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Democracy and Diversity in the Developing World: The American Experience with Democracy Promotion

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Abstract

Since the end of the Cold War, the United States has taken a more active role in promoting democracy abroad. The goals of these interventions have varied. Both the duration and the instruments of intervention have also varied. Finally, American interventions in support of democracy have been both unilateral and multi-lateral, with the latter including, for example, such partners as the United Nations, the European Union, the Organization of American States and a variety of non-governmental organizations.

The purpose of this paper is to assess the recent American experience with democracy promotion in divided societies. In particular, the paper will address four questions. First, what is the relationship between democracy and diversity? Second, why has the United States become more involved in democracy promotion—in general and in divided societies in particular? A third issue is whether the United States should be involved in democracy promotion.

Democracy promotion, however, is likely to figure prominently in American foreign policy in the future. This leads to the final question: how should the United States promote democracy abroad? Based upon past experience, what seem to be the best conditions and the best practices?