealership

might be designed to invoke feelings of trust rather than suspicion in order to increase car sales. Research suggests that cues as subtle as the color of paint on the walls can influence our willingness to trust and thus to make a purchase. Alternatively, consider how a car salesperson might behave to evoke feelings of trust. Research suggests that he or she has a very short window of time (about 30 seconds) to build your trust—first impressions are critical in this game.

A poignant example of the extent to which emotional cues in social situations influence our behavior and decisions is seen in the work of Judith Rich Harris.¹ Harris is a scholar who reviewed decades of research on why teenagers make particular choices, for example, why they might choose to study hard in high school, rob a bank, take drugs, etc. Most of us believe that these choices are the result of individual values and personality characteristics developed through upbringing and early childhood experiences (for example, strict or lax parental discipline). Harris found that the best predictor of teenager behavior was the behavior of the teenagers’ closest friends. Put teenagers in a situation where close friends are going to college, or smoking cigarettes, or taking drugs and social psychologists can predict with a high degree of accuracy that most will make the same decisions. Research consistently shows that our free will is heavily influenced by the will of our peers. Our emotional need to belong frequently overrides our desire to be an individual. In fact, belonging to a group is so important to us humans that it predicts our feelings of well-being.²

A less personal example of the situational cues influencing our emotions and behavior in predictable ways is seen in a high-school pep-rally. One of the best known principles in social psychology is that if you put a large group of people in a room (e.g., a gymnasium) with loud cheerful music, streamers and balloons flying and people clapping their hands in unison, the positive exuberant energy becomes contagious. Soon it will be almost impossible not to smile, experience the energy and feel a sense of pride and “oneness” with the crowd. This would be the perfect time for a political candidate

to step on stage and tell the crowd in a well calculated and persuasive tone exactly what the crowd wants to hear—that not only does its team have the power to win the state championships, that they each have the power to change the world if they vote for this candidate. In this situation, the enthusiasm, positive emotion, and sense of pride are transferred to the candidate. Given that this situation cues such predictable emotions and outcomes, doesn't it make sense that political rallies almost always include cheerful music, balloons, streamers, and synchronous clapping?

The Central Role of Emotion in Decisions

As I've discussed, a key reason we are susceptible to situational influence is that our preferences and decisions are strongly influenced by emotional cues in those situations. Mark Buchanan,³ concludes that we are so susceptible to emotional influence because our brains are the product of millions of years (99% of human history) of living in nomadic hunter-gatherer groups of a few dozen people. Therefore, our brains evolved not to solve math problems or to choose between the most sophisticated of political arguments, but to solve the most pressing problems faced by our ancestors, for example, hunting for food, finding mates, determining who could be trusted, and maintaining one's membership in the group. To meet these needs, the earliest part of our brains to evolve was the emotion center which enabled our primitive ancestors to make fast decisions via emotional cues from the environment. The more finely tuned their ability to pick up cues in the environment the more likely they were to survive and to pass on their genes. Today, our brains have evolved and include a cognitive thinking center that is connected to but separate from the emotion center of our brain. The cognitive center enables the cognitive intelligence required to solve the problems we face today. The connection between the cognitive center and the emotion center enables us to think about and analyze our emotions so that we are not slaves to the simple "flight or fight" instincts that affected the primitive behavior of our ancestors. Today, we can if we try hard, analyze whether our emotions are leading us toward behavior most useful for the future and then override those emotions if we choose.

However, brain research shows that when we make decisions the emotion center of our brain is triggered before the cognitive center of our brain.⁴ Emotion gets cued so quickly (remember it had to in order to save the lives of our ancestors from surprises in their environment) that it occurs outside our conscious aware-

ness. Brain researchers tell us that we are as unlikely to stop ourselves from experiencing an emotion as we are to block a sneeze. Our decisions are first influenced by our emotions; our cognitive thinking kicks in second and is all too frequently used by us to justify and support the decisions we make via our emotions.⁵ This means that the positive emotions we feel about the political candidate at the rally are followed by our cognitive analysis that we must be feeling good about him because his values are similar to our own.

In sum, our emotions play a primary role in our behavior and decisions. In situations where our emotions are cued behavior becomes predictable. Thus, a used car salesman, a friend, and a politician can sway our behavior by influencing our emotions. The good news is that awareness is our best defense. Because pathways connect the emotion center to the cognitive center of our brains, our cognitive abilities can recognize, understand, and, if necessary, override our emotions. This can keep us from falling prey to the emotional manipulation.

Voting Behavior

Partly for the reasons discussed above, Brian Caplan,⁶ an economist, argues that democracies are not inherently good. He points out that, in theory, democracies keep leaders from implementing socially harmful policies. In reality, citizens like us frequently elect leaders who adopt policies that are harmful for the majority of people. This is because voters are susceptible to irrational, that is, emotional thinking. According to statistics, democracies should be safeguarded by large numbers of voters and what economists, like Caplan, call the "miracle of aggregation." This means that if well informed voters vote in consistent directions and uninformed voters (even if they are 99% of the population) vote randomly (that is, like the role of a die), the randomness of the uninformed votes keeps them from having a systematic effect on the pattern of votes coming from informed voters. Thus, even in a democracy filled with predominantly uninformed people, desirable leaders should still emerge victorious in elections. Problems emerge when voters are systematically misinformed. That is, when large numbers of voters are misinformed by politicians and pundits who structure situations, speeches, advertisements or headlines in the media so that they steer voters away from understanding the real issues in the election and toward feeling particular emotions about candidates.

Sophisticated marketing techniques are designed by social scientists (for example, political marketing

specialists) who understand the power of emotional cues to affect the choices of the unaware. They sell us candidates like they sell us trucks, cereal, or beer, for example, through advertisements that show people just like you supporting their candidate for emotional reasons. Another growing tactic involves emotionally persuasive e-mails sent out as chain letters so that you receive the emotionally persuasive message from your own friends and family. Also, the images presented on ads and in e-mails are perpetuated by the brief but emotional “talking points” that steer voters back to the emotional image rather than to the important and more complex issues at stake in an election. Or, they steer voters toward one highly charged emotional issue (for example, abortion rights or gay marriage) that also steers thinking away from the problems or policies that matter most to the nation.

These manipulated votes are no longer random so they have a systematic influence on election outcomes. For example, a politician whose political campaign shows him to be a warm but tough patriotic leader is likely to evoke positive emotions in voters. He might get even more votes if he makes his opponent appear to be a selfish and weak leader because this will evoke negative emotions in voters. When feelings about candidates contrast so significantly they can override voters' interest in candidates' views on important issues or in whether candidates have the competencies necessary to effectively lead. In fact, history shows that politicians who prey on voters' emotions can and do win democratic elections despite whether their views or track records reflect the best direction for the majority of the people in a country.

How Can We Think for Ourselves and Best Support Our Democratic Nation?

There are no simple answers. Perhaps the most important step is to be aware of how easily our free will and free choices are influenced by the emotions evoked by particular issues or in particular situations. The second step might be to teach ourselves to recognize when our emotions are being influenced and to manage our emotions in those situations (for example, while watching political advertisements) so that we improve our ability to think for ourselves and make thoughtful decisions.

Research suggests that we are more likely to thoroughly analyze facts and information, rather than simply become slaves to our emotions, when we have: 1) the desire, and 2) the ability to carefully analyze the information. One study revealed that when college students felt no personal stake in an issue, they were

more likely to be swayed by their emotional reaction to a speaker's credentials. However, when an issue mattered to them personally, they were more likely to analyze the quality of that speaker's arguments.⁷

What else can we do to keep votes from being manipulated? What can we do to keep others from being so easily manipulated? What manipulative techniques have you seen used by politicians? In what situations or around what issues are you most susceptible to influence? How do your emotions affect who you prefer as a candidate? What political issues do you feel most emotional about (that might be used to manipulate your vote)? What keeps voters focusing on how politicians present their messages (i.e., the emotions they evoke in us) rather than the content of their messages? Since both of our dominant political parties (Democrats and Republicans) use these manipulative tactics what can we do to keep them and us focused on the issues that matter most to us and to the majority of the people in the country? Lastly, it would be impossible and likely destructive to attempt to take all emotion out of our decisions about politicians. After all, emotions provide relevant instinctual information that should carry some weight in our decisions—don't they? When should we and when should we not trust our emotions to steer us toward decisions that are best for us and for our nation?

Endnotes

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⁵ Libet, B. (1985). Unconscious cerebral initiative and the role of conscious will in voluntary action. *Behavioral and Brain Sciences*, 8(4), 529–566.

⁶ Caplan, B. (2007). *The Myth of the Rational Voter: Why Democracies Choose Bad Policies*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

⁷ Petty, R. E., Cacioppo, J. T., & Goldman, R. (1981). Personal involvement as a determinant of argument-based persuasion. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 41, 847–855.

